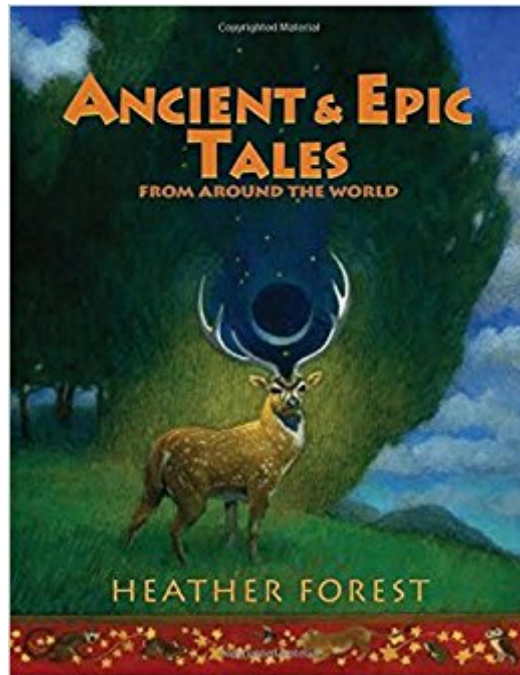


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# Ancient And Epic Tales: From Around The World



## Synopsis

An award-winning collection of ancient tales and adventure. Heather Forest's artful prose and keen curatorial selection brings an array of ancient tales of adventure, quests, and heroics to life for modern readers. This multicultural anthology presents pivotal episodes from epic tales such as Gilgamesh, Beowulf, the Odyssey, the Ramayana, and more. The collection illuminates large-scale narratives that were passed on and preserved through the oral tradition long before being captured in written form by early scribes. With the publication of *Ancient and Epic Tales*, Heather completes her long awaited trilogy of *Tales From Around the World* including *Wonder Tales* and *Wisdom Tales*. These epic narratives remain relevant today as they provide insights into the complexity of human relationships and the intimate, personal journey of anyone seeking to understand the meaning of life. This collection of timeless stories includes Norse legends, Greek myths, Japanese folktales, Persian stories, Irish Ballads and Chinese lore. Offering a global overview, this anthology of concise retellings also provides endnotes with cultural and historical background to inspire readers' further inquiry into these enduring tales.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 9 and up

Grade Level: 3 - 5

## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-7-This mix of 29 short portions of myths, fables, and folktales will excite interest. Forest's

selection, documentation, and skillful storytelling represent a monumental expertise. In the introduction, Forest explains that with such a plethora of material spanning centuries and continents, it was certainly a challenging selection process. She decided initially to narrow it down to stories with lively plots and characters and themes relevant to contemporary life, going on to then single out pivotal, attention-grabbing moments, within those selected tales as a way to encourage readers to seek out the full text. These entries present a mix of ancient, modern, and contemporary settings, and there are a large number of stories from countries such as Anatolia, China, Egypt, Greece, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Mesoamerica, Mesopotamia, Persia, Rome, and South America. Each is a short taste of the epic it represents, with familiar tales (Odysseus outwitting the Cyclops; Thor retrieving his hammer) and lesser-known ones (Hunahpu and Xbalanque bringing the world corn; Finn MacCoul the giant). The magical text would have benefited from some matching illustrations. VERDICT Get one copy and hope for an audio edition.-Nancy Call, Santa Cruz Public Libraries, Aptos, CA (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

If you have stopped by my blog before, you may have noticed that I am a sucker for folktales and fables--plus that cover. That cover will suck you in picking it up. I am extremely fascinated with the stories of other cultures. It is amazing how many of the mythological explanations for the universe around us are similar. Almost every single culture I have come across has a flood story. While I initially fell in love with folktales learning about my English roots, I found an increasing similarity of stories around the world. Then, I started researching biblical stories and tying them together with oral stories of isolated cultures. I began to have a strong feeling that what I had always dismissed as a child must have some foundation in truth. Heather Forest also has an interest in folktales and fables of the world. She has spent years researching these tales. Many have begun as oral histories passed from teacher to disciple for generations before ever being recorded on hard medium. As any person who has played telephone as a child, you will realize how distorted this has made many of the tales. What Ms. Forest is attempting to accomplish with this collection is a middle ground for the stories. She has taken all the renditions she has uncovered over the years and seen where the picture overlaps and trimmed away the strands that have diverged. She also included a little narrative to flesh out the protagonists like any disciple of folktales would to make the rendition her own. This doesn't bother me in the way alternative history gives narrative to Einstein or others because, while I have begun to believe these ancient historical figures may have indeed been a factual part of our history, many stories were created by the people to explain life and the gods to

children. Their narrative started out as fiction; so it can remain fiction. These collected stories are a quick read and well worth it. All the cultures are represented and would make an excellent beginning collection for children. They will be able to get a sense for the vastness of the world in just one book. Hopefully collections like this can keep the integrity of folktales alive for many generations to come. (Star Bookworm)

This a beautifully written book of epic tales from around the world. Some, including Aesop's Fables, or Sir Gawain and the Green Knight were familiar to me, but there were several that were new to me, such as Mwindo's journey, an African tale. It is a pleasure reread the familiar tales as well as the new. The tales are timeless in the sense that they are still relevant today, touching on life's lessons in an engaging and vibrant way. The stories are evocatively retold in an accessible style, equally enjoyable for adult or older child. I like to collect tales of wisdom and this is certainly one worth having on the shelf. (Janey Colbourne Heartseer)

There's a reason why old tales continue to be told: old tales are amazing. This is a collection of what might be said to be the best stories in the world. Lots of them I knew because I've read them in full, like The Odyssey and Beowulf and Aesop's Fables, but many of them were stories I've heard of but never read, like One Thousand and One Nights and Gilgamesh, and still more were stories I've never even heard of, like The Kojiki from Japan and The Ramayana from India. Still, every story was excellent, well told and resonant. Don't buy this book for its cover. Don't buy this book for its illustrations. Buy this book for the stories. (Deb Nance Readerbuzz)

Excellent in every way! readable and alive with wonderful selections from the great epics. Makes you want to read them all. I also loved the detailed sources. This book is a must to storytellers and story lovers.

Great!

REVIEW: Forest, Heather ANCIENT AND EPIC TALES: From Around the World August House, 2016

As a spoon stops a pot from boiling over, let my words stir your heart

Heather Forest has gathered tales, and tales within tales, from many different cultures, historical periods and systems of belief in one intriguing collection. Her choices feel motivated by an abiding trust that wisdom and peace can be constantly uncovered in our lives through sharing great stories. The power of a story lays in how it is told, to when it is told, and who hears it. ANCIENT AND EPIC TALES appears at the right moment, written with ease and elegance, and accessible to young and old. Heather Forest is an advocate for humor, kindness, courage, patience, wisdom, spiritual

knowledge and love The offering of fragments of larger stories makes us interested in knowing more about the great oral literatures of the world, and through the meaningful experiences manifest in each tale, our longing itself is activated. Longing to know more, to imagine, and to feel is the very essence of the storyteller's intention and art.. What do we long for if not to be filled with a sense of belonging to the world ,engaged and alive. ANCIENT AND EPIC TALES provides a storied manual for how to be a human being , in a diverse world with a long history, in troubled times, in the present. The most symbolic or fantastical tales that endure are always about us human beings; how we function in the world in relationship to our minds and hearts, each other, nature, spirit and the world around us. Heather has reached back to some of the oldest recorded stories known. She has chosen parts of the whole epic and retold them with clarity in her own words. We are being called from a voice in the past and by a true teller in the present to not forget who we are. As citizens of the world. And, to remember how to repair what goes out of balance over and over again.; how to be kind to one another and all the creatures who share our planet. Everything thrived, the moment that anger departed. The book begins with a retelling from the epic of Gilgamesh. We are thrust into loss and grief in order to discover the truth of impermanence and the existence of the restorative magic in the world as our task. Then we read a rarely shared story from the cuneiform tablets of Hattusas; a part of a Hittite myth; over 3500 years old. Through this story we are given the instruction that will carry us, like a boat of wisdom, a cradle of loving kindness, throughout all the tales and our own daily lives. Let your heart and soul become untangled. Taste the sesame seed and ripe fig. Be comforted by sweet flavor. Just as olives hold oil and grapes hold wine, You can hold goodness. I loved the little tale of Telepinu, the god of fertility. The deity of Fertility is described as a male. We know now that oldest goddesses were the stewards of fertility. It is known that their power was stolen, revisioned, banished or maligned. In this tale, the God of Fertility, who has power but cannot control his own emotions, is healed when receiving instructions from a Goddess . Her appearance is announced: Lightning flashed. And Thunder rolled. It is She who informs him of the need to let go. She teaches him (and hence, us) to learn to transform the energy of anger in order to restore abundance and satisfaction. These two tales prepare us for the tales of King Solomon: What is small is of immense importance, and the capacity to discern between what appears as real from what is real empowers us with humor and skill. Every choice of story that Heather has made feeds us in the present. In this digital speedy world what can be more helpful than to remember with penetrating clarity that we have to use our innate insight and direct perception if we are to live in the world as it is, rather than as hoped for or assumed. These are

clues given throughout about the path of peace. The stories are simply written. Any one can find satisfaction in this collection. It is not a scholarly text but an offering from the generous heart of one of our best storytellers. For those who seek deeper meanings there are references about how to find full versions, and studies. The simplicity is however disarming. It is a roadmap of intention for how to go deeper if we are patient. *ANCIENT TALES AND EPICS* is a book to travel with; to leave at the side of one's bed or set open on a coffee table. It is great collection to inspire meaningful conversations. A story, as opposed to an explanation or a moral lesson, allows us to experience all sides of a dilemma within ourselves which builds character and compassion. In a classroom, causes and consequences, cultures and ideas can be explored. And, if there is a lesson to be learned, the story provides a way of reflection without pointing out or punishing anyone; context, as well as a chance as said above to become both sides of the problem and solution. Hence, the book is dedicated to our intelligence, an innate ability to change, and a provocation to share our lives, regardless of what we have done or not understood. *THE MILK OF A LIONESSE* is one of my favorite tales. It holds us enthralled as we recognize that fear has to be acknowledged; then, little by little we can feed what we fear with kindness; not destroy ourselves or others in an attempt to get rid of the unfamiliar or uncomfortable. Many of the stories take us, like this, step by step, helping us overcome obstacles. At a time when quick fix solutions, reactions and opinions are paraded as facts, these tales antidote impatience and disappointment. The included tales are sometimes hilarious. I loved the story told by Scheherazad about the unusual death of the Court Jester, a hunchback, and his accumulating murderers. Character's foolishnesses and guilt, without investigation, wreaked havoc, produced zany strategies, until each person, trying to hide their crime, was motivated to tell the truth. Scheherezad is, like Heather, a master teller of tales. She bundled stories together from throughout the world and engaged a King nightly. She changed the cruel King to a kind King. Heat first commented on the behavior of every witless and cruel ruler in the tales, until tempered and strengthened by hearing stories, he gained the courage and insight to see himself in each episode. Scheherazad's weapons were storytelling and psychological insight. It is said that her voice was as rich as a flock of doves in her throat. These are the tools of our author/ teller. Heather Forest slays our impatience with image and event. She enriches us with stories, sending us back to our every day lives refreshed and informed. The voice of the storyteller is heard on each page. Suddenly we are swept up in another they are useful for entertainment, or instruction. One of my favorite story's, a surprise tale that I had never heard before, is the last in the book. Just as the first story started with loss and retrieved our hope again, the final tale begins with the making of the world, the destruction and the renewal of the earth. The essential

issue of the survival of the earth at present, compromised by climate change, is expressed with a sense of determination and solace through the events of this tale. The God of the story, Makunaima planted a world tree so there would be enough food for everyone,. Through the antics of selfish animals, as in so many great tales the earth meant to support all of life, is destroyed; greed , individualism and forgetting abounds. In the great kindness of a compassionate teller of tales - more interested in the story as activity of inspiration than as a museum text, - we collaborate through our hearing the story in bringing the world back to life. Through this gracious gift of stories, Heather keeps the fire of faith burning; reminding us that if we remember to tell and listen to stories we may lessen the troubles of the world and replenish our lives with joy. Thank you Heather Forest for the love and the work! Laura Simms July 2016

A review by Susan Klein, M.Ed., storyteller, author, narrative consultant and presentation coach  
©2016 Ancient and Epic Tales affords the reader an opportunity to bask in the scholarly endeavors of long-time, and much revered American minstrel and storyteller Dr. Heather Forest as she celebrates world cultures through the richness of some of their oldest and most-treasured stories. Dr. Forest's retellings retain the essence of the ancients while opening a welcoming pathway into texts and stories that, to some, may have seemed too daunting to pursue. Whether traveling alongside Odysseus of the Greeks or Gilgamesh of the Sumerians, Ireland's Finn MacCoul's sharp-witted wife Oonagh or Mulan of China, the reader is swept into a global journey, continent by continent, through an inviting tale with evocative imagery  
drawn by this pre-eminent storyteller. The fresh versions of these tales alone are a gift; but a deeper treasure lies at the end of the book's copious detailed notes of the history of the stories and the cultural context wherein these stories were told in the oral tradition long before they were captured in print are coupled with a wealth of cited sources. To a lover of tales, this book is a marvelous dessert following Dr. Forest's first two editions in the trilogy, Wisdom Tales and Wonder Tales. To a contemporary storyteller, Ancient and Epic Tales is a sumptuous feast of tantalizing imagery, heroic adventures, and a bountiful cache of historical information and sources from which to launch one's own research. Dr. Forest's generosity in providing a story-by-story list of sources affords the modern storyteller a solid platform from which to begin, saving following tellers enormous research time. Ancient and Epic Tales will no doubt inspire you to add Dr. Forest's Wisdom Tales and Wonder Tales to your personal library as well to complete this lovely trilogy which celebrates the particular and global imagination.

We received this book to give an honest review. K didn't seem as interested in this book like I was. I love reading about myths and folk lore that has been passed on through the ages of time. I think the reason K didn't really enjoy the book as much was because it was so long and it was a bit more advanced for him. The stories vary from Beowulf, to The Green Man (which that was one story that K did like a bit), there are stories from India which was neat. So it was not just Greek mythology but tales like it says in the title from around the world. I would say this book would be better for kids maybe in the 5th grade and up or those that really like story telling and folk lore. Questions and Answers with K1. Did you like the book in general? "Not really I didn't know much of what was going on and it was really long." 2. Did you have a favorite story? "Yes, I really like the Green Man and how he gave the knight a test"

From start to finish, a treasure. The selections, the retellings, and above all, the heart and knowledge that have gone into this book make it an important addition to any bookshelf and a wonderful gift. With storytellers like Heather Forest keeping tales like these alive, we can rest assured that our human legacy is well taken care of. I love it!

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