



Dragon Keeper

Carole Wilkinson

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In the time of the Han Dynasty in ancient China, the last remaining dragon is in danger of being killed by the cruel Emperor. A nameless orphan with no past and an uncertain future becomes his unlikely ally. The young orphan soon discovers that it is her destiny to protect the aging dragon and his mysterious purple stone.

Chased by an evil dragon hunter and a powerful sorcerer, their adventure is not easy. Each must learn to help and understand the other if they are to survive. To succeed in her task, the young orphan must reach deep within herself to find courage she never knew existed. No longer can she be the timid, shy orphan she once was. She is now the one, true Dragon Keeper.

Dragon Keeper Details

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From Reader Review Dragon Keeper for online ebook

Burcu says

Çok büyük bir zevkle okudum. Ve uzakdo?u mitlerine hayran kalmam? sa?lad?. Ejderhan?n bilgeli?i ve bu bilgelik sayesinde küçük köle bir k?z?n evrilmesi, güçlenmesi beni çok etkiledi. Bir puan? giri? ve gel?me k?s?mlar?n?n biraz dura??n olmas? nedeniyle k?rd?m. Yoksa fantastik türü severlere gözüm kapal? önerice?im kitaplar aras?ndaki yerini ald?.

Bonnie says

The story centers on a girl in 141 BC who has grown up as a slave of the Chinese Emperor's Dragon Keeper. She has been a slave her whole life, and does not know what her name is, or who her parents are. The Dragon Keeper is mean and lazy, so she cares for the 2 dragons in his place, but she does not care much for them, since all they do is lay around. They do not interact with her, or even eat the food she gives them. One day, the female dragon dies, and she feels guilty about this and tries to care for the remaining male dragon better, especially once she learns that she can hear what he is saying to her in her mind.

Suddenly, a dragon hunter comes, and is going to kill the remaining dragon for its organs, so she helps it escape, but it will only leave if she goes with it. She goes with it, but only wants to go back to where she was, because even though her life has not been happy, it is the only one she knows. This becomes impossible, though, when she discovers that the dragon hunter is hunting for not only for the dragon, but also for HER, and that the whole country believes that she has stolen this dragon, and killed the other.

Even though she is not entirely fond of the dragon, she decides to accompany it on its journey to the Ocean, and to do as the dragon tells her, and protect its stone. The dragon finds the stone even more important than its own health for some reason.

Well, there were good parts and bad parts to this story.

The good parts were that the dragon teaches her to count, which she has never learned, by saying, for example, 20 tens and 2 for 22, so throughout the book counting is done that way. This helps the reader feel more connected with her, in a way. I thought it was an interesting device. There is also a lot of adventure that happens, and the main character grows and changes a lot throughout the book, which is fun to read.

The bad parts are that there are a lot of boring downtimes between the adventurous parts, and they really drag. Also, the main character just goes along with the dragon, and takes a long time to warm up to him, even though he is very nice to her. She also seems to not care about what he is doing that much, which is dumb because she is going along with him, and when she finally DOES ask, about 20 pages from the end, she discovers it directly affects the rest of her life. I found her stupid and apathetic throughout a lot of the book, so it was hard to really connect with her, despite the methods the author uses, which I discussed above. There also is something to do with the dragon stone, which I won't ruin, but I figured it out almost instantly, and she doesn't bother to ask about it, again, until 20 pages from the end, so that was annoying too. Also, I've never read a book that takes place in BC China, so I wish the author would have described things a little more. It was a little too much from the characters mindset, and if it was something common to her, it wouldn't be described, even if it was something foreign to the reader.

There is a sequel, which I've read reviews that say it's better than this one. I could believe that, since she knows what's going on in the second book so I wouldn't find her as annoying. So, I think I'll check it out.

John Nebauer says

In western literature, dragons are objects of terror that hoard treasure and breathe fire. There are exceptions, like the dragons in Ursula le Guin's *Earthsea* series, and any Dungeons and Dragons player will know that there are dragons benign, and not all breathe fire. But the red fire-breather la Smaug think is usually our first picture.

So when I spotted a copy of Australian author Carole Wilkinson's *Dragonkeeper* at the Goodwood library I made sure that it came home to visit. China also has a rich tradition of dragon lore that I've only encountered once before. It was a wonderful short story called *Dragon... Ghost* by M. Lucie Chin, published in the first issue of the long-defunct (but soon to be relaunched) Ares magazine.

Dragonkeeper is set in the 2nd century BC, during the Han dynasty. It tells the story of Ping, an 11-year old girl who was sold into slavery by her parents. She is badly mistreated by her master, who is tasked with the care of the emperor's dragons. These are also badly mistreated, and one dies. Ping eventually escapes with the last surviving dragon, Long Danzi (*Long* simply meaning dragon), and Hua, her pet rat. Also with them is a mysterious stone that Danzi was desperate to save. He must make the long journey to far-off Ocean to recover and Ping, with much reluctance, agrees to accompany him.

What Wilkinson has given us is a wonderfully told *bildungsroman*. It also sensitively explores the long effects of abuse upon Ping. She, illiterate and malnourished, is initially reluctant to escape her slavery. Though she desperately hates it, she knows no other life. The modicum of security it offers is some comfort for her. Later, when the reason for the title becomes evident, Danza reveals that he misread crucial signs because Ping is a girl.

I don't know how well *Dragonkeeper* fits established Chinese dragon stories, but it is certainly evocative. Rather than roar, Chinese dragons gong. They have whiskers reminiscent of catfish and are mortally afraid of iron. Danza only communicates telepathically, so when she first hears his voice she's not aware that she was 'hearing' a dragon.

It is not always an easy relationship. Given the task of looking after the dragon stone, Ping loses it to Diao, a dragon hunter. Dragon blood and organs are worth a lot of money because of their medicinal value. When Danzi learns that Ping has lost the stone, his anger is terrible;

'Ping has failed' he said over and over again. 'Ping responsible for stone. Dragon stone comes first. Even before own safety.'

But Danza's Confucian wisdom recognises Ping's true worth, which is great indeed. She gains in confidence as the story progresses, though without bravado. Ping has to screw her courage up, which makes her the more worthy of praise.

Though it's a book for older children, it isn't a nice, safe book. Dragons are butchered, animal parts are sold and people die horribly. At one point, they come to a village that is suffering terribly from drought:

Fragments of their shouted conversation reached Ping on the wind.

'...just a girl.'

'Only Heaven...take life away.'

The woman was crying. Ping edged closer, trying to make out what it was they were talking about.

'...a single life will be lost...'

In the end, Ping must confront her own desire for comfort and safety and make a decision. This is simply a wonderful and deservedly award winning book, suitable for readers from 10 to about 14. I've not read any of Carole Wilkinson's works before. I'm looking forward very much to reading more.

Ömer says

4.95/5

Okurken çok keyif ald?m. Yorumu için: <http://kronikokur.blogspot.com.tr/201...>

Lina says

Akhirnya selesai juga. Awalnya sih rada boring, tapi begitu mulai petualangan Ping dan si naga, cerita mulai mengalir, tema cerita mirip-mirip sama Drachenreiter, dimana naga akan mencari tempat demi kehidupan yang lebih baik. Tapi beda sama Drachenreiter yang cenderung lebih ramai, Dragon Keeper lebih sepi, tokoh utama hanya Ping si gadis budak, lalu Danzi si naga tua dan Hua si tikus yang selalu bersembunyi di baju Ping.

Yang menarik dari Dragon Keeper ini adalah setiap ada konflik atau masalah yang menghadang perjalanan Ping & Danzi, mereka benar-benar mengatasinya sendiri, ngga seperti kebanyakan cerita petualangan yang tiba-tiba suka muncul tokoh penolong dan tau-tau masalah beres, Dragon Keeper mengajarkan untuk berpegang pada kemampuan diri sendiri.

Untuk terjemahan, cukup baik dan cerita mengalir dengan enak, gaya bahasa ringan, makanya saya masukkan sebagai buku fantasy anak-anak.

Yang membuat saya kurang puas bacanya adalah, cerita yang terlalu linear, padahal dengan setting di era China kuno, novel fantasy ini sangat berpotensi menggali mitologi lain daripada hanya sekedar petualangan naga itu sendiri.

Meika Kovac says

Dragon Keeper is a wonderful story that speaks of the bond between a young girl and a dragon, and the quest that they embark on. Set in Ancient China, the girl has only ever thought of herself as being worthless because of her slave background. Dragon Keeper is a story in which she takes part on a journey where she proves her worth and strength to many people including herself.

Although the book got off to a slow start, the plot gradually began to develop. The girl and the dragon take

on many challenges of which empower the girl, called Ping.

I would definitely recommend this book for people of all ages. The book is written with an easy-to-understand approach, so it is also great for younger readers. It has a strong message of which everyone can learn from, which is conveyed through a sweet connection between a simple girl and a great beast.

Khushi says

PRE UNI MEMORIES

This book is actually amazing and I've read this so many times! I love the way she writes and the plot is so good!

Stef Rozitis says

Here are the reason's I loved this book

1. It is about a powerless, nameless person trapped in a completely abject lifestyle as an ignorant, young, female slave. Even in this awful part of her life where she has largely internalised her abjection, the protagonist (so far nameless) is shown to have agency and both the capability and will to be more than she is force to be. But for the time being she accepts all she knows. As the book unfolds, characters largely bully, berate, hunt or betray her but she keeps a sense of herself so intact that she really grows as a character
2. I think her encounter with the young emperor (how do I say this without spoilers) is a metaphor for so much more. It is a metaphor for cosiness, security, romance and for all the YA tropes that it seems like the book is heading toward, but it avoids them. In a sense then the protagonist has to choose between agency/vocation and security/acceptance within the status quo and she is ambivalent about the choice and not entirely free to choose amongst all the pressures. This is I think a common experience for girls/women in many parts of the world. Having to choose between economic/political/social/familial/emotional security and full personhood. Seems easy in theory but it isn't. Throughout the book the girl's (reluctant to name her since she is nameless at the beginning) desire for connection and relationship is complex and therefore believable.
3. The setting in ancient China is stunning and seems to me well researched. It is a completely appropriate setting for a dragon story and has internal consistency (being based on a more-or-less real world). I was cautious about reading a Chinese setting from a white author but I think Wilkinson has steered a course between exoticisation of "other" (apart from a historical setting always being to some degree exotic) and whitewashing, so that her characters come across as really being Chinese but at the same time as relatable to a non-Chinese reader. There is economic complexity, people of many different classes but not stereotypes and the many types of betrayal and complex (dis)loyalties in the book ring true.
4. The dragon was OK but I LOVED the rat. The rat is an amazingly heroic character. I am sad to think he probably won't be in the sequel.

I see that some reviewers found this book "boring" and I must admit it has a slow and somewhat depressing start but read for the complexity and give it a chance to grow on you. Well it did grow on me anyway!

Ali Can Bozkurt says

DNF at %25

Eğer middle grade okumak istiyorsam artık farkı bir kez okumak istiyorum. Tamam kabul. Çin Uygarlığı? falan filan. Ama artık ?u kötü efendi-zavallı? kız olayından kurtulmak istiyorum. Üzgünüm ejderhalar. :"(

Sarah Lee says

My daughter was gifted this for her 8th Birthday and I've been reading it out loud to her. She read the last 3 chapters all by herself and loved the story so much that we've ordered the second in the series! Wonderful story with so many twists, turns and drama. A great paced story from beginning to end!

Keeley says

I read this book as a child and it moved me in a way that I'm unable to forget.

The book is stunningly written and refreshingly different. There are a few reasons why I admire Wilkinson so greatly:

Firstly, the setting of the novel is a challenge in itself. Not only is she setting her novel in China, but also in Ancient China. This would have meant months of research to adequately portray the world into which the reader is thrust.

Secondly, the young protagonist. A child protagonist is always challenging, no matter whether it's a children's or an adult novel. You need to dumb down vocabulary and simplify internal monologues. It's hard to get your point across. Wilkinson does this in such a way that reading and understanding Ping is as easy as breathing.

Finally, the fact that her novel is about dragons. Normally, I'd turn up my nose and sniff at such a plot. However, Wilkinson made me forget how much I disliked dragon fantasy.

I can't put into words how beautiful this novel is. Everyone should read it, whether you're 10-years-old, or 50.

Kat Heckenbach says

I'm writing this on behalf of my 11 yr old son. He adores this series. He is normally one who reads only for information. A three inch thick reference book about sea animals will occupy him for hours, but a novel will get scrutiny and a turned up nose. "Too thick, chapters are too long, words (font) are too tiny..." But I told him he needed to pick SOMETHING fiction and TRY to read it. And no, not Diary of a Wimpy Kid.

He actually ended up choosing the second book in the series (Garden of the Purple Dragon), not realizing it

was a series. He LOVED it. Stayed up late at night reading (yep, he can, we homeschool) and raved and raved about it. He told me that I "must" read it too. When he finished, he begged me to get the first book (this one) and is reading it now, and loves it as much as the second book. We have also ordered the third book (Dragon Moon).

The things he says he loves about it are:

It is full of action.

He loves the dragon.

He loves the Asian culture.

He says is just "sucks him in."

Now I'm dying to read it--and will tell everyone I recommend it because it got my reluctant fiction reader to fall in love with a whole series!

My Website

Find me on Facebook

My YA fantasy series:

book 1

book 2

Cassandra Lê says

I am so tired of reading this.

I has no idea why but this book doesn't make me feel that it was set originally in China.

It was just plain boring. The dragon is too weak, it's just like people touch iron on it and it weaken. The girl is okay, but nothing much was indicates through her characters. It was not satisfying as I thought. I do like Chinese history, but this book fails me.

Miyuki Gardner says

A young servant girl named Ping felt like she had no future or purpose in life, so she worked as a servant. Ping knew the last dragon was going to be killed but some how, she felt as if she had a reason to protect this dragon and its precious purple stone. Ping helps this dragon to escape and they go on to a adventure to some type off dragon island.

I didn't truly like how Ping and her dragon got to find his confidence towards Ping later on in this book, but I did like it when they really just worked together and compromised all of their thoughts and plans through. Also, I love the way the book has so much action and stalking during the book.

Do you as a reader ever think that they might have new company along the series? Or that Ping and her dragon may ever just give up on their journey and wait for the guards to just, kill them?

I recommend this book to anyone who LOVES fantasy/action/mystery. And to all who love dragons!

Mirrani says

Reading Dragon Keeper, I was automatically caught up in the spirit of the time period it is set in. But it wasn't just the Chinese culture that struck me as true and genuine, it was also the Dragon culture, which was well thought out and wonderfully blended into the story. While reading I realized just how connected the Chinese culture was with the Dragons. It is almost a case of the chicken and the egg; did the use of gongs and chimes attract dragons to the humans or did the humans seek a way to replicate what they heard come from these majestic creatures? Who knew of qi first? Who first knew of herbs and healing? None of these things are brought up so obviously in the book, but as someone who thinks highly of the idea of the dragons having shared knowledge with humans and having lived among peoples of the past and taught them, these things easily crossed my mind as I was reading.

The story is well thought out from its humble beginning to the ending that isn't as much of an ending as it is a continuation of life. Our lives aren't split up into chapters and our memorable moments in time don't necessarily have sharp, clean endings. A person may lose their job but the story doesn't stop there. Will they find another one? Will they find themselves in the same line of work as before or has that person learned a lesson that has pointed them on a different path? What will the new job bring? So many books simply end instead of allowing the mind to continue with these questions and I found the end of Dragon Keeper both fitting to the culture of the Dragons and refreshing in its final non-resolution. "Who knows how things will end? Perhaps there is no end."

Dragon Keeper is not only a well planned story, but it is well told. The plot will keep your attention, but it is the attention to details that makes you thirst for even more. I admit to knowing little of Chinese history, but the book seemed well settled in its time period and I found nothing to jostle my mind from the story in that regard. Chinese words and concepts are easily sewn into the story, teaching readers the powers of qi, the mathematics of counting, the geography of an area and its distances or types of money, all without jarring you away from the tale being told. It all comes naturally, even without the dictionary and pronunciation guides at the back, because as Danzai teaches Ping about life beyond slavery, you realize that you have learned as well.

In fact, the entire story is not just Ping's journey to learn about herself and her country, it is the story of the reader's journey as well. While holding the book, you travel the countryside with a girl and a Dragon, share their joys and sorrows, participate in their adventures and reach the ocean with them as they begin new parts of their lives.

If you are a fan of the Neverending Story or DragonHeart, you will probably find yourself as desperate for the rest of the series as I have become. I would also highly recommend this book to anyone who has pet rats, as I found great joy in reading about Ping's rat, the most honorable Hua.
