

The Snow Maiden and Other Russian Tales (World Folklore Series). Translated and retold by Bonnie C. Marshall; Alla Kulagina, advisor. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 154 pp. \$35.00 (cloth). ISBN 1-56308-999-8.

The tales in this volume were translated and retold by Bonnie C. Marshall, Adjunct Professor and Curriculum Coordinator for the Russian Program at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her other publications of folktales include Baba Yaga's Geese and Other Russian Stories and Grasshopper to the Rescue: A Georgian Story. Marshall wrote Tales from the Heart of the Balkans, another title in the World Folklore Series, with Vasa D. Mihailovich. Alla Kulagina, a *kandidat* in the Department of Folklore at Moscow State University, acted as consultant on The Snow Maiden. Her work includes various study guides, and research on lyric songs, ballad, and *chastushki* (Russian limericks).

The Snow Maiden and Other Russian Tales belongs to the World Folklore Series published by Libraries Unlimited, a division of the Greenwood Publishing Group. According to the Greenwood website, these “colorful story collections combine impeccable scholarship with entertaining reading. In addition to the stories, each title provides cultural and historical background information; photographs, maps, and drawings; discussion and activity ideas; glossaries; and ‘extras’ including traditional recipes, games, and more.”

The present text is faithful to this model. In addition to the tales, Marshall presents an introduction with sections on the geography and history of Russia, and a description of Russian life today. Marshall's presentation of Russian history illustrates and augments the narrative effectively with the inclusion, beginning with the Revolution, of several political *anekdoty* (jokes). There is an overview of the history of Russian folklore and folktale collecting. The book also includes a number of activities to accompany the stories, a bibliography of Russian sources, an English reading list, two maps, and eight pages of color photographs.

Marshall organizes her folktale translations into four sections. First are the ten animal tales, including “Kolobok,” Russia’s version of the gingerbread man story. There are nine fairy tales, such as “Snow Maiden,” “Teryoshechka,” and “At the Pike's Command.” The best tale in this section, and indeed the entire book, in the opinion of my seven-year-old, is “The Puff Monster,” which Marshall heard from “twelve-year-old Aleksandra Pozniakova”(21). There follow ten tales of

everyday life where social satire, according to Marshall, is prominent. Some tales included in this section are “The Fool and the Birch Tree,” “Magic Water,” and “The Devil Loans Money.”

Finally come tales of spirits and the supernatural. Here are five *bylichki* (memorates) that tell of encounters with a supernatural being supposed to have been experienced by the narrator or someone known to the narrator. Their inclusion is important because folklorists have traditionally put *bylichki* in a different genre from *skazki* (folk tales proper). Here they appear for the first time, according to Marshall, in a non-scholarly English collection. Two of the three brief stories contained here under the title of “Spirits of the Bathhouse” are rather grisly, in keeping with macabre reputation of *banniki* (bathhouse spirits). Elsewhere, though, Marshall often avoids fatal dénouements such as in the fairy tale “The Sun, The Moon, and Raven Voronovich.” In Afanas’ev’s telling, the old man and the raven fall to their deaths from the roost at the end of the tale. As Marshall tells it, the old man merely gets a bump on the head and some torn clothes.

This collection is targeted at grades K through twelve. The tales are appropriate listening for small children and should be interesting independent reading from about second grade. Teachers of upper elementary grades should find the supplementary materials as well as the tales helpful in planning and conducting special sections in social studies such as a “Russia unit,” as part of a cultures week, or an in an exploration of folklore, for instance. Junior high and high school students should be able to use the entire book themselves, both the cultural background and the tales, and may even feel motivated to pursue further reading based on the “recommended readings in English.” This reading list will certainly be of interest to educators.

The “activities to accompany the stories” include three recipes. The first is for “runaway buns,” actually *olad’i* or griddle cakes, from “Kolobok.” Next are *bliny*, or thin Russian pancakes; and finally there is a recipe for *shchi*, cabbage soup. In this section are also a number of craft ideas ranging from making *lubki*, or chapbooks, to a birch bark headband, and even creating the Snow Maiden out of snow (weather permitting). There are a few simple line drawings to accompany some of the activities. Such a presentation makes this section seem more appropriate for adults planning craft or cooking activities for kids rather than something that will appeal to children themselves, in most cases. I recall from my own childhood that those books of ideas for craft

activities with the most pictures, photographs, or detailed drawings best captured the imagination and made me want to try the projects myself.

I am always somewhat saddened to see a collection of Russian folktales for children without illustrations. Some kind of artistic graphic material—drawings, paintings or even photos of folk art—can be helpful in sparking young imaginations as they contemplate the tales. The inclusion of only photographs seems to be a common feature of the entire World Folklore Series, although a sister volume, The Enchanted Wood and Other Tales from Finland, does include three of Akseli Gallen-Kallela's paintings for the Kalevala. Therefore, a few of Ivan Bilibin's Russian folktale illustrations, for example, could have been included here. Or perhaps a list of illustrated English and Russian editions might have been added to the bibliographic section. In any case, those interested in exploring the iconography of Russian folktales can, for a start, consult the present volume's list of folktale collections in English, several of which do include illustrations.

The photographs present in The Snow Maiden are mostly helpful. They included shots of various folklore performances, a samovar, a stove (*pech'*), bast shoes, and so on. However, artwork is generally far more evocative than most of the amateur photos included here. By far the most charming picture is the cover photograph, a beautiful outside shot of a window from a traditional dwelling: *podzornaia rez'ba* (carved framing details), shutters, and frame painted white, a tulle curtain, and pots of geraniums on the sill.

The Snow Maiden and Other Russian Tales can be recommended for schools, public libraries, and families with or without Russian roots. It cannot compare with some other collections, such as Guterman's translations of Afanas'ev's folktales (Pantheon Books), in terms of sheer number of tales, let alone the recently completed comprehensive collection by Jack Haney (The Complete Russian Folktale, 7 vols), but Marshall's selection gives a decent overview of the variety of Russian folktales. Furthermore, her introductions to the country, the culture, and the stories, plus the activities section put The Snow Maiden and Other Russian Tales in a class by itself.

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