



Princess Academy

Shannon Hale

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Miri lives on a mountain where, for generations, her ancestors have lived a simple life. Then word comes that the king's priests have divined her village the home of the future princess. In a year's time, the prince will choose his bride from among the village girls.

The king's ministers set up an academy on the mountain, and every teenage girl must attend and learn how to become a princess. Soon Miri finds herself confronted with a harsh academy mistress, bitter competition among the girls, and her own conflicting desires. Winning the contest could give her everything she ever wanted-but it would mean leaving her home and family behind.

Packaged with a fresh cover, this timelessly charming, award-winning story from best-selling author Shannon Hale is sure to enchant a whole new generation of readers.

Princess Academy Details

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Author : Shannon Hale

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From Reader Review Princess Academy for online ebook

Diane says

Every now and then I like to read a good children's book, especially if it has a smart heroine. *Princess Academy* was perfect reading for a Sunday afternoon. It tells the story of Miri, a 14-year-old girl living on a mountain that mines a valuable stone. One day, it's announced that the prince will choose his next princess from Miri's village, and all of the girls are sent to an academy to be educated.

Miri is a spunky girl: she studies hard, she tries to make friends and she stands up for the rights of others. What I especially liked is how the author emphasized education — Miri finds a way to use her new knowledge to help her family and the village.

By the end of the book, it didn't really matter who became princess, because Miri had found her purpose in life.

Highly recommended for anyone who wants a delightful dose of girl power.

Shannon (Giraffe Days) says

The linder quarries on Mount Eskel make for hard labour, but the villagers who mine it wouldn't trade their life for anything. The linder stone takes skill to extract in whole blocks from the mountainside, and its qualities enable them to converse without speaking.

Fourteen year old Miri wants nothing so much as to join her father and older sister in the quarry. But she's small, and her father has forbidden her to set foot in the quarry. Instead, Miri tends the goats; teases her childhood friend, Peder; and wishes on the little miri flowers that she was named after to be allowed to work with everyone else in the quarry.

But everything changes the day the traders arrive for the last time before winter, bringing with them an official from the capital of Dunland - a messenger from the King. It has long been a tradition that the priests name the city from which the prince and heir to the throne must choose his bride. This time, causing great shock amongst the noble families of Dunland, the priests have named Mount Eskel - so overlooked it's not even considered a province of Dunland.

And so, further down the mountain in an abandoned stone manor house, the Princess Academy is established. Usually a formality, this time the girls aged thirteen to seventeen really must be trained - taught to read and write, how to walk and talk, about history and geography, diplomacy and economics.

Most of the girls don't want to become princess, and their families need them back in the village and quarry, but even so, competition sparks amongst them. Who will be princess? Could Miri, who does so well at her studies and was able to make the prince smile, be the one? (And what about Peder?) Yet when a threat comes to the Academy, curtseys and platitudes won't save them - only wits, mountain strength and Miri's determination.

This is the first Hale book I've read, and arguably her most popular one. It wasn't what I expected, but really it was better than I expected. It's one of those quiet fantasy books, like General Winston's Daughter - nothing

showy, no loud magic tricks or evil sorcerers or that tedious battle between good and evil (yawn). It also didn't follow those boring fantasy clichés that so many authors seem to enjoy perpetuating - a patriarchal social structure, for instance. Men and women work alongside each other in the quarry, and respect each other. Gender doesn't come into it. I got the impression that, despite classic hierarchies and class divisions, the rest of Dunland is much the same. The setting still had that typical medieval flavour, but with new angles and greater equality. Since it's *Fantasy*, not historical fiction, this is precisely the kind of thing I want to see - and don't get enough of.

The story is also disarmingly simple in its style - the prose has that lovely, unburdened quality that's usual in YA and Children's fiction - no fancy adjectives, no heavy-handed descriptions, no long-winded paragraphs: light on its feet, detailed and yet deceptively straight-forward. Perfect for its target age group (9-12) but just as enjoyable for the rest of us.

I loved Miri: she was a sympathetic character, a resourceful, intelligent, spirited girl you could really admire. She makes a great role model. The other girls weren't as fleshed-out as I'd have liked, but their characters still came through in small ways. The plot wasn't predictable, and the ending was very sweet. I also loved the small role economics plays in the story, not to mention the power an education gives you - Miri uses her hard-won knowledge from the Academy to improve her village's ability to trade, thus improving the quality of life on the mountain as well as their bargaining power. See, it's educational as well as a fun read!

Melanie Kilsby says

Miri just wants to make her father proud and be like all Mount Eskel's people mining its beautiful stone. But when an opportunity for her to be a Princess is forced on their people, can she refuse? Or will this new path change her life forever?

I LOVED this middle grade book.

Though it's not written with a Christian world-view, it almost had an Esther-type retelling. Shannon Hale did a great job at bringing a clean respect to God in this book. Even having faithful rest days, which I very much appreciated. Plus, there was this really unique language the Mountain people had that could only be used through the stone. Super cool! But, because it starts with singing, it reminded me of worship, of prayer and praying for each other as Christians, connecting us together as one... which I thought was neat.

This book focuses on making a difference even if you are small and finding out what you are good at. It's about finding courage and strength in those who may fail around us. And most importantly, it's about the gift of books and learning. Shannon did an amazing job at reflecting these issues in all of the characters. It seemed each had their spotlight and for a middle grade book, I thought each character was well rounded with perfect arcs in this age group.

Overall, a sweet and superb MG book!

HT Goodwill says

Overall, the book was well written and appropriate for a young adolescent audience. It was certainly not written for someone in my demographic!

I enjoyed a number of aspects of this book and also a few disappointments. Specifically,

1) The resolution of the primary conflict (who gets to be the princess) felt too much like a plot-device (I can't say more without giving away the ending) that the author threw into the story to avoid a painful conflict between the characters.

2)The culture of the mountain village and the kingdom as a whole was not developed enough - there was a lot of good potential here. On the other hand...

3) What culture was discussed permeated the story. Things like 'quarry-singing', holding hands, and twirling the miri flowers (to name a few) were present throughout the story, lending the culture a consistency.

4) However, the absolute BEST aspect of this book is the over-all theme on the value of education. It was wonderful to see the education the girls received transforming their lives and the lives of their families. Further, I loved how the principle characters recognized the impact and determined to continue pursuing and sharing it.

Despite the two negative comments above, please don't misconstrue my review for a negative one. As I said before, this book wasn't really written for me. Were I an adolescent girl this probably would rate 5 stars. I think my daughters will thoroughly enjoy reading the book when they get older (I know I will recommend it to them) and I highly recommend the book for any adolescent girls you may know.

C.B. Cook says

I read this all in one day, guys. Seriously. Okay, so I read twelve pages of it this morning... Also, is it already June??? WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN???

The Good

-The characters. Oh my gravy, Peder. Can I just steal him? And Miri and Britta and Knut... Bascially, I just want to kidnap all the characters.

-The setting. Basically, the setting was just plain awesome. I WANNA MOVE TO MOUNT ESKEL.

-Linder/Quarry-speech. That was sooo awesome. From the blurb, I wasn't even expecting that. But then again, I'm not sure exactly what I was expecting...

-Plot continuity. Shannon Hale's pretty good at dropping early hints of plot twists without being too obvious. And yeah, I missed most of them, so I ended up with a ton of "Aha!" moments.

(view spoiler)

The Bad

-Surprises. This book actually did not surprise me all that much. I predicted pretty much everything. (view spoiler)

The Ugly

Very little romance, more violence than anything else. Someone falls off a cliff.

So... I'm not sure if this book really intrigued me yesterday or if I just was procrastinating writing... I really enjoyed it though, I must say.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

\$1.99 Kindle sale - 12/7/16

This is a favorite comfort read, and a delightful older middle grade/younger YA fantasy that was nominated for a 2006 Newbery Award. Miri is a teenage girl living in a small, simple mountain village, where everyone makes a living quarrying a lovely marble rock that is found only on their mountain. It's a sometimes harsh life, with everyone kind of scraping to get by, but filled with love and close friendships. One day the simple life ends: the priests of their country have divined that the prince is to marry a girl from their village. The king's ministers, appalled that their prince needs to marry a rough and unsophisticated village girl, set up an academy, a day's hike down the mountain from the village, and force all the marriageable teenage girls to live there and be tutored for a year, at which point the prince will arrive in great pomp, there will be a dance, and he'll choose his bride.

Most of the story follows Miri and the other village girls as they deal with a harsh, cold head mistress of the academy, and the competition between them to be the head of the class (which earns you the best dress at the princess ball and some other perks). Miri deeply wants to be at the top of the class, but she's also conflicted because of her feelings for a boy back in the village.

What I love about this book is that it's about more than just a competition to win the attention and heart of the prince. It's also about friendship, the importance of education, and being a strong person and true to your heart. There's some magic in it, though it's fairly subtle. Highly recommended!

Tamora Pierce says

I really liked it when the girls started pulling together and thinking past the fairytale, deciding that was in their best interest.

Krista Wright says

I thought this book would be cute, fun, and kind of similar to *The Selection*. Unfortunately, it was really boring. No action, no adventure, and definitely not enough romance. Even for a children's book, this still felt really flat. It was well-written, certainly, but it just didn't hold my interest.

Kate Willis says

Confession: I waited too long to read this book. The little snatches of writing style I had seen didn't look that good, and the description gave me the suspicion that it would be *The Same Old Story*. I was happily wrong and discovered one of the best fantasies I've ever read. ;) The worldbuilding was really good and not too bizarre. It felt almost like somewhere straight out of Alps with hardworking, friendly (if slightly quarrelsome) neighbors. I loved the descriptions of the desolately beautiful quarry, the persistent miri flowers (which are actually real!), and the linder rocks. Miri was a likeable heroine--not too strong-willed, smart, or timid. Just a regular, interesting girl. ;) The academy was a unique idea, and I loved how the girls used what they had learned to help their community without becoming the leaders of it. Britta was so sweet

after she loosened up a little, and I liked what ended up happening with Katar.

The encouragement to reach out to people despite their unfriendliness and band together was really excellent. I nearly laughed when they used the rules of diplomacy together on Olana, and the way they helped each other through the test was pretty awesome. ;) Spring holiday sounds like a ton of fun and is just another glimpse of the close-knit community portrayed in this book. (view spoiler) One character who was immensely complicated and challenged my initial opinion of him was Miri's father. I grew to love him. The ending was really unexpected and for a split second I felt cheated. (view spoiler) But once I thought about it, I loved it. :D Love, love, loved it. That's really how it should have turned out, and the lasting effects of the academy were their own reward. (view spoiler)

Not recommended for younger readers because of a slight element of romance; (view spoiler); and extreme danger to (view spoiler). Also, the view of God in this book subtly reflects the Mormon religion even though it is in a fantasy setting.

Best quote: (view spoiler)

Altogether, I very much enjoyed this sweet and satisfying read! I can't wait to read the other books in this series. ;)

Sherwood Smith says

Had a very long drive ahead of me yesterday, so took this lovely book along to reread it.

It was never very surprising to this old reader; I could see the plot turns coming a few chapters before they did, but the true pleasure is in the relationships of the families in the mountain village where Miri lives, and of course the relationships of the girls as they develop.

This reading, I appreciated how Hale takes the time to give all the girls at least some personality, and some chance to change and grow, even if lightly sketched in. I loved the evolution of Miri's assumptions (often driven by anger and hurt) and how she would immediately catch herself when perceiving others' anger and hurt, and her attempts to communicate rather than brood for chapters over misunderstandings.

I also loved how the girls decided how to deal with the prince coming to choose one of them before he came, and how everything resolved. And the touches of magic were subtle and fun. Such a lovely book!

Kathleen says

I've been reading this to my 8.5 year old daughter at night before bed. She is eating it up - and I am too. In fact - I read ahead just to see what happens. . SHHHHHHHH.

Though the title is appropriate, I'm afraid that some people will not pick up this book because they think it is froofy and shallow. . 'Tis not. The protagonist is a real, rich character with an inner life and traits both

admirable and unfortunate. The world she lives in is believable and complex economically and socially, and will be understood on many levels depending upon the sophistication of the reader.

It is a coming of age story - I believe that the main character is 15-ish. Issues of friendship, love, attraction, ambition, prejudice, and family loyalty loom large, and are treated with sensitivity and insight into the mind of an adolescent girl.

Put this book on your list of fast moving stories with strong, smart, resourceful and truly human female leads.

Enjoy!

Tatiana says

Sometimes you just want to take a break from endless angst and sexual tension of currently popular both adult and YA books and read something light and inoffensive. "Princess Academy" is an excellent choice for this purpose. Although this is an obviously children's book, it is not silly or overly simplistic. The fairy tale is very imaginative and teaches many valuable lessons (importance of education is among many of them), but never in a preachy way.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and found myself extending my walks and slowing my driving just to continue listening to this excellent full cast audio. My only complaint was that the main narrator read a little too slowly, I really wanted her to speed it up a bit.

Overall, a great experience. I will definitely read more of Shannon Hale's books when I am in a mood for a nice fairy tale.

Reading challenge: #1 - P.

Beth says

AUGUST 2012: Just re-read (technically re-listened) to this one in anticipation of the sequel coming out this month. Loved this book all over again!

MAY 2007: So the latest books I've read ... I haven't exactly enjoyed. I mean, I do finish them and everything, so they must have been okay, but it's not like I was ever reaching for my book multiple times a day, binging on pages. I've kind of missed that.

But all that changed with Princess Academy! Seriously — I loved this book.

(I should probably only admit this through the relative anonymity of the Internet. Seriously ... Princess Academy? What am I, eleven?! Oh well.) :-)

This book is written for children. Nevertheless, the writing was terrific (I didn't feel like I was being led by the hand through the whole story, as some children's writing might — must be one of the reasons it became a

Newbury Honor book). I thought the pacing was perfect; key pieces of information were given a little at a time. It is fairy-tale-ish, and happy endings abound, but none of those endings (even the romance) ended up being sickeningly unrealistic.

I loved the themes of this book: education as a key to opportunity, diplomacy to work through problems, kindness to all (even when they don't seem to deserve it) which leads to empathy and understanding.

One of my favorite books I've read this year, hands down.

Lola says

3.5 stars. If only...If only my eleven-year-old younger self had read this book. I know she would've shrieked with happiness at holding Princess Academy against her innocent little heart. Miri and younger Lola might've shared a stronger and more vivid level of connection and this latter probably would've eagerly pressed five stars as rating. (Well, it certainly isn't every day that I refer to myself in the 3rd person.)

But I'm not eleven anymore, and, even if I enjoy some middle grade and younger reads from time to time, I will never feel the same way when reading them as I feel toward Young Adult novels, my favorite genre. Why I do still read these books aimed to children is for the fluffiness, cuteness and fairytale omnipresent ambience that takes you to another dimension, one of dreams and endless possibilities. Something I can rarely find in YA novels.

And this happened to be a good example of a book giving me this opportunity. I mean, princess stories, if they are of your taste, are wonderful to plunge into and read. Miri as a heroine lacked maturity though. I don't know if it is my own fault thinking that, since we obviously are not same age (she is fourteen) but she spoke without thinking oh so many times...which equalled trouble, or in this context hand lashing and uncountable hours in the closet next to a rat. I kept muttering for her to stop bluntly bursting out words and felt exasperated when she did so anyway, but that's the thing with MG novels: You can't one hundred percent blame the young characters, since it's normal for them, due to their age, to make mistakes and it's usually in purpose for a character growth, which we very much could observe in this story.

I've read three Shannon Hale books so far - The Storybook of Legends, The Goose Girl, Austenland - and I realized that her style varies depending of the genre and type of book she is writing. Probably, if you enjoyed the first two, you will feel the same for Princess Academy. But if you've only read Austenland, then you will find that this book is written differently (with reason and a 'thank god' muttered because Austenland was just a poorly written and confusing book; I couldn't even finish it. But the movie was enjoyable – recommended!)

The romance lovely presented itself. I'm rarely into situations in which a character is in love with her/his best friend but the author managed to make this one not sound cliché or annoyingly cheesy. They were good together and the chemistry evident!

This is not a book for everyone but it was short and sweet and actually not that predictable. Sure, many situations made it easy for us to foresee their outcome, but some others contained plenty of surprises. What I loved most about this book was the lyrical writing and relationship between Miri and Britta, whom she misjudged quite too quickly, and her own sister, Marda. Incidentally, it was good to see original names for the characters.

Beautiful art source!

Donita Luz says

This was such a wonderful fairytale read!

A prince, selecting a girl to marry! The Selection? Read this instead!

Experience a fantastic adventure to knowledge and True Love with small but Terrible Miri!

FULL REVIEW TO COME!
