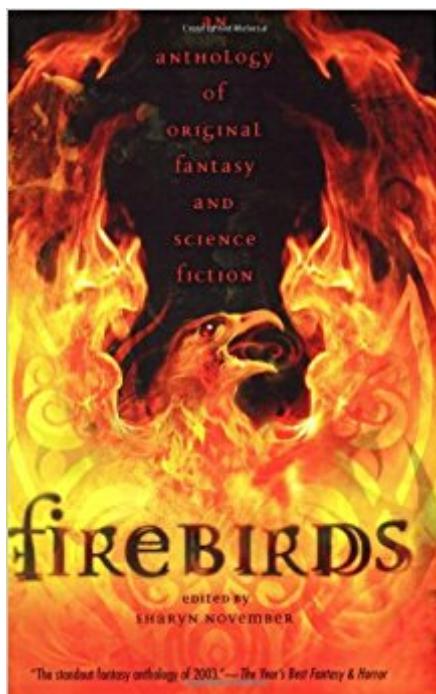


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Firebirds: An Anthology Of Original Fantasy And Science Fiction



Synopsis

Firebirds is more than simply an anthology -- it is a celebration of wonderful writing. It gathers together sixteen original stories by some of today's finest writers of fantasy and science fiction. Together, they have won virtually every major prize -- from the National Book Award to the World Fantasy Award to the Newbery Medal -- and have made best-seller lists worldwide. These authors, including Lloyd Alexander (*The Chronicles of Prydain*), Diana Wynne Jones (*The Merlin Conspiracy*), Garth Nix (*The Abhorsen Trilogy*), Patricia A. McKillip (*Ombria in Shadow*), Meredith Ann Pierce (*The Darkangel Trilogy*), and Nancy Farmer (*The House of the Scorpion*), each with his or her own inimitable style, tell stories that will entertain, provoke, startle, amuse, and resonate long after the last page has been turned. The writers featured in Firebirds all share a connection to Firebird Books, an imprint that is dedicated to publishing the best fantasy and science fiction for teenage and adult readers.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up-Teens will find much to savor and celebrate in this dazzling collection of 16 short stories by some of the best fantasy writers around. A biographical sketch and note from each one follows every selection. The collection starts off with Delia Sherman's "Cotillion," a luscious and romantic

version of "Tam Lin" set in Manhattan, 1969. Diana Wynne Jones's "Little Dot" will charm anyone who has ever loved a cat. Kara Dalkey elegantly retells Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen" in "The Lady of the Ice Garden," and fans of Sherwood Smith's Crown Duel (Harcourt, 1997) will find great pleasure in "Beauty," his charming tale of one of Meliara and Shevraeth's children. Nancy Springer slyly twists the movers and shakers of the world in "Mariposa," a comic tale about a woman looking for her soul. An adaptation of the folksong "The Black Fox" by Emma Bull is complemented by Charles Vess's fine graphic interpretation. "The Baby in the Night Deposit Box" by Megan Whalen Turner is a sweetly daffy look at how evil can be beaten with rules and regulations. In Lloyd Alexander's devastating "Max Mondrosch," a man tries to do everything in his power to get by and still fails utterly. The most disturbing story in the collection, however, is Garth Nix's "Hope Chest," in which innocent Alice May is saddled with the task of saving her family and her town from the creeping shadow of evil. A first-class collection. Patricia A. Dollisch, DeKalb County Public Library, Decatur, GA
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Gr. 7-12. The only theme in this gorgeous tapestry of a collection is that all the authors are part of the Firebird imprint. The 16 stories are richly romantic in the broadest sense, and they effortlessly transport readers. Delia Sherman's opening "Cotillion" evokes the spell of lute music and New York City in 1969; Garth Nix's creepy "Hope Chest" is a Western stand-alone with a very unusual sheriff; Michael Cadnum and Meredith Ann Pierce turn old stories inside out. There's a cat tale (Diana Wynne Jones), and an odd changeling tale (Nancy Farmer), and a graphic novel by Emma Bull and Charles Vess. Nancy Springer takes a bemused and ironic look at what might happen when a girl wants her soul back. So many beguiling tales in one package make this a real find. GraceAnne DeCandido
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Great book full of very interesting stories. Perfect for me since I love fiction and fantasy.

I was given the hardcover as a gift years ago and thoroughly enjoyed it. Just got the paperback as a gift for a friend. The haunted house story and the retelling of "The Snow Queen" as an allegory for toxic masculinity in militarized Japan were worth the price of admission alone.

This is one of the better anthologies I've read. All anthologies are something of a mixed bag. The

reader's taste very seldom meshes exactly with the editor's, or the editor has had to make some compromises along the way. *Firebirds* is substantially above average. The book is helped, of course, by having some very big names in SFF - Lloyd Alexander, Patricia A. McKillip, Garth Nix, to name a few. Aside from her first couple of books, I've never read anything by McKillip that wasn't terrific, and that's true here. The value of anthologies is in introducing readers to new authors. Here, I read a story ("Beauty") by Sherwood Smith, an author I'd never heard of. I was struck by how well developed the world was for a short story. It turns out that's because it is a well developed world. But I nonetheless immediately went out and bought the related novel, *A Crown Duel*. I'll be looking up Nancy Farmer as well. But this anthology also has some other surprises. "Max Mondrosch" was a startling departure from the Lloyd Alexander of the *Chronicles of Prydain*, but no less good because of it. The editor says she built the book around a graphic novel by Emma Bull and Charles Vess, and I looked forward to it. I'm sorry to say that that story is by far the weakest in the book. Happily, almost all the other stories range from good to excellent. In short, well worth picking up.

Firebirds is another masterpiece of editing by Sharyn November. I've heard a lot about the horror that is the slush pile, but people like Sharyn seem to keep finding literary gold. Sure, they're supposedly for kids age 12 to 18, but I tend to think that kids that age are better described as "people", and *Firebirds* is an excellent book for people (and if you're reading this, odds are that you are one). I picked up this anthology because it has a Nina Kiriki Hoffman story in it, and she's one of the few authors for whom I am still something of a raving fan. I read that one first. :)"*Flotsam*" by Nina Kiriki Hoffman is a story about a young boy from another land who winds up in ours and the people that help him out. It's a formula that's been done before, but you know, so was "Fear Street" and Nina Kiriki Hoffman managed to write three stories in that trope that were new. She managed to do the same here. What's particularly nice here is that, while there is magic, it's not particularly magical. Though astonishing to the people that have not previously seen it, it's nothing special to the people doing the magic."*Cotillion*" by Delia Sherman is a remarkably (albeit lantern-hung) variant of Tam Lin. There's nothing very special here, which was surprising, as I generally enjoy her work. Then I got to the end, and it ended correctly, even though it broke the pattern. I appreciate that a lot."*The Baby in the Night Deposit Box*" by Megan Whalen Turner was wonderful. I shant bore you with a plot-based retelling, so let me just say that it's a story about a small town and their collective love for a child. I mean, sure there's a fairy war with goblins, enslavement and death as well as buracracy on many levels, but that stuff's not important. Really, it's all about love and bunnies... as well it should be."*Beauty*" by Sherwood Smith felt strange. It was like reading a story

that was only half-told. As I read it, I thought that it was a vehicle for a bit of philosophy on pretty people and rightness of action. Then, when I got to the end and read the Author's Note, I saw that it was a sequel of sorts to Crown Duel. It sorta stands on it's own, but I suspect that I would have liked it better had I read the other book first."Mariposa" by Nancy Springer is a story that needed to be written. It's very good and addresses a common social problem in a very matter-of-fact and unusual way. This is one of those that is definitely aimed at the 12-18 age range, but also serves as a good reminder for those of us who are a wee bit older."Max Mondrosch" by Lloyd Alexander is horrifying and nightmarish and should not be read. Really, get out your tape and stick these pages together. Put a PostIt note on the front of the story with the note "Do not open until economy has improved." You'll thank me later. (Oh yeah, it's really good, you just don't want to read it.)"The Fall of Ys" by Meredith Ann Pierce really requires knowledge of Celtic myth. This is one of those stories that should really stand on it's own, but really doesn't. It would be better if it were framed as a story within a story, so that the traditional myth could be briefly retold than this story could be told from a "what really happened" perspective. Maybe there wasn't enough space to do it that way, I don't know. In the end, it was somewhat disappointing."Medusa" by Michael Cadnum was another story that requires knowledge of myth. However, I think that this story still permeates our mainstream culture, so that's OK. Unlike many retellings, it really dwells on the concept that the Greek gods really don't care about humans, so I applaud its historical accuracy as well as the way that it twists the form just enough to resolve appropriately for modern audiences."The Black Fox" by Emma Bull and Charles Vess is a surprise comic book! Like most of Emma's work, it's well researched and well told. Like most of Charles's work, it's very well drawn and annoyingly lettered. I mean, sure the lettering is beautiful, but it's a little harder to read than the more classic style. Maybe it's just what I'm used to, I don't know. Anyway, it's a good retelling of a classic folk song and again tweaked so as to be accessible to modern readers. I enjoyed it. "Byndley" by Patricia A. McKillip is pretty much a classic McKillip story. The writing sparkles and the storytelling winds its way through the woods much like the characters it describes. It feels like it should be a novel, yet, at the same time, it's good that it's not. As a novel, it would be ponderous and difficult to get through. As it is, you come in at the end of the story and enough is retold that you understand and appreciate it. It's done well and well done."The Lady of the Ice Garden" by Kara Dalkey was another retelling of "The Snow Queen", and I must admit that Kelly Link's version has spoiled me forever. Had I not read that one, I would have thoroughly enjoyed Dalkey's version. As it was, there seemed to be something missing. Granted, there is a subtlety to Japanese culture that I may be missing due to incomplete historical knowledge, but in the end, I just didn't enjoy this one as much as Link's. So it goes."Hope Chest" by

Garth Nix was holy-crap-what-am-I-reading fantastic. It's another foundling story, but is very different from any other such story I've ever read. It takes the interlinked concepts of destiny/fate/purpose and tells a story that is every bit as heartbreaking as Greek tragedy and still unbelievably good (despite being an American Western). It's worth the price of the collection all by itself. "Chasing the Wind" by Elizabeth E. Wein was good, but didn't make much of an impression on me. This may have been due to the immediately preceding "Hope Chest", but it could also have been that it was about a time period that doesn't really do much for me, nor does aviation history. I suspect that WWII and aeroplane aficionados would have a very different opinion. "Little Dot" by Diana Wynne Jones is about kitty cats. It doesn't really work well as a story, as there are too many things left unexplained and the world isn't well built. Were this a story among other stories set in the same world, it would be better. However, the kitty cats feel real, and that's worth something. "Remember Me" by Nancy Farmer is good but sad. It's about families and misfits. Mostly though, it's about being different, as seen by those who are not. It's short and worth reading, so I shall not say any more here. "The Flying Woman" by Laurel Winter is an interesting exploration of magic, honor and care taking. There's also an element of "you can't change people", which is a good, though difficult, lesson to learn. In a book full of life lessons, this is an appropriate story to exit on. Taken as a whole, the collection is wonderful, and the only real problem was that it took me five years to get to it (and then two months to write this review, *sigh*). Sure would be nice if there was a subscription model so one could get the latest monthly or bimonthly Sharyn November book without having to track them all down. Sure, tracking things down is fun, but I don't have the same amount of sleuthing time I once did. But, if that's the biggest complaint I have, I guess I'm OK.

Firebirds is a short story book by Lloyd Alexander, Michael Cadnum, Kara Dalkey, Nancy Farmer, Nina Kiriki Hoffman, Diana Wynne Jones, Patricai A. Mckillip, Garth Nix, Meridith Ann Pierce, Sherwood Smith, Nancy Springer, Megan Whalen Turner, Elizabeth E. Wein, Laurel Winter, Emma Bull with illustrations by Charles Vess. The book is edited by Sharyn November. Firebirds is a collection of stories all based on different themes. Each author has a different style of writing. Firebirds has two genres, fantasy and science fiction. I liked this book because the endings were always surprising. I didn't know many of these authors and reading these short stories gave me an idea of how they wrote. All the stories in Firebirds were interesting and different. I would rate this book an eight on a scale of one to ten because some of the stories weren't very interesting. I haven't read many short story books but this was one of the books that I enjoyed. Many of these stories are parts of books that the author has written or sequels. Some of my favorite stories were

Beauty by Sherwood Smith and Little Dot by Diana Wynne Jones. Beauty's about a princess named Elestra. Elestra didn't have any beauty and no one really cared about her. In the throne room, there was a tree that was really a person turned into a tree. One night the Elestra goes into the throne room and is captured by Flauvic, the person who was tree. Beauty's a story that makes you wonder what's going to happen. Little Dot's a story about several cats and a human named Henry. One day Henry is told that there is a Beast that's eating many animals. Find out what happens by reading Firebirds. Little Dot's an engrossing story that captures your attention.

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