

**The Blue Sword By Robin
Mckinley**

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An Enduring Classic: Rediscoveri ng The Blue Sword By Robin McKinley

In the vast landscape of young adult fantasy literature, few novels have achieved the quiet, persistent longevity of **The Blue Sword**.

by Robin McKinley. First published in 1982, this novel has captivated generations of readers with its blend of desert adventure, quiet romance, and a heroine who earns her power through grit and grace rather than prophecy or birthright. For those who have yet to step into the dusty, windswept world of **Damar—and for**

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those who wish to return—this deep dive explores why **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley** remains a cornerstone of the fantasy genre.

The World of Damar: A Land of Sand and Sorcery

One of the most compelling aspects of **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley** is the richly imagined setting of Damar. McKinley crafts a world that feels both ancient and immediate. The homeland of the Homelander colonists, with its

tidy farms and predictable seasons, stands in stark contrast to the sprawling, untamed desert of the Hillfolk. This dichotomy is not merely

geographical; it is cultural and magical. The desert hums with a latent power, a current of magic known as the "kelar" that flows through the land and its rightful rulers. McKinley does not bog the reader down with thick paragraphs of exposition. Instead, she reveals Damar slowly, through the eyes of her protagonist, allowing the reader to discover the beauty and danger of the desert alongside her. The

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heat, the vastness, quiet, and too fond
the sudden storms, of riding across the
and the quiet plains alone.
dignity of the McKinley
Hillfolk all masterfully avoids
contribute to a the trope of the
setting that feels "chosen one" who
like a character in immediately takes
its own right. up a sword with
practiced ease.

Introducing Harry Crewe: The Reluctant Heroine

The heart of **The Blue Sword by Robin McKinley** is Angharad Crewe, known to everyone as Harry. Orphaned and sent to the remote outpost of Istan to live with her brother, Harry is a classic outsider. She does not fit into the rigid social structure of the Homelanders. She is too tall, too

Harry is awkward, lonely, and unsure of her place in the world. Her journey is not about discovering that she was always powerful; it is about discovering that she *can* become powerful through determination, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace the unknown. This makes her one of the most relatable and beloved heroines in fantasy.

Readers do not

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admire Harry because she is perfect; they admire her because she is real.

A Plot Woven with Destiny and Choice

The narrative of **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley** unfolds with the measured pace of an epic, yet it never feels slow. The story begins when Harry is kidnapped—or, more accurately, "claimed"—by Corlath, the king of the Hillfolk. This is not a tale of a damsel in distress. Corlath takes Harry because the magic of the kelar

compels him. He senses something in her, a spark of the old power that the Hillfolk revere. Initially resistant and proud, Harry soon finds herself immersed in a culture that values strength, honor, and a connection to the land. She learns to ride the fierce desert horses, to fight with the curved, deadly sword that gives the book its name, and to listen to the whispers of magic that surround her. The central conflict arises when the demonic Northerners threaten to invade Damar. Harry, now called "Harimad-sol" or "Harry, sword-solver," must decide whether to

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stand with her new from a metal that people or return to glows with a cold the safety of the blue light, the Homelanders. The sword is an artifact The climax is a of the legendary sweeping, Damarian kings desperate battle and queens of old. against When Harry first overwhelming touches it, she is odds, a sequence overwhelmed by that McKinley visions and a surge writes with visceral of kelar. The sword clarity and does not grant her emotional weight. power; it connects her to a lineage of rulers who shaped the land. It is a burden as much as a gift. McKinley uses the sword to explore the idea that true leadership is not about domination but about stewardship. Harry must learn to control the sword, not be controlled by it. This nuance elevates **The Blue Sword by Robin**

The Significance of the Blue Sword Itself

In many fantasy stories, a magical weapon is simply a tool of power. In **The Blue Sword by Robin McKinley**, the sword is a symbol of heritage, responsibility, and

belonging. Forged **McKinley** above

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simpler tales of magical artifacts. The sword is a test of character, and Harry passes that test not by force of will, but by learning humility and respect for the power she wields.

Themes That Resonate Across Generations

Why has **The Blue Sword** by Robin McKinley endured for over four decades? The answer lies in its timeless themes.

- **Identity and Belonging:** Harry

struggles with where she belongs. She is not truly a Homelander, but she is not born a Hillfolk either. Her journey is about creating a third space for herself, a place where she can be both. This resonates deeply with young readers who often feel caught between different worlds.

- **Cultural Understanding:** The novel handles the clash of cultures with surprising subtlety. The Homelanders

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are not evil, **McKinley** to master it

just ignorant.

The Hillfolk

are not

savages, just

different.

Harry learns

to bridge this

gap,

respecting

both

traditions

while forging

her own path.

- **Inner**

Strength vs.

Outer Power:

The Blue

Sword by

Robin

McKinley

repeatedly

emphasizes

that true

strength

comes from

within. Harry

is physically

overtaken by

the kelar at

first, but she

slowly learns

through

discipline and

self-

awareness.

- **Friendship**

and Loyalty:

The bonds

Harry

forms—with

the wise

woman Luthe,

the fierce king

Corlath, and

even the

horses she

rides—are

central to the

story. These

relationships

are earned,

not given, and

they provide

the emotional

core of the

novel.

A Writing

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Whispers and Roars

Robin McKinley's prose is often described as "lush" or "dense," and these descriptions are accurate. She writes in long, flowing sentences that pull the reader into Harry's internal world. However, this style is not without its critics. Some readers find the pacing slow in the middle sections of **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley**. Yet, this deliberate pace is a feature, not a bug. McKinley takes the time to let the desert and its magic seep into the

reader's consciousness. The action scenes, when they come, are all the more powerful for the quiet that precedes them. McKinley has a gift for sensory detail. You can feel the grit of sand, the heat of the sun, and the cool weight of the blue sword in Harry's hand. This immersive quality is why many readers return to **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley** year after year; it is not just a story you read, but a world you inhabit.

**Comparing to
Its Prequel:
The Hero and**

The Blue Sword By Robin the Crown Mckinley

No discussion of **The Blue Sword by Robin McKinley** is complete without mentioning its predecessor, *The Hero and the Crown*. While **The Blue Sword by Robin McKinley** was published first, it is technically a sequel, set generations after the events of *The Hero and the Crown*. That novel tells the story of Aerin, the legendary queen of Damar whose bloodline carries the kelar. Reading *The Hero and the Crown* after **The Blue Sword by Robin McKinley** enriches the experience.

providing context for the magic and history that Harry discovers. Aerin is a more fiery, impulsive heroine compared to Harry's steady pragmatism. Both books stand alone beautifully, but together they form a diptych that explores different facets of heroism. Fans of **The Blue Sword by Robin McKinley** often find equal joy in Aerin's story, creating a small but perfect universe within McKinley's bibliography.

Critical Reception and Lasting

Legacy

Upon its release, **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley** was met with widespread acclaim. It won the Newbery Honor in 1983, a prestigious award that solidified its place in children's literature. Critics praised its strong female protagonist and its original fantasy setting at a time when the genre was often dominated by medieval European tropes. Over the years, **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley** has been cited by countless authors as an inspiration. It paved the way for other quiet,

introspective fantasy heroines who rely on wit and will rather than magical destiny. The novel has never gone out of print, a testament to its enduring appeal. In an age of sprawling fantasy series with grimdark themes, the compact, hopeful story of **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley** offers a refreshing and grounding reading experience.

Why It Matters Today

In a modern publishing landscape saturated with high-stakes, fast-paced fantasy, the measured and

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thoughtful **McKinley** a

approach of **The** surprisingly
Blue Sword by progressive novel
Robin McKinley for its time. For
feels almost young readers
radical. It demands today, Harry Crewe
patience from the remains a powerful
reader but rewards role model: a girl
that patience with a who is brave not
deeply satisfying because she is
emotional arc. The fearless, but
novel handles because she acts in
themes of spite of her fear.

colonization and
cultural exchange
with a sensitivity
that remains
relevant today.
Harry does not
"civilize" the
Hillfolk; they
civilize her. She
learns from them,
adapts to their
ways, and finds her
strength within
their framework.
This subversion of
the classic "white
savior" narrative
makes **The Blue**

Conclusion: A Sword Worth Lifting

Reading **The Blue
Sword by Robin
McKinley** is an act
of quiet discovery.
It is a book that
does not shout for
attention but earns
it through the
sheer power of its
craft. From the sun-

Sword by Robin scorched plains of

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Damar to the quiet determination of its heroine, every element of this novel has been carefully and lovingly constructed. It is a story about finding your home, claiming your power, and learning to wield a legacy with both hands. Whether you are a long-time

fan returning to a familiar friend or a new reader seeking a classic fantasy experience, **The Blue Sword** by **Robin McKinley** awaits. It is a novel that reminds us that the most powerful magic is often the quiet kind—the magic of belonging, of courage, and of a heart willing to try.