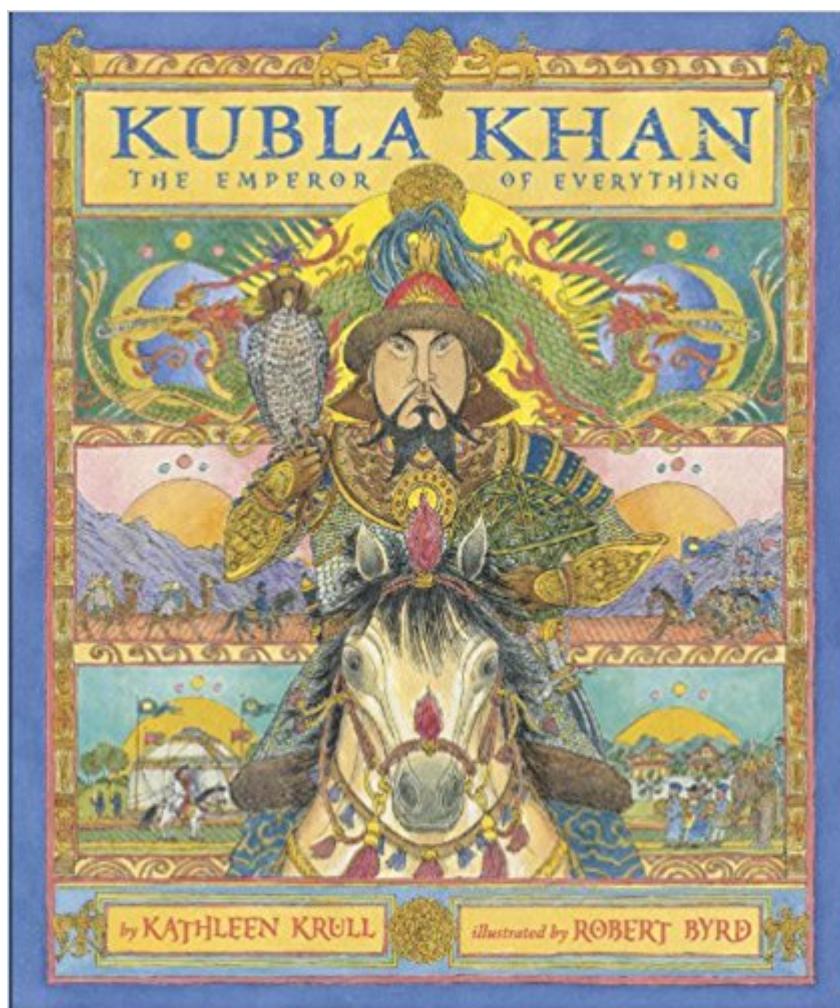


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Kubla Khan: The Emperor Of Everything



Synopsis

Always cast in a supporting role in the many books about Marco Polo, the great Kubla Khan now takes center stage in a splendid picture-book biography. He is a wonderful subject-a man who liked to live large, building the imperial city of Beijing from scratch, siring a hundred children, throwing birthday bashes for 40,000 guests. He ruled over the greatest empire of the time, one that was lightyears ahead of Western civilization in terms of the arts, sciences, and technology. With astonishingly beautiful and detailed illustrations by Robert Byrd and a clever text by Kathleen Krull, this portrait finally gives Kubla Khan his due.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Gr 3-6 Krull's clear and lively text describes Kubla Khan's life beginning with his earliest days, when he shot his first rabbit. According to legend, under his grandfather Genghis Khan's guidance, he ate a mixture of its meat and his own blood in a ritual to bring him luck and declare him "worthy of the hunt." During Kubla's reign, he became the first Emperor of the Yuan dynasty. To keep this vast area in check, he knew he would have to live in China and built a city worthy of an emperor. This lavish capital became Beijing. Krull depicts her subject as a wise, if not beloved, ruler. She includes an adequate bibliography with materials for both adults and young readers, but what she makes clear in her note is the relatively scant availability of primary sources.

Much of what we know is derived from the fairly unreliable writings of Marco Polo. The colorful and appealing artwork integrates well with the text—*the* illustrator has also done significant research. Some portraits of Kubla Khan exist, both Chinese and European, but whether they are accurate is unclear. Byrd relied on the work of Eastern artists to inform his art so that the illustrations themselves echo what one may find in Chinese art and Mongolian design of the period. Little has been written for young readers about Kubla Khan, and this is a worthy addition for all collections. Barbara Scotto, Children's Literature New England, Brookline, MA © Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

It's a tricky task to re-create the life of the famed Mongolian ruler, as reliable information on the man is scanty, but Krull assembles a convincingly grand impression of Kubla Khan and his vast accomplishments. The grandson of the warlord Genghis Khan, Kubla would eventually become the first emperor of China—*the* Yuan dynasty, and a remarkably enlightened one, stressing knowledge, the arts, and quality of life (though he wasn't above resorting to some serious savagery during his ascendancy). The grandiosity of his reign is well depicted in Byrd's Eastern-style artwork, which provides a subtle buttress to the narrative arc, from the earthy tones of Kubla's nomadic childhood to the regal coloring and intricate designs of his luxurious reign to the husky sunset of his final years. Krull underscores Kubla's worldwide significance by extrapolating how his meeting with Marco Polo helped spark the European age of exploration. A list of sources—with those best suited for young readers handily denoted—concludes the book, a solid choice for reports that is also scintillating enough for pleasure reading. Grades 3-5.

--Ian Chipman

I enjoy reading books about the past, but most of what I've read in both children's and adult books has focused on the American experience. So I was thrilled to hear about this book. Kubla Khan was a man of contradictions. A just ruler under most conditions, his armies destroyed many villages, massacring any who refused to become part of Khan's growing empire. It was interesting to read about Kubla's mother who was determined to have her children make a mark in the world and did everything in her power to provide them with a chance to do so. Clearly a man of great intelligence and leadership ability, Khan left a mark that can still be seen in Asia today. One thing I found especially fascinating was how involved in his life, his mother, and second wife were. In a time where women were seen as inferior and incompetent, these women had a big impact on Khan's life, personal and professional. The book is too long for a short read-a-loud, but there is plenty of detail

for discussion. The illustrations are very detailed as well as colorful and bright. The illustrations compliment the text beautifully. I highly recommend this book for those who enjoy reading about the world.

World history is filled with Asian emperors who controlled vast realms but very few of them resonate in the West. How much does the average educated American know about Babur or Tamerlane? With the exception of Kubla Khan, I doubt most people could name a single Chinese Emperor. Yet Kubla Khan reaches out through the centuries because of his relationship with Marco Polo. Without the Venetian traveller, he would join the ranks of other obscure Mongolians. Kathleen Krull is a solid writer and she does a very good job of touching on the highlights of Kubla Khan's long reign. The scope of his Empire and the luxury of his Court stand in wonderful contrast to the European monarchs of the time. In our current century where we are now experiencing the rise of Asia, it is important for children to see that the West was not always the dominate region of the World. My only problem with this book is the eccentric illustration style of Robert Byrd. There is a psychedelic aspect to his illustrations that is not quite fitting in a children's history book. Nevertheless, this is a good book and I would recommend it.

Nice book for smaller children.

Beautiful book, well written and most interesting for the children and myself. loved the illustrations!

We LOVED the illustrations in this book and really enjoyed learning more about the Mongol Empire. Great for my 2nd and 3rd grader!

should have looked into the book more, was for a young person, child,

I read this book and I was amazed. How is it possible that a book can be that good. It has awesomely great pictures and written in a creative way.

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