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The Firebird

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Yolen, Jane. *The Firebird*. Illustrated by Vladimir Vagin. HarperCollins, 2002. ISBN 0060285397. \$15.89. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading level: Preschool

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fairytales; Picture book

Subject: Fairytales—Juvenile fiction; Folklore—Russia; Ballet--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews

The Firebird tells the story of Prince Ivan and his attempts to rescue a princess and her maidens from the evil wizard Kostchei. Using a magic feather and a golden sword from the mysterious Firebird, Ivan slays Kostchei and frees the women.

This exquisite version of the Firebird combines elements of the original Russian folktale with elements of the ballet choreographed by George Balanchine. Each double-page spread of text and illustrations is divided into a top panel and a bottom panel. The top panel consists of illustrations and text that tell the folktale version of the legend. The bottom panel displays the corresponding scene from the ballet, depicting dancers dressed as the Firebird, Prince Ivan and various demons. Vladimir Vagin's luminous illustrations are the perfect complement to Jane Yolen's text.

In an author's note, Yolen explains the sources for the Firebird legend, as well as her experience seeing the actual ballet. This book will appeal to those who love ballet.