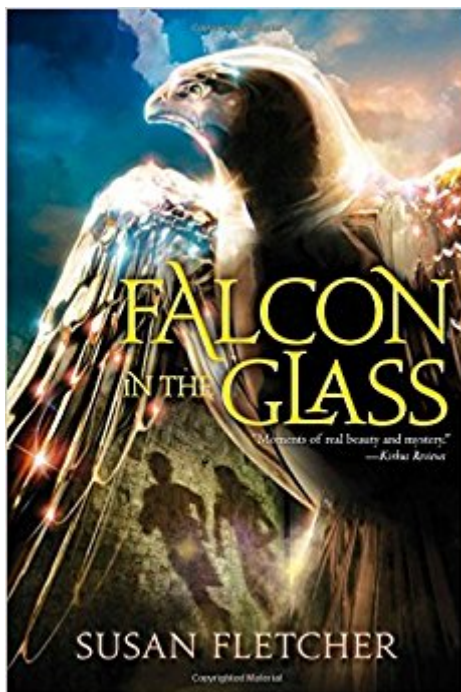


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Falcon In The Glass



Synopsis

A boy risks his life to save some very special children in this fantasy adventure rife with moments of real beauty and mystery, set amidst the rich backdrop of Renaissance Venice. In Renaissance Venice, the secrets of glassblowing are guarded jealously. Renzo, a twelve-year-old laborer in a glassworks, has just a few months to prepare for a test of his abilities, and no one to teach him. If he passes, he will qualify as a skilled glassblower. If he fails, he will be expelled from the glassworks. Becoming a glassblower is his murdered father's dying wish for him, and the means of supporting his mother and sister. But Renzo desperately needs another pair of hands to help him turn the glass as he practices at night. One night he is disturbed by a bird—a small falcon—that belongs to a girl hiding in the glassworks. Soon Renzo learns about her and others like her—the bird people, who can communicate with birds and are condemned as witches. He tries to get her to help him, but discovers that she comes with baggage: ten hungry bird-kenning children who desperately need his aid. Caught between devotion to his family and his art and protecting a group of outcast children, Renzo struggles for a solution that will keep everyone safe in this atmospheric adventure.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

Gr 6-8 Renzo toils in a glass workshop in Italy in the late 1400s. He works ceaselessly to pass the glassmaker's tests and become an apprentice, an unlikely event given the scandal that colors his family's past. Studying nights, the teen desperately needs an assistant to succeed. When he meets Letta, a homeless waif, he secretly asks for her help. Letta has secrets, too. She is one of the "bird children," who seem to have mystical relationships with their avian companions. Letta strives to provide for other impoverished bird children, while Renzo cares only about his upcoming test. As Letta helps him with his glassmaking, he realizes that his self-centeredness hurts others. When his negligence causes Letta and her "family" to be imprisoned, he devises an ingenious plot to rescue them. Detailed descriptions of glassmaking and Venetian life will give readers a bird's-eye view of the culture. The author illuminates Renzo's character one scene at a time. With each adversity he faces, he learns about himself and can choose to act differently. Scenes alternate between the Venetian palace dungeon and Renzo's adventures. The sizable amount of factual information and Fletcher's reserved tone may appeal to a limited audience. However, for those who like historical fiction steeped in context, this is a solid selection.

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--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Desperate to pass the glassblower's apprenticeship test and restore his family's honor, Renzo hatches a dangerous plan. He partners with Letta, one of the newly arrived "bird children," part of a homeless band with piercing green eyes and wild-bird companions. The children's unusual bond with their birds invokes whispers of witchcraft, leading to imprisonment and threats of hanging. Renzo, caught between protecting his mother and younger sister or trying to save the lives of children he barely knows, struggles to define the meaning of family, responsibility, and loyalty. Set in 1497 Venice and Murano, Italy, the book's perspective shifts from Renzo to minor characters, allowing for complex motivations and unintended consequences to be reflected. Evocative prose captures the world of glassblowers, the cold damp of Venice, and the menacing power of Venice's leaders. The compelling story line bogs down at times with Renzo's engulfing self-doubt, but the end result is a well-constructed, intriguing novel. Grades 5-8. --Suzanne Harold --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I just love how vividly Susan creates the setting for her books. I always feel like with her imagery I can step into the community/time period and really view the world. I was quite excited to read her

newly released, yes you can get this fantastic book NOW!! book, *Falcon in the Glass*. My thoughts on *Falcon in the Glass*: What an experience, to go back in time to life in Venice in the 15th century and experience life through a glass maker laborer's existence. I always love how Susan Fletcher can spin a tale. I am quite a fan of her *Dragon Chronicle* series and was completely lost in this new gorgeous tale which is filled with intrigue, adventure, survival, glassmaking, history, murder, assassins, and determination. The book slowly welcomes you into a world where you care about every character and begin to worry about each fate. The main character is Renzo, a young boy determined to pass a test to prove he is worthy of being an apprentice to a glassmaker. He is in a pretty desperate situation after his father is murdered by an assassin and failed the first test almost a year ago. Renzo takes a risk and reaches out for help from someone that could create some pretty big complications. It has been a little while since I read a historical fiction book about a new-to-me time period. I love how Susan Fletcher immersed herself in this world and created a magical yet realistic place to exist in imagination. I hope many students who loved getting lost in another fantastic book, *The False Prince* by Jennifer A. Nielsen, also enjoy getting lost in this story. I would recommend it for mature fifth grade students up through adults! Quotes I loved from *Falcon in the Glass*: "It was a ghostly sight, so startlingly strange that for some time afterward the captain wondered if he might have imagined it." "His shoulders, arms, and back all ached; a dark pool of weariness pressed down on the crown of his head and seeped into his eyes." "The mind might grasp the work, but the body must know it too, know it without thinking - in the memory of the hands, in the wisdom of the eyes, to judge from the color of the glass when it's time to blow it, to spin it, to warm it again in the furnace."

Susan Fletcher is an amazing author. I loved this book.

great read

Difficulty keeping my interest

Renzo dreams of becoming the greatest glassblower on Murano, the island near Venice where many beautiful glass pieces are created each day. But since his father's death he has been forced to prove himself early in the hopes that he can become an apprentice and help support his mother and young sister. His task is much harder, because he's not allowed to have anyone help him learn what he needs to know before he is tested. When he happens across a band of children who have a

mysterious connection with birds, he forges a relationship that just may help him get what he needs while providing them with food and shelter. To do this, Renzo will have to work against forces that would lock up the children and bring him and his family down with them. *Falcon in the Glass* by Susan Fletcher brings the history and beauty of glassblowing in Murano to life along with a tale of children who must be daring and brave to change their circumstances. Renzo at first sees the bird children as pawns he can use to help him get what he needs to bring security to his family. But as he begins to look at them as individuals, he learns that he can no longer think only of his own comfort. He finds himself taking risks for them because he knows it's the right thing to do. He also begins to feel a special bond with their leader, Letta. When Letta and the others are accused of witchcraft, Renzo has to find a way to help his new friends without bringing suspicion upon his own family. Fletcher is a master at evoking a vivid depiction of a past way of life while also creating a fascinating tale set there. As a twelve-year-old boy, Renzo is grown up beyond his years because he has an enormous amount of responsibility to take care of his family. Yet he hasn't hardened so much that he can't see the humanity even in those who set themselves against him. *Falcon in the Glass* is a great read for anyone who loves a blending of history and adventure. I recommend it for readers aged 9 to 13. The publisher provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

This weekend, I'm in Renaissance Venice, courtesy of *Falcon in the Glass*, by Susan Fletcher. I actually visited Venice way back in 1983, when I was an exchange student in Denmark, so I can really visualize the story as I read. Even if you haven't been to Venice, Susan Fletcher's vivid recreation of the setting makes it easy to imagine what our hero, Renzo sees and experiences. She also manages to bring the history and beauty of glassblowing in Murano to life without being didactic. Here's the story in a nutshell: Renzo is a twelve-year-old laborer in a glassworks and has just a few months to prepare for a test of his abilities, and no one to teach him. If he passes, he will qualify as a skilled glassblower. If he fails, he will be expelled from the glassworks. Becoming a glassblower is means of supporting his mother and sister. But Renzo desperately needs another pair of hands to help him turn the glass as he practices at night. One night he is disturbed by a small falcon that to belong to a girl hiding in the glassworks. Soon Renzo learns about the bird people, who can communicate with birds and are condemned as witches. He tries to get her to help him and discovers that she comes with baggage: ten hungry children with birds who desperately need his help. Caught between devotion to his family and his art and protecting a group of outcast children, Renzo struggles for a solution that will keep everyone safe. A great read for kids who love historical

fiction.

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