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Juvenile Fiction

Magic Hoofbeats: Horse Tales from Many Lands
Josepha Sherman
Josepha Sherman, editor
Linda Wingerter, illustrator
Barefoot Books
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The eight tales in this collection from locales around the world (including North America, Russia, and Albania) are linked by one subject: horses. The tales are organized by place of origin, beginning with a North American story set about pintos, which are popular amongst the Pawnee people.

Each story's opening double-page spread displays, on the left, a framed image of the featured horse. Above it, a decorative banner lists the horses place of origin; below it, a label names the breed. On the right, a brief introduction provides the characteristics of the horse and its land and culture, along with a brief preview of the story's action.

Most of the stories center around male heroes and male horses-except "The White Mare." In this tale, the kings daughter, Fifine, becomes the prize of the Golden Prince. Sensing impending danger, Fifine's white mare warns her that the Golden Prince is not only evil, but also an imposter. The horse devises a plan of escape for the princess and helps her find true love and happiness.

The author, a notable folklorist, has also written fantasy and science-fiction titles about popular movies and television shows like *Star Trek* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* , as well as more traditionally educational books like *Mythology for Storytellers*. A careful reading of this new volume reveals that Sherman may be speculating that the horse in the tale is the same breed as the one discussed in the preface. Nevertheless, she maintains that "these horses, for all their magic, truly are horses."

Each retelling inhabits the conventions and motifs common in folklore: repetition, mythical numbers, predictable characters and plots, and "happily-ever-after" endings. "The Little Humpbacked Horse" features a farmer and his three sons, classical folktale characters.

When the farmer learns that his hay is being stolen, each son attempts to capture the thief. The first two sons fail, leaving the supposedly foolish third son to apprehend the thief, who turns out to be a horse. Sherman's use of repetition, a conversational tone, and rhetorical devices captures the oral nature of each engaging tale, and although she provides a list of sources, more documentation would have been useful.

The illustrator holds a BFA in design from Rhode Island School of Design; she has created art for school textbooks and children's magazines, as well as several lovely children's books, including *One Grain of Sand* by folk singer-songwriter Pete Seeger. Here, Wingerters beautiful acrylic paintings depict images and cultural details from the eight countries. The flying white horses and various shades of blue produce a dreamlike quality, rendering the book a likely bedtime favorite for horse lovers.

Kaavonia Hinton