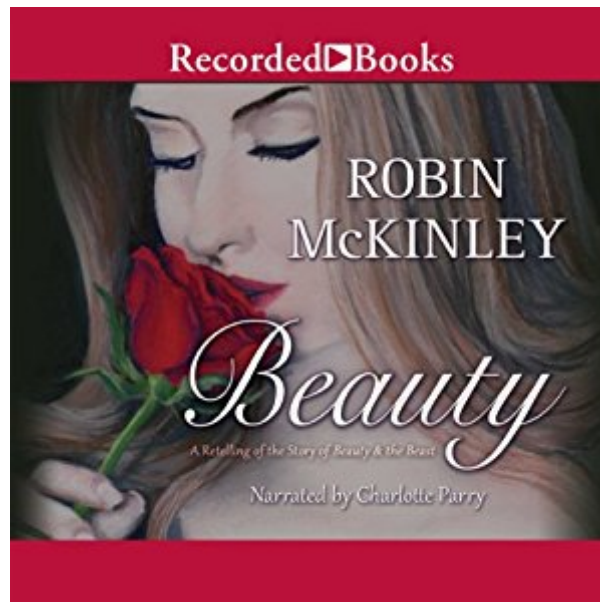


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Beauty: A Retelling Of The Story Of Beauty & The Beast



Synopsis

New York Times best-selling author Robin McKinley has won numerous awards for her writing, including the prestigious Newbery Medal. Though her two sisters are beautiful, Beauty, despite her name, is thin and awkward - but she's also courageous. So when her father makes a terrible promise to a Beast living in an enchanted castle, Beauty knows she must volunteer to be the Beast's prisoner.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a book that I originally bought when it was packaged as an adult fantasy novel with a lovely Boris Vallejo cover. It has since been changed to a children's format and labeled ages 9-12 which is sad because I believe many adults who would love this story will overlook it due to its new age labels and format. First, what this book is not--it is not a slam, bam action book or gigantic doorstopper epic. What it is--a wonderful romantic retelling of the fairy tale Beauty and the Beast. A widower has three daughters, Grace, Hope, and Honour. As a young child, Honour decides that her name is boring and states she would rather be Beauty, and the nickname stuck with her. Kindly Grace and Hope grow up into great beauties, but Beauty grows into a gawky ugly duckling, little concerned with her looks, but proud of her intelligence and way with horses. They all live happily in the city until disaster strikes and they lose almost all their possessions. They move to the country next to a mysterious old forest and as years pass become used to hard work and the peasant life. Beauty thrives, but still suffers from low self esteem. Then their father goes back to the city to check on one of his lost ships and when he returns, brings her a beautiful rose. You know the story--he met the Beast who demanded one of his daughters in exchange for the father's life, because he

dare to pluck the rose. Beauty volunteers to go to the Beast, taking only her warhorse turned plowhorse, Great Heart. She meets the Beast and encounters all the mysteries of his strange castle and invisible servants, some fearful and some wondrous. A sweet and charming romance ensues as the Beast asks her every night for her hand in marriage.

The best-known and best-loved of Robin McKinley's books is also one of the best of the fairy-tale retellings -- "Beauty," a more enlightened, fully-drawn version of "Beauty and the Beast." There's a depth and a richness to the story and characterizations, as well as a beauty of atmosphere and writing. Beauty (real name is "Honour") is the ironically-named heroine of the story -- she isn't beautiful, but is very intelligent. She has two sisters, the beautiful Hope and Grace, and a benevolent, wealthy father. Then all their lives change suddenly: the ships their father owns are lost, and the money goes with them. One of the sisters marries a poor but worthy country lad, while the other lost her beloved fiancée who captained one of the ships. After selling their possessions the family moves to the countryside. The father leaves on a trip -- and returns with a single rose, a gift for Beauty, which carries the price of either his life or his daughter. Beauty leaves to go live at the castle of the mysterious Beast, with only her plowhorse to accompany her. She arrives at a castle of invisible servants, magical books, friendly animals, and a melancholy Beast who asks her to marry him every evening... There is nothing new in fairy tale retellings now, but when McKinley first wrote "Beauty," it was a relative rarity. And even now, few of them are as intelligently written and have such solid heroines. Rather than giving her story a contrived "twist," McKinley merely fleshes out the storyline and gives the characters personalities. The writing is excellent; McKinley writes the more prosaic passages of cottage life and the surrounding friendly village, as well as the more dreamlike, fantastical scenes in the Beast's castle.

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