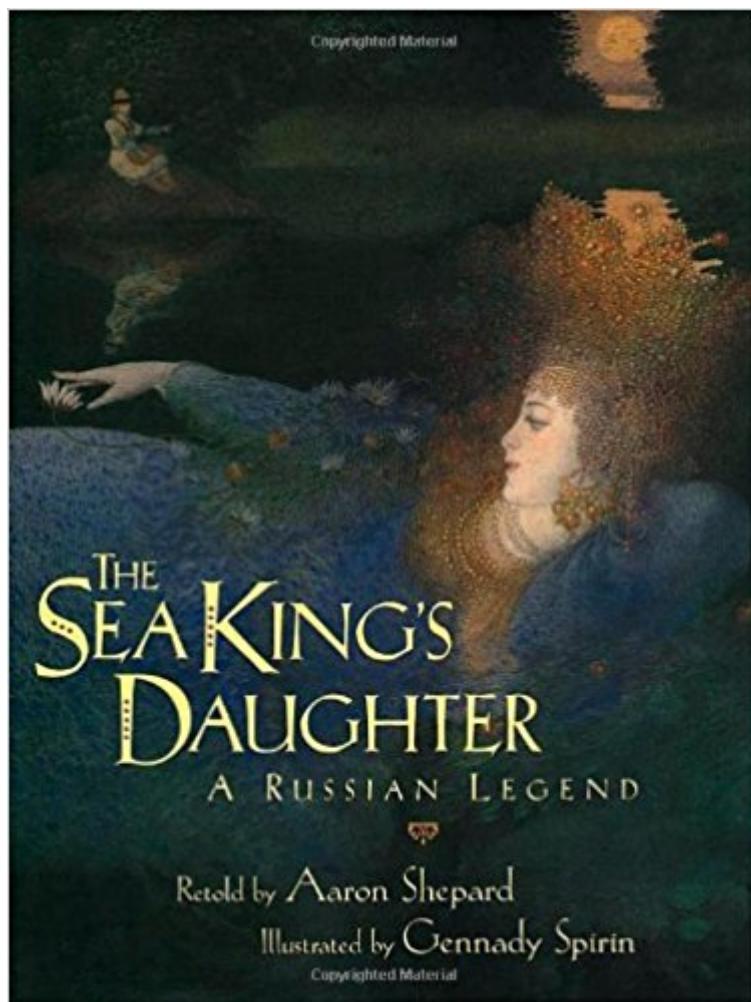


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# The Sea King's Daughter: A Russian Legend



## Synopsis

Sadko the musician loved his city of Novgorod, the richest and most free in all Russia. With its great feasts, its white stone churches, its merchant visitors from many lands, Sadko felt there was no better place to be. Yet he was lonely too, for the rich young ladies who danced to his music would never favor anyone so poor.Â One night he takes his twelve-string gusli and goes alone to play by the River Volkhov. Suddenly from the water rises the Sea King, who invites the astonished musician to play at his underwater palace. But how will Sadko get there? And how will he get back? And will he want to return at all, when he meets the Sea King's lovely daughter?Â One of the most popular legends of Russia, Sadko's story is found in medieval epic ballads, as well as in a popular opera by Rimsky-Korsakov. It is retold here in elegant prose, complemented by the entrancing illustrations of a modern Russian master.Â TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS -- A READER'S THEATER SCRIPT OF THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE IN AARON'S BOOK "FOLKTALES ON STAGE," OR FREE ON AARON'S WEB SITE.Â /////////////////////////////////Â Aaron Shepard is the award-winning author of "The Baker's Dozen," "The Sea King's Daughter," "The Monkey King," and many more children's books. His stories have appeared often in Cricket magazine, while his Web site is known internationally as a prime resource for folktales, storytelling, and reader's theater. Once a professional storyteller, Aaron specializes in lively retellings of folktales and other traditional literature, which have won him honors from the American Library Association, the New York Public Library, the Bank Street College of Education, the National Council for the Social Studies, and the American Folklore Society.Â Gennady Spirin, with a style he describes as "fairy-tale realism," is one of the world's most esteemed children's illustrators. His honors include five gold medals from the Society of Illustrators, the Golden Apple from the Bratislava International Biennial, First Prize at the Bologna and Barcelona international book fairs, and four appearances on the New York Times list of Ten Best Illustrated Books of the Year. Born and trained in Russia before moving to the United States, Gennady already knew well the legend of Sadko and welcomed the chance to contribute his sumptuous art to this retelling.Â Â

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 3-6. A poor but gifted musician draws the attention of the King of the Sea, who invites him to visit his palace under the sea. The ruler then becomes so taken with the young man's music that he insists Sadko stay and marry one of his daughters. The Sea Queen, however, whispers to Sadko that if he kisses or embraces his sea-wife, he will never be able to return home again. That evening he lies next to his bride, the Princess Volkhova, but never touches her. The next morning he awakes beside the River Volkhov in his beloved city of Novgorod. He becomes a rich merchant, marries, and raises a family, but whenever he plays his music near the river, he thinks he sees the Princess Volkhova raising her head out of the water to listen. This retelling retains the flavor of Old Russia. Shepard includes detailed notes about the story, his sources, and a brief pronunciation guide. Spirin's full-page watercolor and colored-pencil illustrations are lavish, highly decorative, and somewhat formal in their execution. Done in a palette of sepia-toned browns, reds, and blues, the pictures are highly stylized and reminiscent of a late 19th-century illustrative style. The depiction of the Sea King's family is interesting; while some of the undersea creatures are depicted as mermaids, the Sea King and his family wear traditional Russian dress and have legs and feet. Overall, this is a fascinating spin on mermaid/human interaction and should appeal to an older picture-book audience. ?Denise Anton Wright, Illinois State University, Normal Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Â 1997 New York Times Ten Best Illustrated Books of the YearÂ 1998 American Library Association Notable Children's BooksÂ 1998 NCSS/CBC Notable Trade Books in the Field of Social StudiesÂ 1997 Aesop Accolade, American Folklore SocietyÂ 1998 Honor Title, Storytelling World AwardsÂ 1997 Cincinnati Enquirer Best Illustrated Children's BooksÂ American Bookseller Pick of the ListsÂ Starred review, Publishers WeeklyÂ Featured on CBS This MorningÂ "Emotionally

authentic prose and jewel-like illustrations make this an exquisite volume. . . . [A] mood of eloquent enchantment." -- Publishers Weekly, Aug. 25, 1997, starred reviewÂ "Exquisite." -- The New York Times Book Review, Oct. 26, 1997Â "Knock-your-socks-off beautiful. . . . Will stay in a family's library forever." -- Valerie Lewis, "CBS This Morning," Dec. 11, 1997Â "Retains the flavor of Old Russia. . . . A fascinating spin on mermaid/human interaction." -- Denise Anton Wright, School Library Journal, Dec. 1997Â "The telling is descriptive yet very accessible. . . . The pictures are gorgeous and resplendent with extraordinary details." -- Stephanie Zvirin, American Library Association Booklist, Nov. 15, 1997Â "Aaron Shepard proves once again that he is one of the finest authors working in the field of folktales today. Meticulous research and a respect for the story, as well as those who have told it, characterize all of Aaron's works. Set off by illustrations that are as wondrous and detailed as the story, this is a book that begs to be read aloud." -- Kip Nead, Growing Up, Nov. 1997Â "Aaron's prose is both lyrical and storyteller-friendly, plus he includes excellent notes on his sources and the historical and cultural background of the story." -- Katy Rydell, Stories, Winter 1998Â "Involving. . . . Stunning." -- Susie Wilde, WUNC-FMÂ "Lush language and Gennady Spirin's intricate watercolors make *The Sea King's Daughter* a feast for ear and eye." -- Mary Quattlebaum, Washington Parent, May 1998Â "Rich. . . . This book will delight students of all ages." -- The Mailbox Bookbag, Aug.-Sept. 1998Â "Shepard masterfully brings this story to a new audience." -- Janet Marnatti, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Nov. 15, 1998Â "A satisfying story, beautifully illustrated." -- Marilyn Courtot, Children's Literature, June

1998Â /////////////////////////////////Â SAMPLEÂ Down sank Sadko, down all the way to the sea floor. The red sun shone dimly through the water above, while before him stood a white stone palace.Â Sadko passed through a coral gate. As he reached the huge palace doors, they swung open to reveal a giant hall. The elegant room was filled with guests and royal attendants -- herring and sprats, cod and flounder, gobies and sticklebacks, sand eels and sea scorpions, crabs and lobsters, starfish and squid, sea turtles and giant sturgeon.Â Standing among the guests were dozens of maidens -- river nymphs, the Sea King's daughters. On a shell throne at the end of the hall sat the Sea King and his Queen.Â "You're just in time!" called the King. "Musician, come sit by me -- and let the dance begin!"Â Sadko set his gusli on his lap and plucked a merry tune. Soon all the fish swam in graceful figures. The seafloor crawlers cavorted. The river maidens leaped and spun.Â "I like that tune!" declared the King. He jumped to the center of the hall and joined the dance. His arms waved, his robe swirled, his hair streamed, his feet stamped.Â "Faster!" cried the King. "Play faster!"Â Sadko played faster and the King's dance grew wilder. All the others stopped and watched in awe. Ever more madly did he move, whirling faster, leaping higher, stamping

harder.Â The Sea Queen whispered urgently, "Musician, end your tune! It seems to you the King merely dances in his hall. But above us, the sea is tossing ships like toys, and giant waves are breaking on the shore!"Â Alarmed, Sadko pulled a string until it snapped. "Your Majesty, my gusli is broken."Â "A shame," said the Sea King, winding to a stop. "I could have danced for days. But a fine fellow you are, Sadko. I think I'll marry you to one of my daughters and keep you here forever."Â

Great Russian tale and illustrations from Gennady Spirin. The 17th and 18th century costumes in the illustrations have so much detail you can look at them and find something new every time. The story is a nice adventure and as with all good Russian tales has a bitter sweet ending.

My granddaughters, aged 4 and 6, are at rapt attention while this book is being read. It has inspired them to ask very good questions which opens the discussion for great learning. Beautifully illustrated.

#### Cute story

This book is a joy to look at, and the pictures will surely capture your child's imaginations. Set in long-ago Russia and the seas beneath, the story follows the brief love affair between a young minstrel and a mermaid. In the end, the young man chooses to return to the land above the waves, but the bitter-sweet memory lingers. My 4-year-old mermaid daughter enjoyed it, but the book is probably more suited to slightly older kids and early readers.

Beautiful illustrations and the class loved the story as well. Excellent for using as a frame when teaching writing a story from another culture.

Beautiful original ethnic illustrations, and a lovely story.

One of the most beautiful children's books I have ever seen. Worth buying (used) if only for the gorgeous pictures.

I bought this as a gift for my granddaughter and so far I haven't given it to her. I am sure she will love it.

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