



2008

# The Snow Queen

Jan Staheli

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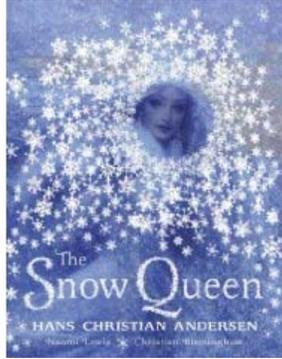
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### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Staheli, Jan (2008) "The Snow Queen," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 4 , Article 17.

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Andersen, Hans Christian. Retold by Naomi Lewis. *The Snow Queen*. Illustrated by Christian Birmingham. Candlewick Press, 2008. ISBN 9780763632298. \$18.99. 64 p.

Reviewer: Jan Staheli

Reading Level: All;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Fairy tales; Children's picture books;

Subject: Friendship; Winter--Juvenile fiction; Snow Queen (fictitious character); Books--Reviews;

In this classic fairy tale, Kay and Gerda are "not brother and sister, but they were just as fond of each other as if they were." One summer day, Kay is pierced in the heart and eye by the splinters of a demon's mirror. They immediately begin to freeze his heart and cloud his vision to what is good and beautiful. He is taken by the Snow Queen, who kisses him on the forehead. "Her kiss was colder than ice; it went straight to his heart, which was already turning into a lump of ice." When Kay doesn't return, Gerda sets out to find him. Meeting witches, princes, robbers, and snowflake soldiers, she makes her way to the Snow Queen's palace, where she weeps for joy at finding Kay. Her tears melt the lump that is his heart and his own tears wash his eyes clear. They walk home hand-in-hand and discover that they are not young children anymore. As they sit in the sunshine, Grandmother reads to them from the Bible, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The beautifully illustrated, large-format (30 x 26 cm.) picture book might have come straight from the Snow Queen's palace. The board cover is decorated in icy blues and creams, with a clear dust jacket covered with iridescent snow flakes. The story is presented in seven parts, just as Andersen published it in 1845. Lewis' retelling is clear and sweet, with a straight narrative line that carries the reader through the tale. The pastel illustrations are evocative and varied, with a broad color palette from the cool winter blues to bright summer hues. This lovely story can be read as a fairy tale or as an allegory about the various natures of love, especially Christ-like love. With these qualities, the story and its illustrations will be enjoyed by all ages.

Volume 29, no. 4 (March/April 2009)