



Through the Skylight

Ian Baucom , Justin Gerard (Illustrator)

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Two tantalizing tales, magically intertwined, cross cultures and span centuries as three kids set out to save the lives of three others—who just happen to live in the Middle Ages!

A stone lion roars....

A sleek black cat speaks....

A faun leaps from the canvas of a painting....

When Jared, Shireen, and Miranda are each given one glittering gift from an old Venetian shopkeeper, they never fathom the powers they are now able to unleash; they never expect that their very reality is about to be utterly upended. And the adventure has hardly begun.

For in another time, centuries earlier, another trio—Rashid, Maria, and Francesca—have been thrown together under terrible circumstances: They have been kidnapped and, along with hundreds of other children, will be sold into child slavery. Unless, that is, they can find some way to save them all.

But all their fates lie in the hands of Jared, Shireen, and Miranda. The future—and the lives—of these three very modern children become entirely intertwined with those of the children from the past. Danger, it seems, has a way of spanning centuries.

Through the Skylight Details

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Download and Read Free Online Through the Skylight Ian Baucom , Justin Gerard (Illustrator)

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Deborah says

I loved the book's premise: the idea of an animated stone lion and mythological Roman fawn; Aladin's Tale come to life; a connection to the Children's Crusade. Intriguing. The setting of Venice, both modern and Renaissance, was rich with the promise of imagination.

However, the adventures' plot relied primarily on the character's fate and happenstance rather than their personal choices. It was stymied also by the literacy device used to tell the historical characters' story, actually reading from an old book. This device, while interesting at first, soon staled and felt like exposition. To me, the theme of religion within the book seemed forced and awkward and unbelievable. What modern tweener would not immediately recognize an Islamic prayer? Plus, there were times when the characters--when they did make choices--made ones that lacked common sense. At one point a character controlled a surly dragon through the possession of an artifact. He then gave that artifact to another for a moment, and yet the dragon did not rebel or return to his place of origin. Nor was any explanation given as to how the character could momentarily suspend that magical world's rules of magic.

Despite these flaws, I would probably try another book by this author.

Alaina says

Though the Skylight is a mysterious, adventurous, and interesting book to read. The main characters in this book are Jared, Shireen, and Miranda. Shireen is a special character and I related to her a lot. Shireen is a key character because she is unique, and her sister and brother are more ordinary. The individual fairy tale stories in this book really come together and make the whole book interesting.

In the beginning, the pace could have been faster. The author could have gotten to the action of the story in a quicker way. The author really challenges you to increase your vocabulary.

There's a lot to learn about historical events. Venice is a great setting for Through the Skylight. If you love fantasy stories, I suggest you read this book. Overall this is an excellent book to read with a class or for a school assignment.

Marsha says

How much is our destiny foretold and how much is due to free will? That surprising conundrum and its startling answer wind through this tale about La Serenissima and the ancient history that brings three siblings in contact with an adventure from the past and a sinister force that wears the cowl of a holy monk.

A modern book about enchantment had better have something unusual about it and this book has them in spades. Moving statues, pictures that come to life and talking cats and birds are just a few of the wonders that permeate this book about a story that spans centuries and calls on six unlikely heroes. I was utterly enrapt by

this novel and found the characters no less gripping than the adventure story it told. Even, as one character says, this is a story that benefits from having children in it, the adults play their small parts as well, making this novel one older teens can enjoy.

Marqeisha says

A semester in Venice can change the lives of Jared, Shireen and Amanda by a quick map of mythical power that a couple of rings and a die holds. Who knew it would lead them on a long suspenseful journey. This book was a very good book. I have not read a good children's book in a while and I'm glad it was this one. If you're looking for a good bedtime story or a good adventure book this is the book for you. The book is easy to understand so it's great for younger children. Although the book is a bit slow in the beginning as you read along the book captures your attention. The book also taught me a lot about Venice before I read it I had never even heard of Venice. While reading the book I learned little Italian phrases I also learned about different historical places in Venice.

Kayla Bason says

When sibling cross world's a wonderful fantasy about a family's trip to Venice changes drastically. The kids encounter magical beings that take them further into a wild quest. The strengths of this book are definitely the location and characters. The location allows a lot of different elements to get involved. For example, the characters have to take the water bus instead of taking the regular bus. They encounter everyday activities that we don't. The characters' attitudes keep the book going. They become more outgoing as they get involved in the magic of the story. Despite these very enjoyable elements, I was frustrated that some of the transitions make the book hard to understand. There is frequent movement between the present and a past narrative and sometimes I found this confusing. If you appreciate magical adventures and have a craving for a wild quest I think this is the book for you. It keeps you engaged and takes you to another place.

Joannah Keats says

I found this to be an unoriginal, confusing, and ineffective mash-up of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and *A Wrinkle In Time*. The similarities to TLWW were so pervasive that I found it distracting. There is not much here for kids to get excited about. The reading level is too high for the kids who might enjoy the story, and the kids at the appropriate reading level are unlikely to enjoy its over-the-top plot and characters.

Other than an alcoholic, binge-drinking, wine-obsessed faun who is a somewhat secondary character throughout the book, I did not recognize any other potential content issues that parents might object to.

Sara Bennett says

This was a book I picked up on a whim because the cover looked cool and I have this thing for Middle Grade fantasy. I just love it haha. While I had my doubts here and there this book did turn out to be cute and sweet and a nice adventure. There were parts where it seemed a little confusing or slow, but in the end it was a pretty good middle grade book. Definitely one that I would recommend to my siblings. (the main content was brief violence and magic)

Jessikah says

A children's fantasy novel that had so much potential effectively reveals itself as a mess.

Having read a few other middle grade fantasies set in the city of Venice (Water Mirror and The Undrowned Child to name some), I was eager to see what Baucom's magical vision of this ancient landscape. What I read was a tale that was influenced by C.S. Lewis but lacked the subtlety of his religious undertones. In fact, I would call the religious themes in this novel overtones, as they come across as awkward. They seem to insist upon themselves.

The story begins with three siblings. Jared, Shireen and Miranda. Jared and Shireen are adopted from India and Miranda is the biological daughter of their parents. The children are living in Venice with their professor father and mother who home school them. They are drawn into an odd bookshop where they are given an ancient text which talks about the Thousand and One Nights but is the story of a boy named Rashid who travels with his uncle. They are also "given" two magical rings and a magical die. The rings allow the girls to communicate with cats and bring the stone lions of Venice to life. The die allows Jared to call fourth characters in famous paintings. One of these are a faun named Silvio for instance. It also turns out that the siblings' names and descriptions are written in the book of Rashid... who is still somehow alive and under the influence of an evil christian preist from the time of the Crusades. Are you getting a headache yet?

Anyway, at this point there is a lot of oddly placed religious lipservice in the book. Jared, Shireen and Miranda are mentioned to say their prayers everynight. We don't get a sense that they feel any sort of connection to prayer, just that it is something they do. Also, the stone lion (Lorenzo il Piccolo) that Shireen commands talks about the Holy Virgin and the Father and the Son. Silvio the faun swears by the names of a bunch of Roman gods. We hear that Rashid is a Muslim and a talking cat mentions offhand and awkwardly that a bookseller who originally kept Rashid's book is a jew.

At first I thought maybe all of this wasn't central to the book until the themes just kept popping up. The Crusades are spoken of by the siblings' father as atrocious (which they were). When the siblings are united with Rashid and two other girls under the influence of the evil preist, one of the girls holds up a cross and asks if the children acknolege it. It all became too much.

When C.S. Lewis wove the tale of the resurrection into "The Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe", it was done so that the story of sacrifice was in the text, but the world of Narnia could be enjoyed as a secular fantasy as well. This just felt stiff and forced. More than that, the joining of Rashid's story with the story of the three siblings was so confusing at times, I had trouble wanting to suspend my disbelief. And in order to enjoy fantasy you really have to allow yourself to go with it.

I think that the author had two potentially good stories here. Maybe they didn't have to be told in the same book. Maybe they could have been plotted differently. However, if I am reading Christian literature, I would like a bit more warning before having it hit me in the face repeatedly. Aside from that, the story was just so confusing that I had trouble keeping track of what was going on.

Kevin says

When brothers and sisters embark on magical journey in Venice, you never really know what will transpire. This book is an interesting fantasy about a family that spends a semester in Venice, and the kids begin on a quest to help children hostages. This book is a great book to read and great for learning little bit of Italian. There are a lot of strengths and very few weaknesses in Through the Skylight. The clarity of this book is outstanding. Through the Skylight is very easy to read and to understand. The uneven pacing of the book is a weakness. Excessive details drag out the narrative, but the suspense keeps you wanting to read more.

Throughout the book the author highlights the importance of setting. Venice is a great backdrop for this story. The historical elements are a wonderful tribute to the book. the fact that the setting is in Venice brings light to many adventures described. Also it highlights the culture and the story they tried to solve.

Is it truly possible to connect the past with the present? Will Jared, Shireen, and Miranda work together to patch up broken hearts and save scared children/ Will they solve the the missing pieces to the puzzle and fulfill what has been written? The truth lies between the lines.

Kris says

Recommended for gr. 5-8. Three American siblings live in modern-day Venice. They each receive a small gift from a shopkeeper and strange things begin happening. Stone lions come to life, they have conversations with a cat, and creatures step out of paintings. This turns into an adventure fit for a storybook, and in fact, there is a book that seems to be telling their story. Another trio of children from Venice of the past show up, and the American children must put themselves into danger to save the others.

A good story, readable and captures the attention. Boys as well as girls will enjoy this.

Rochelle Sondaes says

Interesting story set in Venice. At times I loved it. Sometimes though it felt a bit forced. I was about 350 pages in before I started to get bored with the story. I do plan on ordering it once it is available in paperback mainly because I know my 8 year old self would have thought it was the best thing ever.

Laura says

A relatively strong version of the modern children go on an adventure genre: here, three siblings in modern

day Venice find a mysterious shop and the shopkeeper gives them the opportunity to take a turn at his sack of oddities. They pull out two rings and a die, all somehow magic and somehow integrated in a book about the *One Thousand and One Nights*. Thanks to these 'trinkets' and the book, Jared, Shireen and Miranda are drawn into an adventure that includes three children enchanted during the Middle Ages, St. George's dragon, a faun, talking cats and the stone lions of Venice coming to life.

While those may sound relatively quotidian to followers of this genre, they're brought together in a way that will engage readers. To my mind, it was better than *The Thief Lord*, which was supposed to be this sort of magical adventure!

ARC provided by publisher.

Kate says

This fascinating modern fantasy has overtones of C.S. Lewis at his best. Jared, Shireen, and Miranda are siblings whose father has taken a visiting professor position in Venice for a semester. While getting their bearings of the city, the three stumble upon an old junk shop, where they meet a mysterious old man. Seeming to know something the children don't, he gifts them with a trinket apiece from a mysterious bag along with a copy of the folktale classic *One Thousand and One Nights* in Latin. Soon, the children are involved in a fantastic romp through Venice along with a stone lion come to life, a faun who's stepped out of a painting, and another trio of children from another time.

Francesca, Maria, and Rashid are somewhat allegorical characters; the commentary they are meant to represent will be obvious to adult readers, but less so to target-aged middle-grade or YA readers. I loved this book not only for the flights of fancy it took, but also for the imaginative way Baucom used two vastly different contexts to his advantage. For the perceptive, mature middle-grade reader, this will be a delight... but don't read the inside jacket! It spoils a plot point that comes along later and really ruined my enjoyment of the early parts of the book because I was waiting for that plot point to crop up.

This book features a family formed through international adoption - Jared and Shireen were adopted from India, while Miranda is the white biological child of the siblings' parents. This is a point in a few places, but the issues of international adoption are mostly glossed over. Although Baucom describes Jared and Shireen as having brown skin, they are illustrated in cover and interior art as having a skintone roughly the same as Miranda's. Just thought I'd throw that out there in case anyone was looking for books that deal with this issue; although it's a part of this book, it wouldn't be my first pick for a child looking for characters to relate to.

Lauren Gatecliff says

I loved the way the story in this book was told, I got lost in it. I thought the author did an amazing job with the characters and setting it really spoke to me.

Keya Cureton says

A bedtime story deepens as siblings Jared, Shireen, and Miranda try to solve a problem from the past that has burst into the present. The main characters of the book are Jared, Shireen, and Miranda. An old Venetian shopkeeper unleashed a powerful magic upon them.

Thefts, kidnappings, and betrayals from centuries ago have endangered the lives of people in the present.

Now it is up to them to solve this mystery.

Through the Skylight is a mysterious adventure that is told at a leisurely pace, although at certain points of the book the reader gets a little lost. Other than that the book is well-written treatment of a great mystery.
