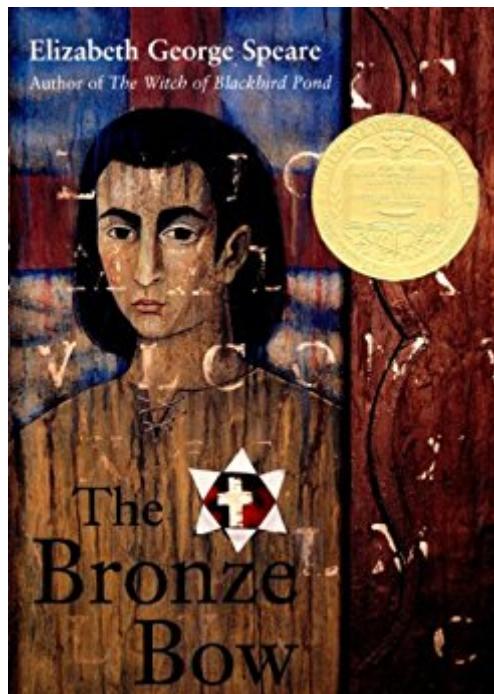


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Bronze Bow



Synopsis

He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. (from the Song of David (2 Samuel 22:35)) The Bronze Bow, written by Elizabeth George Speare (author of The Witch of Blackbird Pond) won the Newbery Medal in 1962. This gripping, action-packed novel tells the story of eighteen-year-old Daniel bar Jamin—a fierce, hotheaded young man bent on revenging his father's death by forcing the Romans from his land of Israel.

Daniel's palpable hatred for Romans wanes only when he starts to hear the gentle lessons of the traveling carpenter, Jesus of Nazareth. A fast-paced, suspenseful, vividly wrought tale of friendship, loyalty, the idea of home, community . . . and ultimately, as Jesus says to Daniel on page 224: "Can you see, Daniel, it is hate that is the enemy? Not men. Hate does not die with killing. It only springs up a hundredfold. The only thing stronger than hate is love." A powerful, relevant read in turbulent times. (A)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Upon his grandmother's death, teenaged Daniel returns to the town where he grew

up to take care of his demon-possessed sister and take over the blacksmith shop of a friend, Simon, who has become one of Jesus' disciples. Hoping Jesus is the one to deliver them from the tyranny of the Romans, Daniel and his friends form a group with the bronze bow (from 2 Samuel) as their symbol. The Bronze Bow by Elizabeth George Speare is a wonderful story of what anger and hate can do to us. The setting of first century Galilee and the peripheral character of Jesus Christ works well. I recommend this book to anyone about middle school age and up.

One of the better fictionalized New Testament stories I've read. In a genre where sometimes the bar isn't set too high, in this book, the characters were well-drawn and interesting. The 1st century setting felt real. The author achieves a real transformation for the main character, Daniel, and it is well-dramatized and affecting. Apparently, this is what would be deemed YA (young adult) category, but I'm an adult and I enjoyed it.

My daughter's Sunday School teacher gave this book to her class as a Christmas present last year, and I recently read it. It was so good that I purchased it for a friend who also enjoys historical Christian fiction. It's very well written, and I learned a lot about the culture of Jesus' day. I think it will give anyone a greater appreciation of the ministry of Jesus, the struggles that the Jewish community experienced under the control of the Romans, and a visualization of the region of Galilee where Jesus spent most of his life an ministry.

Read this myself in middle school and as an adult I still remember how much this impacted me in my youth. Through the point of view of a young boy during the time of Jesus, it was interesting to see how he was influenced even though his life was totally separate and he was going through hard times on top of finding his place in the world. Lots of great core value stuff in here. Got this for my nephew for Christmas but haven't heard yet how he liked it.

Although it would never win the Newbery these days due to its specifically religious content, this story is quite timely in terms of the ongoing struggles in Israel/Palestine (although the tables are turned at this point). The setting is first-century Israel, and we see Jewish society excited about the arrival of a teacher and preacher, Jesus, who, despite his background as a carpenter, teaches with authority and is reputed to heal people. Eighteen-year-old Daniel, a Jewish boy, hates the Romans because of his personal history with them. He joins up with a group of bandit rebels, led by the charismatic Rosh, who live in caves up in the hills. Daniel meets Joel and his sister Malthace

(Thacia), siblings from a religious, educated Jewish family, when they explore the hills one day on their holiday. He also befriends Samson, a huge slave, possibly mute, that the rebels "freed" and who latched onto Daniel. Daniel left his family behind when he escaped a cruel apprentice-master to join the rebels: his sister, Leah, traumatized by earlier events, and his elderly grandmother. A major part of the plot revolves around Daniel's inner conflict between his love of the exciting but relatively carefree life with the rebels and his sense of obligation toward his family. Eventually, Joel and Thacia become involved in his family's struggle for survival, as well as in the struggle against the Romans. Throughout, Daniel keeps encountering Jesus, mostly through his friend Simon, the Zealot (also an ironsmith), and his inner conflict widens to include his deep hatred of the Romans and desire for revenge with Jesus' message of forgiveness and peace. This book gave me a different and more human perspective on Jesus; some of the best parts describe a weary Jesus who, nevertheless, takes time for people, especially for a confused Daniel. Speare was masterful in portraying the culture of the time, and the contrast between Daniel (a poor, orphaned ironsmith) and Joel (his friend, son of an influential and wealthy rabbi), as well as their encounters with the impoverished and ignorant "rabble," shows the stratification of that society in a concrete and interesting way. We used this book for a church reading group, and everyone who read it had favorable feedback, although Daniel's truculent, scowling personality grated on at least one reader.

Bronze Bow is an excellent, timeless book. It is well written and helps students or adults understand what was going on in Israel during the time of Jesus. It deals with the resistance to the Roman intervention. The best aspect of the book is that Jesus is an important supporting character, but whenever he is directly involved in the plot, he doesn't do or say anything that is not specifically described in the Bible. This book does not proselytize but has a strong theme of forgiveness and sacrifice. It is appropriate for both Christians and non-Christians who are interested in the culture at the time.

I don't think I have what one might call a huge interest in Jerusalem. I'm pretty religious and I enjoy studying the religion, but what mostly drew me to this book was not the Jerusalem/Judaism/Christ aspect but the fact that this was written by Elizabeth George Speare. But it worked well and I have to admire the woman from stepping out of New England for a captivating portrayal of a young man torn between a vow of vengeance and the redeeming power of love. Daniel is someone with whom everyone should be able to identify, determined to do what he feels is right and just. Even with all his intentions of fighting the Romans, he still comes off as an eighteen year-old boy with all of those

thoughts and feelings. The writing, as usual for this great writer, is fantastic and detailed without being overwhelming. There is plenty of adventure which is well-balanced with the sweet story of Jesus Christ. Even so, I would not call this a proselyting book, but a piece of historical fiction of a boy who happens to be touched by Christ. I was deeply moved and impressed.

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