



2009

### Zarafa: The Giraffe Who Walked to the King

Meriam Bates

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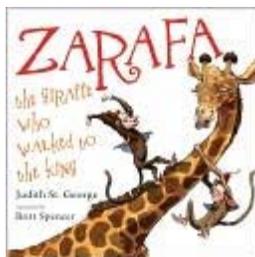
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St. George, Judith. *Zarafa: The Giraffe Who Walked to the King*. Illustrated by Britt Spencer. Philomel, 2009. ISBN 9780399250491. \$16.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Meriam Bates

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical fiction; Biographies; Adventure stories;

Subject: Giraffe--Egypt--Biography--Juvenile literature; France--Kings and rulers--History--19th century--Juvenile literature; Diplomatic gifts--History--19th century--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Zarafa means charming or lovely one in Arabic. It was also the name of a giraffe who was a present from the king of Egypt to the king of France. In order to get from Egypt to France, Zarafa had to travel on camels, boats, and even walk the last five hundred miles of the journey. Throughout it Zarafa was sweet and good tempered and everyone loved her, especially the King of France. French citizens came to visit her by the thousands at the zoo in Paris until her death in 1845.

St. George brings the true story of Zarafa to life in this readable, brightly illustrated picture book. She stays true to the facts of the real life story, but at the same time brings it to a fun and interesting level for young readers. Spencer's watercolor, gouache and ink illustrations are lively and bright. He uses bright colors for the African scenes and more subdued ones for the European scenes, symbolizing the distance that Zarafa travels as well as helping the reader to understand how different and exciting Zarafa must have appeared to the French people who had never seen anything like her.

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