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First Test (Protector Of The Small #1)



Synopsis

Tamora Pierce returns to the land of Tortall with a heroine who refuses to quit in this first book in the #1 New York Times bestselling Protector of the Small series. Ten years after knighthood training was opened to both males and females, no girl has been brave enough to try. But knighthood is Keladry's one true desire, and so she steps forward to put herself to the test. Up against the traditional hazing of pages and a grueling schedule, Kel faces one roadblock that seems insurmountable: Lord Wyldon, the training master of pages and squires. He is absolutely against girls becoming knights. So while he is forced to train her, Wyldon puts her on a probationary trial period that no male page has ever had to endure. Further set apart from her fellow trainees, Kel's path to knighthood is now that much harder. But she is determined to try, and she's making friends in the most unlikely places. One thing is for sure, Kel is not a girl to underestimate. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Ten-year-old Keladry wants to be a knight like her hero Alanna the Lioness. After she rescues some kittens from a spidren monster, she becomes more determined than ever to go to knighthood-training school, so she can learn how to protect the weak and small. Kel is the first girl page since Alanna (who was disguised as a boy at the time), and the odds seem to be against her:

The training master thinks girls shouldn't be knights; some of the boys play vicious practical jokes on her, trying to get her to drop out. Kel shows her courage when she is the first student to stand up to the school bullies. As always in Tamora Pierce's fantasies, there are plenty of good, likable characters, such as the Shang Wildcat, Daine (who converses with animals), King Jonathan, the mage Numair, good old Sir Myles, Neal of Queenscove, and Lord Raoul. And then there are the animals: Kel's faithful horse, Peachblossom, and the sparrow Crown and her flock, who prove quite dangerous to Kel's enemies. There are some exciting confrontations with immortal monsters. "First Test" is the first book in Ms. Pierce's third Tortallan series, Protector of the Small, and it's just as much fun as the two earlier series. I'm now looking forward to reading the next book, "Page."

I thought this book was great. Some people have been complaining about the lack of involvement from characters in previous books, but them staying in the background helps to make this book original, not just restating previous books. Also, there are some reviewers asking where Kitten is, but they must not have read "In the Realms of the Gods" very carefully, because in it Diamondflame takes her back with him to the dragonlands. The question I agree the most with is, Didn't Princess Kalasin say she wanted to be a knight? Where is she? Since Roald is an older page and Kally is a year younger, she ought to be a page the same year as Kel, but there's no sign of her. I suppose the author thought it wouldn't be the same if there were two girls, but she still could have offered a reason why Kally wasn't there instead of pretending she doesn't exist. Some people have claimed that there wasn't any excitement. I guess they somehow missed the spidren hunt, the fights, the weighted lance, and other parts. There's also the mystery of the anonymous gift-giver, though I'm pretty sure I know who it is. I won't spoil it for those who haven't, however. I like that Kel is way different from either Alanna or Daine. In fact, she and Alanna are in many respects complete opposites. Of all Ms. Pierce's characters, I guess she most resembles Daja (of Circle of Magic), or Raoul, Alanna's friend from her days as page and squire. One thing: we really didn't get to know Roald, I suppose because Ms. Pierce didn't want to repeat lady knight/heir of throne friendship. On the whole, this book was a good read, my only real regret being that it was over too soon. I would have liked to read Joren's reaction to the Stump's final decision. I can't wait for the next one to come out, speaking of which, why is Ms. Pierce starting a new series? That will be wonderful, but finish this one first! Keep up the good work, whichever series, though!

Ever since I read this book (about 5 months ago) I've been waiting with baited breath to find out what happens. It starts off Keladry(Kel) of Mindelan has just decided to become a knight. Ever since

Alanna (Lioness Quartet) became King's Champion, it has been legal for girls to become knights. So against the better judgement of Lord Wyldon, the guy in charge of the training, she is accepted. The only catch is Alanna is to have NO contact with her. And Kel is on probation unlike any boy. After Kel gets to the palace no one wants to be seen dead with her except Neal, Duke Baird's son. Kel learns to deal with bullies, unfair treatment and fear. It's a really great book! The reason I gave it 4 stars instead of 5 was it wasn't written like the Alanna and Daine books. It's more like the Circle of Magic books, kind of young seeming. It's still a great read though!

All right, I will admit that this was not one of Tamora Pierce's best books, and I should know, because I've read them all (Song of the Lioness, Immortals, Circle of Magic-which sucked). And this was not one of her best. It was interesting, to see someone who had no magic whatsoever, deal with people the normal way. You know, without turning them into trees, or throwing bolts of lightning on them. Kel was a very unique person, whose only fault, in my opinion, was that she was too stuck on the Yamani Isles way of life. Hey, if she loves them so much, she can go back, right? This book did provide a good continuation of the Immortals series, and gave us readers (who still haven't recovered from the abrupt cutoff in Realms of the Gods) a glimpse of what happened between Daine and Numair (I mean the fact that she's sleeping with him kinda gives you a hint!). It is nice to return to our beloved Tortall, and join Kel (who seems much older than 10 years old) and her friends (I only remember Neal, the others were just unnecessary) battle everyday life.

In fantasy, generally, the idea of girl turned warrior is overdone, and most of the time, very badly done. One main exception was the entire Song of the Lioness quartet, which I highly recommend reading before First Test. So, when I heard Tamora Pierce had written another book about a female knight - I looked to it with high expectations. Mostly, this book lives up to the previous Song of the Lioness quartet...in potential at least. Keladry is not as memorable a character as Alanna, and it is reading the surrounding characters that makes the book worthwhile. The minor characters and lesser protagonists have made much more of an impact in my mind than Keladry. The story at times is trite - but I won't hold that against it, that occurs in the best of the best fantasy and especially in 'young adult' reads. I mean, what can you do differently in a book about warrior training and facing difficulties with bullies, etc? Yet, despite that, it holds enough suspense that I am eagerly awaiting the next addition to the series. Overall, this book is worthwhile reading (especially since you get to see Alanna, Daine, and Numair among others again!), but I wouldn't classify it among Pierce's best.

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