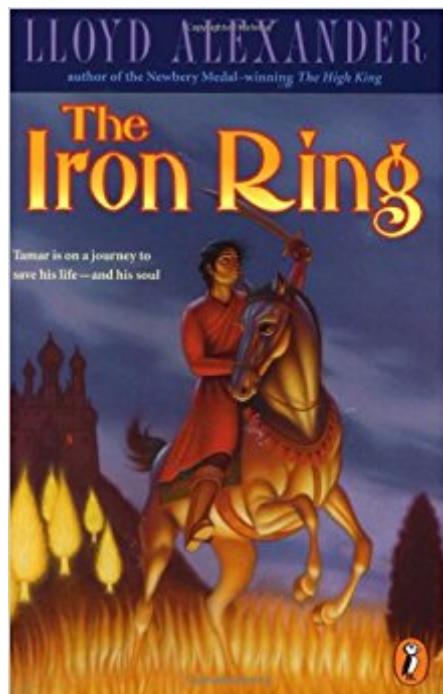


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# The Iron Ring



## **Synopsis**

When Tamar, the young king of Sundari, loses a dice game, he loses everything--his kingdom, its riches, and even the right to call his life his own. His bondage is symbolized by the iron ring that appears mysteriously on his finger. To Tamar, born to the warrior caste, honor is everything. So he sets out on a journey to make good on his debt--and even to give up his life if necessary. And that journey leads him into a world of magic, where animals can talk, the foolish are surprisingly wise, and danger awaits...

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 0680 (What's this?)

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

This semi-mystical epic adventure draws loosely on the great myths and literature of India. "The imaginative scope of the story and its philosophical complexities will make this an exciting journey for the reader," said PW. Ages 10-14. (July) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 5-9. Alexander's latest epic adventure is rooted in the mythology of ancient India. A losing game of chance with a mysterious stranger seems like a dream to young King Tamar, but the iron ring on his finger is a very real token that his life may be forfeit. A journey to the stranger's distant kingdom seems his only chance to discover the truth. Many adventures and diversions crop up along the way as Tamar gains some surprising companions, including a brave and beautiful

milkmaid, a cowardly eagle, and a wiley monkey king who used to be a man. The author's flexible style moves smoothly from comedy to tragedy and back again; from battle scenes to ridiculous situations, Alexander never loses the thread. Set within the action are small gems of poetry and folktales. The concept of dharma, or proper conduct, and the rigid caste system deeply affect Tamar's actions. Plot, characters, and setting all have their parts to play, but it is the tension set up among the lively characters and the cultural conventions binding them that create the structure of the story and lead inevitably to its conclusion. This wise and witty adventure can be enjoyed on many levels. ?Ruth S. Vose, San Francisco Public Library Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

The threads of this story are spun so neatly, and they weave together (some sooner, some later) to produce a well-crafted coming-of-age myth. Lloyd Alexander put so much care into this work of art, I was stunned to see that he had written so many other books. This seems like the life-labor of a dedicated storyteller. Reading the book is so satisfying, as the young king travels from prideful impetuous behavior into reasoned risk-taking into peaceful acceptance and maturity. Excellent, memorable characters and scenes, great use of foreshadowing throughout. The setting in India allows for some wonderful animal companions, all of whom have their own heroic characters to develop. Great, great book for boys. This is a coming of age novel they will never forget. Too bad about the cheesy new cover -- I read this with an older, more interesting cover with an India-looking illustration that shows all the animals in the story.

Lloyd Alexander has a great ability to take the style of the old legends and give them new life. This book reads like any familiar folk tale, though the Indian setting and the book's opening dream sequence lend a more mysterious mood over the book. Scholastically, it's not very weighty, though younger readers may find the themes of class, identity and honor worth contemplation. Like many adventure stories, The Iron Ring establishes the hero and the villain without much ambiguity. However, the book's setting in the birthplace of Buddhism and Hinduism sets the stage for some interesting explorations of truth and illusion as the hero wonders if he is fulfilling his destiny or forsaking reality for a dream. Furthermore, the young king gains a stronger understanding and respect for the lives of those outside the life of his small kingdom, as his perception of the world around him grows. If you demand historical accuracy and drink your philosophy strong, this book is not for you. But if you're looking for a good straight-up adventure story, Lloyd Alexander is your man.

Blast from my youth! I loved this book when I was a kid. I recommended it for young readers! Although I'm 26 and am enjoying it as well. Some concepts seem elementary (being a children's book), but the Morals are spot on!

Some people like to complain that Lloyd Alexander writes the same story over and over again under different guises. My response: so does the rest of the world. At least Mr. Alexander does a great job of it. Known for exploring worldwide folklore, Alexander takes to the world of India for this. He explores mystical gods and makes a wonderful and powerful social commentary on the caste system. It's the usual journey of growth and discovery, but that is always a great journey. I cry every time I read this, it touches me so. Excellent piece from the awesome Lloyd Alexander.

Yet another story from a master of fairy tale fables. A great read for anyone that wants a fun escape with characters that are relatable and real.

Shipped quick and Good Deal Thank you

This was a GREAT BOOK which I would recommend to anyone who loves to read books by Lloyd Alexander. This book was exciting. It had it: war, treachery, magic, and of course love. This book was not too graphic or gory in its battle scenes and was just right in its magic parts which even included a talking monkey. Of course Lloyd Alexander spiced it up with a surprise ending. I would highly RECOMMEND this book! It is both very funny and very exciting. If you like Lloyd Alexander, this book is definitely for you. If you want to be sitting down for a while, get this book and find somewhere comfy to read because you won't be able to put it down.

As he did with the Prydain Chronicles, "The Arkadians" and "The Remarkable Journey of Prince Jen," in this book Lloyd Alexander takes a set of cultural myths and legends, and weaves them together into a remarkably seamless fantasy adventure. The strange king Jaya arrives in the kingdom of Sundari, and in an audience with young King Tamar, beats him in a game of dice. Tamar loses more than the game -- his life is now Jaya's. Then he wakes up, with no sign of Jaya, and an iron ring on his finger. Honor demands that he travel to Jaya and offer his life, and despite the wishes of the wise old Rajaswami, he sets out. Along the way, Tamar encounters first a thieving monkey who was once a man, a quirky wise-man, and a beautiful gopi (cowgirl) Mirri, with whom he

falls in love. But soon Tamar's internal struggle becomes even more pronounced: He learns of a villainous noble who is threatening all of them. Many of Lloyd Alexander's books have a formula cast: a young hero with a lesson to learn, a smart heroine, a quirky older man, and usually a few lovable animal sidekicks. Here it works very well. Alexander also includes an unusual commentary on the Indian caste system, on how unfair it is. Tamar goes from horror at just looking at one of the chandala ("the lowest of the low") to calling one of them his friend; his true friends don't care about his supposedly contaminated state, because they care more about him than about castes. And Alexander's look at honor and the keeping of one's word is also amazing. The plotting is exceptionally intricate -- Alexander is adept at giving little twists and unexpected turns in his plots, but "Iron Ring" may be the most complex book he's yet written. His writing isn't quite as detailed as some of his other books, but the dialogue is still enjoyable and well-written. Perhaps my only quibble is that ALL the animals talked, not just the once-human ones, or the really unusual ones. Tamar is a classic Alexander hero -- he has a lot to learn, but he's enthusiastic, good-hearted and likable. His hesitation to stay with Mirri is also well-written, since his life belongs to Jaya. Mirri herself is a sharp, no-nonsense heroine that readers will like; Rajaswami is a sweet old guy who is completely loyal to Tamar. Then there is Hashkat, the thieving, lazy monkey who is surprisingly loyal, and Garuda, the ugliest and most annoying eagle imaginable. "The Iron Ring" is among Alexander's finest fantasy books, melding myth with his own storyline and likable characters. Fans of romantic, adventurous epic stories will love this one.

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