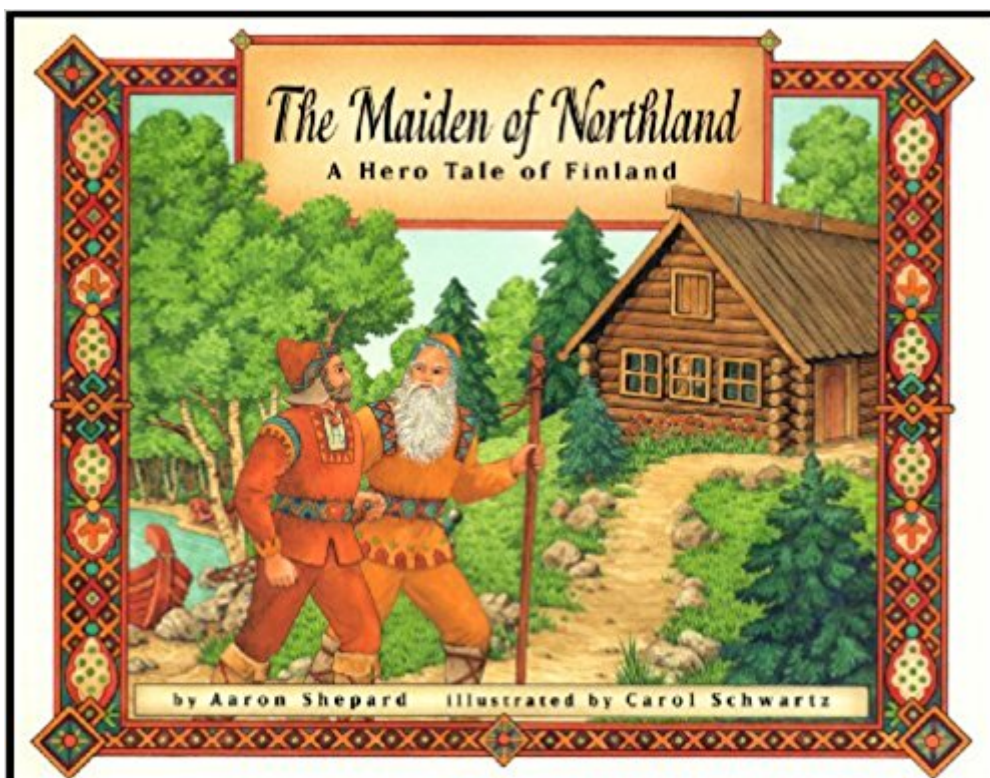


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The Maiden Of Northland: A Hero Tale Of Finland



Synopsis

Not so long ago, in the tiny, isolated villages of Finland, where prolonged summer days gave way to endless winter nights, people would pass the time by singing the many adventures of their favorite heroes: the mighty, magical men and women of ancient days.Â Â They sang of old Vainamoinen, greatest of sages and magicians, who helped create the world but never could find a woman to wed him. They sang of his friend and ally Ilmarinen, first among craftsmen, the blacksmith who forged the dome of the heavens.Â Â They sang of Louhi, the ancient lady of Northland, whose crafty wit and magical powers made her a worthy opponent for Vainamoinen himself. And they sang of Aila, Louhi's lovely daughter, who captured the hopes of the two old friends and drew them as rivals to the shores of Northland.Â Â The songs endure, the heroes live, in this poetic retelling of Finland's national epic, the Kalevala.Â TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS -- A READER'S THEATER SCRIPT OF AN EXCERPT FROM THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE FREE ON AARON'S WEB

SITE.Â //////////////////////////////////////Â Aaron Shepard is the award-winning author of "The Baker's Dozen," "The Sea King's Daughter," "The Adventures of Mouse Deer," and many more children's books. His stories have appeared often in Cricket magazine, while his Web site is known internationally as a prime resource for folktales, storytelling, and reader's theater.Â Carol Schwartz is the award-winning illustrator of over 45 picture books.Â

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 3-7?A retelling from the Finnish myth cycle, the Kalevala, in which the aging hero

Vainamoinen and the great smith Ilmarinen compete for the hand of Aila, the maiden of Northland. Aila has no intention of marrying either of them, but her mother decides to take advantage of the situation and sets the suitors a task. When Louhi asks each of them to bring her "...something never seen before," Vainamoinen returns with a kantele, a lap harp, that the woman is unable to play. Ilmarinen's sampo, a mill that grinds flour by itself, pleases her, but Aila refuses to marry the smith. The spurned men escape with their gifts, but lose them in the ocean. Shepard's use of free verse allows him more flexibility than the traditional poetic meter. While the text falters occasionally, it retains a sense of majestic rhythm and is most effective when read aloud. Shepard's retelling differs significantly from M.E.A. McNeil's prose version in *The Magic Storysinger* (Stemmer House, 1993), but both titles are well written and valuable, especially since there is little from the Kalevala available for young readers. Supporting information is detailed, including a pronunciation guide, notes, and references. Schwartz's gouache illustrations are vivid and appealing, with jewel-like colors and crisp lines. The book is nicely laid out, with an abstract folk-art design bordering each page and the verses set in two well-spaced columns. An unusual and appealing addition.

Donna L. Scanlon,
Lancaster County Library, PA
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1996 Aesop Accolade (American Folklore Society) "Well written and valuable. . . . Shepard's use of free verse allows him more flexibility than the traditional poetic meter. [The text] retains a sense of majestic rhythm and is most effective when read aloud. Supporting information is detailed. Schwartz's illustrations are vivid and appealing, with jewel-like colors and crisp lines. An unusual and appealing addition." -- Donna L. Scanlon, *School Library Journal*, Apr.

1996 "Shepard's free verse telling has power and sparkle. . . . Grandly illustrated." -- Glenn Giffin, *Denver Post*, May 12, 1996

"The language of Shepard's story, the way [the characters'] magic is performed -- all is bigger than life, as the mythic tale should be. It is a book to read aloud -- to an older child, to an appreciative adult. . . . A most handsome book." -- Kate Frankel, *Storyline*, Winter 1997

"The [free] verse reads aloud particularly well. . . . This is an unusual and appealing book, particularly in light of the scarcity of books for children in this subject area." -- Notes from the *Windowsill*, Dec. 15, 1996

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SAMPLE

Age-old Louhi, dame of Northland, sat on the floor before her mill, turning, turning the top stone, feeding grain through the hole, slowly grinding the day's flour. The millstone rumbled, the woman grumbled.

Lovely Aila, maiden of Northland, sat at the loom, slinging the shuttle, banging the beater, weaving cloth for woollen garments. The shuttle rang, the maiden sang.

Outside, the watchdog barked. Said Louhi to her daughter, "I have grain to grind, bread to bake. Look to the dog, see what bothers it."

"Mother, I

have cloth to weave,yarn to spin.I can't spare a moment,can't stop for an instant."Â Muttered Louhi,"Young women are always busy,even when they lounge in bed."Â She went outside,walked to the farmyard's edge.A red boat sped across the bay,a red sleigh coursed along the shore.Â Louhi rushed inside."Daughter, good news!If my eyes don't fail me,Vainamoinen comes to court,Ilmarinen comes to wed.No maid ever chose from two such heroes --Vainamoinen, rich and wise,Ilmarinen, skilled and handsome.Which do you prefer?"Â "Mother, why choose either?Do you wish me gone so soon?Let me stay here,to stroll through the woodand dance in the meadow.A wife's work starts before dawn,ends long after dusk.She has no time to sing to birds,no chance to pluck the berries."Â Said Louhi,"This is child's talk,not a woman's.You can't stay here forever,can't always be a girl!"Â "But can't I be a girl a little longer?Must every maiden be a wifebefore her fifteenth year?"Â "It's true you could wait awhile," said Louhi."But even if you aren't ready,we might gain from the ardor of these heroes.I have a plan.Daughter, quick,dress in your finest.Wear ribbons of red,ornaments of gold and silver."Â Not long after,Vainamoinen landed,jumped from his boat;Ilmarinen pulled up,leaped from his sleigh.Shoulder to shoulderthey rushed through the gate,strode over the farmyard,threw open the cabin door,pushed their way inside.Â Then both stopped amazed.Lovely Aila stood there,dressed in her finest,wearing ribbons of red,ornaments of gold and silver.Her cheeks glowed,her eyes danced.Â Said Louhi,"A greeting to the famous heroes!A welcome to the two great men!And what could you seek in Northland?"Â "Your daughter in marriage,"said Vainamoinen."The maiden as wife,"said Ilmarinen.Â Said Louhi,"If only there were two of her,then she could go with both!But as things are,a contest must be held."Â "What is the contest?"asked Vainamoinen.Â "You each must make for me a gift,something never seen before.I'll decide whose gift is finest,whose present has greatest value."Â "And what is the prize?"asked Ilmarinen.Â "The winner asks the maid to marry,proposes to my fair daughter."Â Warmly smiled the maiden.Swiftly beat two hearts.Â

A really nice, not too long version of some of the tales from the Kalevala, connected into one story of seven "chapters", including: Joukaheinen challenging Vanamoinen, the courtship of Ilmarinen and Vanamoinen and Louhi's daughter, the forging of the Sampo, the creation of the kantele, and the battle for the Sampo. A great mythology many of us have never heard of, this free verse version is engaging for a child of 7 and up, I'd say. The pictures are colorful and detailed. We really liked it for our home study of the Kalevala. Some background information on the stories, and a pronunciation guide for names, are included.

Love this book! Great condition, and the illustrations are as vivid and bright as I remembered them.

Aaron Shepard's loving and powerful retelling of the Kalevala epic captures the beauty, magic, poetry and grace of the original in a form highly accessible even to very young children. My half-Finnish daughters (ages 5 and 7) sat captivated through a first reading and insisted on a second, thoroughly entranced by the magical power of Vainamoinen's poetry and song and eager to touch their Finnish heritage. But there's enough depth here to appeal to older children, too. Carol Schwartz's rich and colorful illustrations add a glimpse of daily life in the ancient Finnish countryside that makes the magic all the more real by placing it among such believable folk.

thank you ! Nice and fast and exactly what I wanted !

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