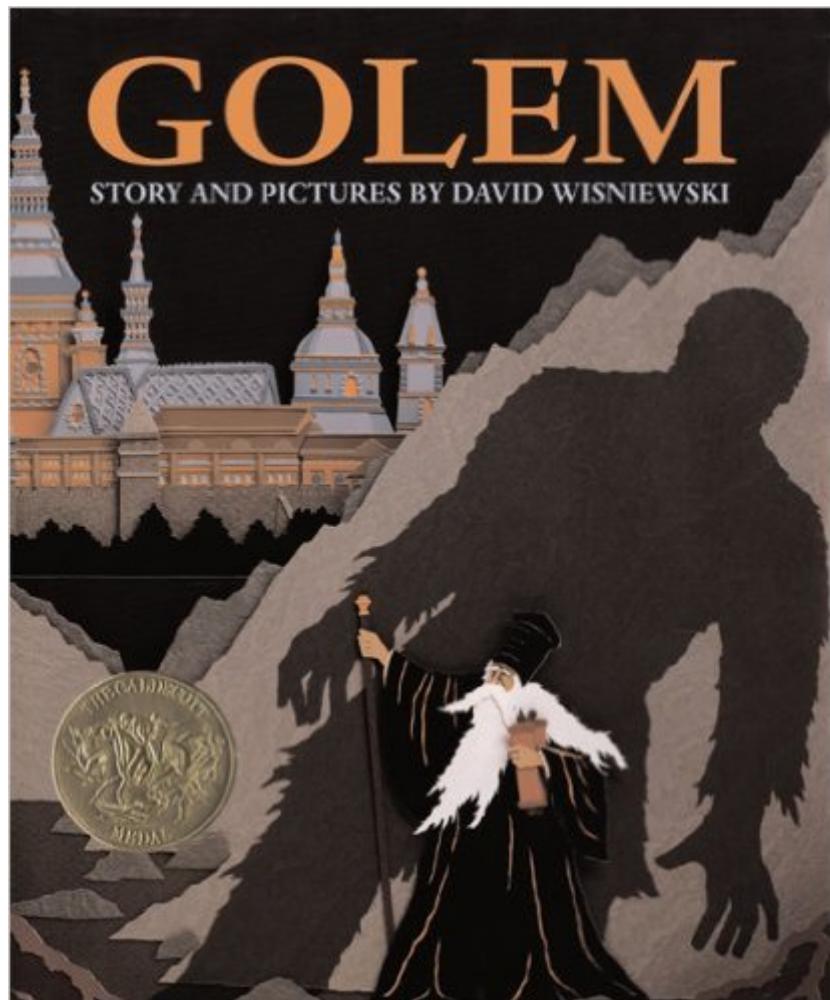


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Golem



Synopsis

Retold from traditional sources and accompanied by David Wisniewski's unique cut-paper illustrations, Golem is a dramatic tale of supernatural forces invoked to save an oppressed people. It also offers a thought-provoking look at the consequences of unleashing power beyond human control. The afterword discusses the legend of the golem and its roots in the history of the Jews. A Caldecott Medal Book.

Book Information

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (November 19, 2007)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.2 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (40 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #243,245 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #280 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Multicultural #12205 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

People learn about the myth of the Golem in a variety of different ways. Sometimes they learn about it through literature (I credit, "The Adventures of Cavalier and Clay"), through song and story, or through children's books. David Wisniewski was not the first author/illustrator to create a picture book out of the myth of the man of clay. He was only the best. In this tale, four hundred years ago the Jews of Prague were sorely oppressed. They had been oppressed in the past, it's true, but new evil rumors were being passed on about them. People were telling the "Blood Lie", which claimed that Jews were guilty of mixing the blood of Christian children with the flour and water of matzoh. Amongst these Jews lived the chief rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel. One night, in a dream, Loew was commanded by God to create a Golem. Obeying the command, Loew built a man out of clay and gave it life. The Golem, unofficially named Joseph, was sent to discover the men spreading the Blood Lie about the Jews and bring them to justice. When the Golem was successful at this

endeavor an angry mob of enemies of the Jews set upon the ghetto to wreak massive destruction. Instead, the Golem protected the Jews and the emperor of Prague vowed never to let such a thing happen again. With that, the Golem's life was taken (much to his chagrin) only to be called back again if the Jews ever found themselves in trouble once more. David Wisniewski provides and lengthy and incredibly in depth note at the end of this tale outlining the history of the legend as well as the history of the Jews themselves. You cannot help but be impressed by the depth and intensity of Wisniewski's research. As a writer he deftly tells the Golem's tale, even mentioning how the creature grew to love life.

Golem is a gorgeously illustrated, well-written, and educational tale, with deep connections to Jewish tradition and faith. However, the story is also very sad and distressing, especially for those who are impressionable or sensitive. I suggest that parents review this book carefully, looking through their children's eyes, before sharing it even with teenagers; likewise, I suggest they be prepared for some nearly unanswerable questions. The book retells the legend of Rabbi Leow and the Golem he created from clay to protect the Jews of Prague during a time of danger for them. Anti-semitic factions within the city were spreading rumors that Passover matzoh was made with the blood of Christian children; this rumor, called the Blood Lie, led to attacks and abuses of the defenseless Jews. Already, the story is a deeply distressing one, too upsetting for the average child. It gets worse, though - the Golem, who calls Rabbi Leow 'Father,' protects and saves the Jews, and then begs the Rabbi not to kill him. Leow does anyway. While the message here is one about the wise use of power, it was mostly lost on our family, since at that point everyone was crying too hard to think at all. There's no doubt that the book is well presented. It's beautiful, with cut-paper illustrations that seem to spring off the page. However, even these gorgeous pictures cast a pall; they are grim in tone and appearance, at times giving a hellish cast to a story that needed no further embroidering in that department. The novel medium - photographs of cut paper - and the success with which it is used do merit the Caldecott Medal. However, unlike most Caldecott books, this one is not for casual or entertainment reading, nor is it for children. I can't emphasize this enough.

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