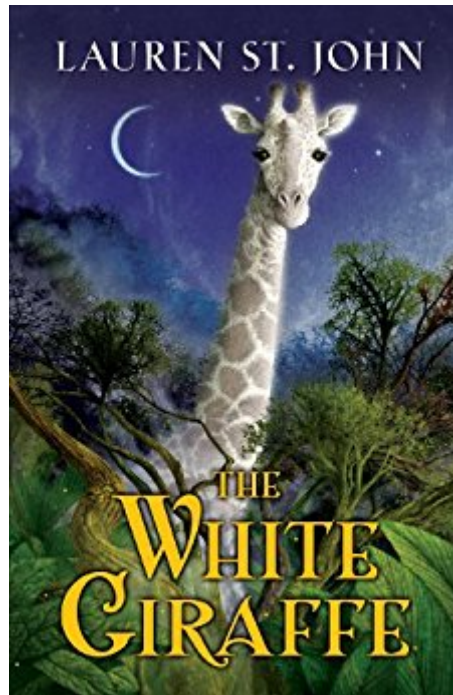




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The White Giraffe



Synopsis

When Martine's home in England burns down, killing her parents, she must go to South Africa to live on a wildlife game preserve, called Sawubona, with the grandmother she didn't know she had. Almost as soon as she arrives, Martine hears stories about a white giraffe living in the preserve. But her grandmother and others working at Sawubona insist that the giraffe is just a myth. Martine is not so sure, until one stormy night when she looks out her window and locks eyes with Jemmy, a young silvery-white giraffe. Why is everyone keeping Jemmy's existence a secret? Does it have anything to do with the rash of poaching going on at Sawubona? Martine needs all of the courage and smarts she has, not to mention a little African magic, to find out. First-time children's author Lauren St. John brings us deep into the African world, where myths become reality and a young girl with a healing gift has the power to save her home and her one true friend.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Martine has lost both her parents in a tragic fire and is sent to live with her grandmother on a wildlife

reserve in Africa. Life is much different than it was in England and Martine feels lonely and afraid, especially since her grandmother has made it clear she isn't pleased Martine is living with her. Late one night she sees the impossible: a white giraffe. She sneaks out to meet the animal and becomes friends with him. Encounters with injured animals show Martine that she has a special power to heal those animals, a gift. When her classmates see her gift, they suspect her of being a witch. I thought this was a neat story, and the illustrations are beautiful. As a mother, the amount of sneaking out and danger that 11-year-old Martine encounters bothered me, but none of that scared my daughter. There's also a woman that reads bones to predict the future, so that might bother some people. The book is recommended for ages 8-12, and I think that's pretty spot on. For a kid's book, this was a decent length, 180 pages. Some of the animals mentioned I'm not sure that age group would be able to identify, but it's a well written book. There are 3 other books in the series: Dolphin Song, The Last Leopard and The Elephant's Tale.

I loved this book. I'm an adult but I enjoyed this story and I'll probably read the whole series. I loved learning about Africa which is a place I knew so little about. I looked up every place, animal or plant to learn more as I read. The writing style was so good with enough description to paint each place and person clearly without getting boring. There were some typos in my ebook copy, mostly at the beginning of chapters, and I hope they will fix those. They look like copy and paste errors and I'm sure a program of some sort was used that seemed to have issues at the start of a chapter. It happens about 5 or 6 times. I hope there will be an update.

A pleasant contemporary read with magical elements, *The White Giraffe* follows the adventures of a young girl named Martine. After losing her parents in a fire, Martine finds herself in South Africa, living on a game reserve. But she doesn't feel welcome by either her grandmother or the kids at school, so when she hears about a white giraffe, she decides to check it out. What she finds is far more than she could ever have imagined. Finding courage and talents she didn't know she had, Martine faces a future unlike any she could have imagined. I think what I enjoyed most about this book is the vivid setting that the author creates. I could almost feel the heat and hear the animals. And the idea of riding a giraffe is a fun one, although staying on would definitely be a problem. The magical elements fit into the story fairly well, proceeding as they do from native beliefs expressed through Grace, a Zulu sangamo (healer). The story is an interesting one as Martine befriends the giraffe and then has to deal with her ability to heal as well as poachers and mean kids at school. Recommended.

Words can't describe the feeling I have for this book. As an adult, it draws back to me the many strong bonds I have held with animals and how they soothe our human griefs. I have compiled several small photo books of pictures of Sawubona, the mountains, the sea, and all the places they rode, and some photos of the people Maritine may have met. (downloaded from internet site) I will include these with the books that I plan to give to my 7 year old, gentle animal lover granddaughter so she can imagine the terrain as we read it to her (perfect for a chapter at bedtime), and also to some other young girls ages 9-14 in my family. I have recommended this to all my friends who also give it 5+ stars. Looking forward to reading the rest of Lauren St. John books.

My daughter and I read this book aloud when she was about 9 or 10. We did that because we enjoyed the activity of reading aloud. I probably wouldn't have read this book if I hadn't read it with her. We both absolutely loved it. One of the rewards of raising a child is coming in contact with children's literature that didn't exist when I was growing up. Lauren St. John's work is some of this literature. When I gave my now 15 year old daughter a Kindle for the holidays, I included *The White Giraffe* as a nostalgic present, along with several books more of her age group. I'm sure we'll both re-read this book more than one time. It's an adventure story, it's magical, and it's poignant. There are other Lauren St. John books in the series with the same characters, but *The White Giraffe* remains a favorite.

I've read this book many times with my daughter through the years, but she wanted to do a book report on it. I had to buy it for my Kindle because we loaned it out. This book has it all: animals!, preteen angst, dealing with bullies, magic, the lingering undercurrents of Apartheid and discovering what you're made of.

It's true that it is hard to resist the cover. All the rest of the wonderful black and white illustrations by David Dean are also delightful, but the book also is paced well, has fun characters, and the appeal of animals and foreign places. The best part for me is that the setting rings true; it sounds like the author knows what she's talking about and loves sharing it with her audience. She does mention some of the social issues in South Africa, but since that is not the intent of the book, she doesn't dwell on them. The book isn't aimed at young adults; it's a children's book so the plot is fairly simple but nonetheless enjoyable for all ages. I'm looking forward to future journeys with St. John's colorful settings, whimsical fantasy, and endearing animals.

Bought this gift for my grandson's birthday. He's an avid reader. He tells me it was a good book and I will have to take his word on that. Great price for it.

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