



## King of the Wind: The Story of the Godolphin Arabian

*Marguerite Henry, Wesley Dennis (Illustrations)*

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**King of the Wind: The Story of the Godolphin Arabian** Marguerite Henry , Wesley Dennis (Illustrations)

He was named "Sham" for the sun, this golden red stallion born in the Sultan of Morocco's stone stables.

Upon his heel was a small white spot, the symbol of speed. But on his chest was the symbol of misfortune.

Although he was as swift as the desert winds, Sham's proud pedigree would be scorned all his life by cruel masters and owners.

This is the classic story of Sham and his friend, the stable boy Agba. Their adventures take them from the sands of the Sahara to the royal courts of France and, finally, to the green pastures and stately homes of England.

For Sham was the renowned "Godolphin Arabian" whose blood flows through the veins of almost every superior Thoroughbred. Sham's speed-like his story-has become legendary.

## King of the Wind: The Story of the Godolphin Arabian Details

Date : Published November 1st 1990 by Aladdin (first published 1948)

ISBN : 9780027436297

Author : Marguerite Henry , Wesley Dennis (Illustrations)

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## From Reader Review King of the Wind: The Story of the Godolphin Arabian for online ebook

### Rebecca McNutt says

Well-written, vivid and memorable horse story, a definite classic and filled with action and adventure.

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### Josiah says

Few authors bring more sympathy and enlightenment to the story of a horse than Marguerite Henry, and "King of the Wind" happens to be one of her very best such books, if not her magnum opus.

The story of the closeness between the Godolphin Arabian and his young, fiercely loyal master has an emotional stickiness that can't be beat by much else in literature. Ultimately, though the historicity of the story is nothing short of fascinating, I think it is this resonant tenderness of relationship that gained the Newbery Medal for "King of the Wind".

Marguerite Henry has a sweet, understated style of writing that comes through very well in this book. Somehow, though the story is in no wise predictable, the reader feels that everything will turn out right in the end, and it is this innate sense that gives the narrative an added level of charm. "King of the Wind" is a very nice book and, though I have not read all of the contenders for the 1949 Newbery Medal, I would not be surprised if this were the best in the class.

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### Sheila says

This was an enjoyable read, by quintessential horse book author Marguerite Henry. I enjoyed learning the hard luck, riches to rags to riches story (even fictionalized as it was) of the Godolphin Arabian, one of the founding sires of the Thoroughbred horse breed.

The book also tells the story of Agba, a faithful human that follows the horse he calls "Sham", through his entire life. I'm not sure how much of Agba's story is true, or if Agba even ever existed, but I would like to think that he did.

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### Tania says

King of the Wind is the perfect example of how to fictionalize a true story. None of the elements added to the story took away from the story itself, they simply added its heart and soul. Reading this story, both as a child and an adult, I can place myself in Agba's shoes [or bare feet] and walk those thousands of miles with him and Sham through time. King of the Wind is my favorite horse story, and honestly favorite book, of all time. Henry impresses upon the reader all the beauty and majesty of this horse who holds such a special place in the history of Thoroughbreds.

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## **Kate Schwarz says**

Great trip down memory lane for me--Marguerite Henry was one of my very, very favorite authors as a horse-obsessed kid. I will have to read Misty of Chincoteague soon, even though it's not a Newbery Book (just an honor book...still very worth of my 2353rd read in my life).

I liked the historical fiction aspect of the novel, loved the story of the first Arabian to arrive in Europe and strengthen the bloodlines of the horses there, and the story of Agba, the little mute horseboy, and his devotion to Sham, the Arabian stallion, is really touching.

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## **Joy H. says**

Added 2/1/11. (first published 1948)

Below are the comments I made about King of the Wind at my GR group:

I recently listened to the audio version of King of the Wind: The Story of the Godolphin Arabian (first published 1948) by Marguerite Henry. It won the 1949 Newbery Medal, an award given to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

This fictionalized story is based on fact. The Godolphin Arabian is the ancestor of the finest thoroughbred horses. The story tells about a swift and spirited Arabian horse named "Sham" who is sent by the Sultan of Morocco as a gift to Louis XV of France. Sham eventually sires a colt which is the beginning of the Godolphin Arabian breed.

Although this is a book for young readers, it's an interesting, touching, well-told tale which appeals to older readers as well. A customer review at Amazon says:

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"Marguerite Henry's fictionalized biography of the Godolphin Arabian, one of the three founding thoroughbred sires, follows the horse Sham and his mute groom Agba from the stables of the Sultan of Morocco through hardship in France and England to celebrated triumph at stud. ... Agba, who never speaks a word, is one of the most absorbing characters in children's fiction. ... it's a must for horse lovers."  
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Marguerite Henry also wrote Misty of Chincoteague (1947), about a pony. In 1961, it was made into a movie which is streamable from Netflix:

**"Misty"** (1961)

<http://movies.netflix.com/Movie/Misty...>

Jim's review of the Misty book is here:

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

**PS-My thanks to Werner whose post originally led me to this story, King of the Wind.**

See his message #44 at: <http://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/4...>

**ADDENDUM - 3/22/16**

I just discovered that there is a film adaptation of this book, King of the Wind: The Story of the Godolphin Arabian.

FILM: "**King of the Wind**" (1990)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097668/?...>

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TWO SUMMARIES FROM ABOVE-LINKED IMDb page:

"In 1727, an Arab colt is born with the signs of the wheat ear and the white spot on his heel: evil and good. And thus begins the life of Sham. He is a gift to the King of France, through a series of adventures with his faithful stable boy, Agba, he becomes the Godolphin Arabian, the founder of one of the greatest thoroughbred racing lines of all time."

"Based on author Marguerite Henry's popular children's novel, winner of the Newbery Medal in 1949, King of the Wind is a fictionalized account of the emergence of Sham, the renowned Godolphin Arabian who fathered a long line of outstanding race horses. **The ancestries of Man o' War and Seabiscuit can be traced back to the Godolphin Arabian.**"

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Our public library has the DVD! Good news all around!

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### **Anne Osterlund says**

Agba is a Moroccan slave boy who works with horses. And falls in love with a small colt bearing the marks of both greatness and danger. The boy names the horse Sham and together they race like the wind. When the Sultan of Morocco selects Sham as one of the six perfect horses to send to the king of France (ordering Agba to go with him), the boy believes the horse's destiny is about to unfold.

But will Sham's destiny be that of greatness?

Or will the mark of danger dominate both of their lives?

A fictional tale of the Godolphin Arabian. I read Marguerite Henry's Misty books when I was about ten, followed by almost all of Walter Farley's Black Stallion series (one of my FAVORITES). But somehow it's taken forever for me to actually tackle King of the Wind. Didn't take forever to read though. I just might have to blitz through the rest of Henry's horse books for good measure.

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### **Desi says**

If they still had the library records from my elementary school, one would see that I checked this book out SO MANY TIMES.

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### **Laura Verret says**

*King of the Wind*. The name itself oozes of Arabian sand and high-blooded stallions...

**The Story.**

Agba has lost his heart; lost it to the beautiful mare, the mare who lives in the Sultan's stables. The mare is a lovely thing and she holds a tiny foal deep within her tummy. Tonight is the night it will come into the world.

Agba is worried as he tends the mare throughout the night, but the morning sun shines on a new foal, spindly and small in the sunlight. His name will be Sham – the Arabic word for sun – and he will race as the wildest wind, for on his heel is the tiny white spot, the spot of swiftest. A champion among steeds has been born.

One day at the Sultan's command, six stable boys stand before his majesty. He commands that these six boys and the six most magnificent horses in his stable be sent as a gift to King Louis XV and France. Agba and his Sham are chosen. They journey over land and the sea till they arrive in this foreign land of France. King Louis XV uses Sham for a short time, but soon Sham is sold, unjustly sold; sold to a driver of wagons.

As Sham is passed from owner to owner, Agba wonders at this. Will Sham ever be appreciated for his splendor and speed? Will he ever be sold to a man worthy to own the King of the Wind?

**Conclusion.** An inspiring fictionalized biography whose setting ranges from the opulent magnificence of a Sultan's palace to the cramped stables of an English Inn. Its adventurous story and historical instruction will thrill its readers – especially those who love animals. Or horse stories. =)

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### **Mirrani says**

It seems like all the "classic" books about horses follow the same mold; the horse is born, grows up, learns how to handle humans, goes through a casting out period where they are treated horribly and become separated from the people they love, then somewhere toward the end they find their family or human again and all is restored in the world. This book fits right in with that category, so why do we all love it so deeply?

The story of Sham is the story of hope, of struggle through hardship and the return to grace. It is also the story of the strength in friendship. But more than all of this, it is the story of a great horse who was made great not by his deeds, but by the deeds of his children. King of the Wind captures the essence of Sham's greatness, showing it to the readers in a way that his actions were never allowed to do, all while describing the experiences in the most beautiful and heart-touching detail. Horse lovers and fans of racing will find that this book is so all-encompassing that they simply can not put it down, because after a while you realize you don't see the words on the page, you see the image of the experience in your mind.

Easy to see why this was a Newbery winner and is still a must read.

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### **Kathi says**

I was happy to become reacquainted with Marguerite Henry in this early-ish Newbery winner. Google sources gave me a new appreciation of her from learning about her childhood illness that made her bedridden for six years, to a tribute from her publisher in a commemorative edition of the book. Henry's charm and kindness were noteworthy; plus, what an example of well-lived years: Henry published her last book shortly before she died at 95!

I also enjoyed the history in King of the Wind, as well as the bittersweet devotion of Agba to "his" horse. Had to skim over the suffering of Sham, however; reading about man's inhumanity to animals is almost as difficult as reading about our mistreatment of each other. I will always like stories with happy endings, and was glad to know this one during Sham's difficult years!

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### **Kristen says**

Newbery Medal Winner--1949

I have to admit--I wasn't too excited about this one when I saw it was another horse story, but it was actually an enjoyable little read. Definitely not something I would normally pick up and read, but a lot of these early Newbery winners have been that way.

This is really just a cute story about a boy and his horse--they travel far and wide, experience tragedy and triumph, and are separated at times--but they always find their way back to each other.

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### **Michael Finocchiaro says**

My daughter is 7 and loves horses. And so it is no surprise that this short book by Marguerite Henry about the Godolphin Arabian was one of her favorites. A fairy tale full of surprises and suspense, the story of Agba and Sham was a nice read. There is a more than a tinge of Orientalism unfortunately, but still it does not distract from the beauty of the prose and the splendid illustrations. A classic!

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### **Nandakishore Varma says**

I read this book in my preteen era. I checked it out from the library during summer holidays at my ancestral home: but I could not read it because I caught an eye infection. I left for school with the tragedy of an unread book burning in my heart. So imagine my delight when, next year when I came back for the vacation, I found the book still there - my aunt had forgotten to return it! The library must have written it off as "lost".

The story of the Godolphin Arabian, blessed with unbelievable speed and cursed with ill-luck at the same time, is somehow twined with the story of this particular library copy of the book in my mind. It waited one year patiently, covered with dust and forgotten, to be read and treasured by me when I returned - rather like the protagonist of the story who had a largely tragic life but went on to gain immortality, in the famous breed he fathered.

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### **Mom says**

This book has been my favorite since I was a child and I still love it. My love of horses began with this book.

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### **Joan Innes says**

This classic was a true horse-lovers adventure. The story begins in the royal Arabian household with one of the finest fillies in the kingdom foaling a young colt. From the onset of its life, the beautiful colt has many signs declaring a life of contradictions; greatness and difficulties that prove to be true. It is born during a full moon during Ramadan and has two markings on its sleek coat that signify luck and hardship. Like the stories of the Arabian Nights, this story is full of superstition, good and evil, and harrowing adventures.

The young horse is immediately placed into the earnest care of a young, lithe, diligent boy who happens to be mute. That this young boy, carries the entire adventurous story without saying a word says much to the descriptive story telling of the author. The boys fondness and attachment to the horse carries with them as they are set as an embassage to the King of France along with a dozen other top Arabian horses and their stall boys. This story is ultimately about kindness, destiny and talent winning against all odds.

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### **Emily says**

This book was among a handful that were absolutely beloved stories in my childhood. Although I haven't read this book in probably 30+ years, it was still just as magical to me now as it was then. <3

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### **Wendy says**

This is one of my favorite books of all time. I'm aware that the vast majority of it is made up, but the way Henry weaves the story makes it believable anyway. You want Sham and Agba to be together again, even if Agba wasn't real at all.

One of the criticized portions of the story, the cat Grimalkin, actually was real, if not in quite the way he appeared in this book, by the way.

Henry tells an entertaining, compelling tale which has endeared the Godolphin Arabian, one of three tail-male foundation sires of the Thoroughbred, to people in a way the Darley Arabian and the Byerly Turk haven't at all achieved. And as Gandalf says in the movie, aren't all great stories worthy of a little embellishment? I think so, and this story becomes richer and sweeter for it. Even as an adult I find it extremely entertaining. Your horse-crazy child will love and cherish this book their whole lives, and you just might, too.

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### **Jinn Nelson says**

This book is amazing.

It's told by a mute boy. No joke. It's amazing because it's about a horse and his boy who is mute, and stays mute through the whole story. Probably my favorite thing about this book is that one of the main characters tells you all about what happened to him and his horse without saying a thing.

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## Samuel says

Before I get much farther into this review, I should probably say that I've never been a "horse book" kind of reader. So if you love Black Beauty and National Velvet and The Black Stallion, you may well like King of the Wind more than I did. A lot of the rest of this Goodreads page is full of people who swear by it, largely based on its excellent descriptions of horses and horse behavior.

I can't argue with that -- Henry clearly knew her horses -- but I still wasn't all that sold on King of the Wind. It's more or less based on the story of the Godolphin Arabian, a famous horse whose descendants were some of the finest racehorses of all time (including Man o'War, as the oddly disjunct introduction mentions), but it's so heavily romanticized and embellished as to remove any veneer of realism. We follow the Arabian -- known for most of the book as Sham -- from his initial home in the stables of the Sultan of Morocco, to the Royal Court of France, into disgrace as a cart-horse, and finally into triumph as the greatest sire of racehorses in all England. This whole plot relies heavily on chance coincidences, theatrical gestures, and soap-opera dialogue, and I didn't find it believable in the slightest.

Maybe that's just my resistance to the genre. After all, I've made no secret of my intense dislike of Smoky, the Cowhorse, and the arc of that book's plot, if not any of the specifics, isn't all that far off from King of the Wind. More troubling, though, is the book's lack of characterization. The Arabian is cared for and followed during the whole story by a mute boy named Agba, whose character exhibits almost no development through the novel, and who seems to exist in the story largely because Henry was unable or unwilling to follow the Will James model and have everything take place in the horse's point of view. (As far as I can tell, Agba seems to be entirely a product of Henry's imagination, as opposed to a real person that she worked into the story.)

So, no points for plot or development of characters from me, though Henry's prose is crisp, and the settings (the 1940's ideas about historical Morocco and Islam aside) are well developed. That said, although the 1948 publishing year was a pretty good one for picture books (Blueberries for Sal, Thidwick the Big-Hearted Moose, The Big Snow), it was a weak one for older readers -- maybe the weakest of the decade -- and so I wouldn't characterize King of the Wind as a mistake winner, or anything like that. As I've said before, all publishing years aren't created equal, and King of the Wind was probably as good a choice as anything else. But -- those kids who are really into horses aside -- I think it's a very minor entry in the Newbery canon.

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A longer version of this review appeared on For Those About To Mock ([abouttomock.blogspot.com](http://abouttomock.blogspot.com))