



# Birth of the Firebringer

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## **Birth of the Firebringer** Meredith Ann Pierce

Jan, the prince of the unicorns, is high-spirited, reckless-and the despair of his mighty father, Korr. Reluctantly, Korr allows Jan to accompany the other initiate warriors on a pilgrimage. Soon Jan's curiosity leads him, along with his friend Dagg, and their mentor, the female warrior Tek, into the greatest dangers-deadly gryphons, sly pans, wyverns, pards, and renegade unicorns. Yet time after time they are rescued, leading Jan to wonder: Am I the heir to a special destiny?

## **Birth of the Firebringer Details**

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Author : Meredith Ann Pierce

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Fantasy, High Fantasy

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# From Reader Review Birth of the Firebringer for online ebook

## Margaret says

I wanted to like this series more than I did, because I like Pierce's Darkangel books and her short stories so much. It's about unicorns, which I was a little worried about, but I thought Pierce pulled that off pretty well, actually; her unicorns aren't pretty, fluffy things, but warriors who fight for their lives and land against other beasts, gryphons and wyverns.

I think what I mostly didn't like was the main character, Jan the unicorn prince, who was all too often (particularly in the last book) incredibly dim, in a way that seemed to serve the plot (so that the big reveals could happen at the right time) more than the character. Come to think of it, that's rather how I felt about Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood, too. Still, I love Pierce's writing and find her worldbuilding absorbing, so I'm not at all sorry I read these.

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## Annye says

I'm abandoning this one - the cheese is just too great. There is definitely a place for cheese in my heart but I'm just not in the mood right now (#RobinHobbBookHangover2017). I wish I had known about this book when I was 10!

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## Mel says

This book long predates such animal-based series as Warriors, and it far outshines them. It was published back in my childhood, and is a three-part series. The first is the best and most interesting read, rife with a wonderful prophecy, very accurate animal depiction, and great fantasy elements. It is set among a group of war unicorns, yet these unicorns are nothing like the white, virgin-seeking typical story we see. These unicorns are a varied, honorable, dangerous race that is in the middle of an age old battle with dragons. There are no men in this series (although something like them are mentioned at one point) and the world is lovely. Great, often overlooked fantasy book and one I often carry extra copies of so I can lend it to friends.

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## Jennifer Alvarez says

THIS IS THE BOOK I WAS BORN TO READ! I loved every beautiful moment, word, image, and character. The writing is lavish, the imagery intense. The writer uses archaic words to great effect, creating a universe that feels foreign but familiar, new but also ancient. This story brings the world of the unicorns to life. They are graceful moondancers and bearded warriors who have been kicked out of their homeland by cunning wyverns. Intelligent pans, aggressive gryphons, and renegade unicorns also surround the Vale where they live. The main character Jan is a princeling unicorn, colt of Korr, the prince of the unicorns. Jan has a big destiny and an even bigger heart. His friends Daag and Tek make wonderful companions.

In short, this book took my breath away. All horse lovers, Guardian Herd fans, lovers of mythical creatures

and fantasy novels should read this trilogy! I'm on #2 now, Dark Moon and it's just as gripping and exciting (I'm on chapter 6)

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### **Amber says**

Ok, I'll admit it. I am definitely length-biased when it comes to books. I prefer any book I read to be around three hundred pages... I am so glad that I didn't even look at how many pages this little treat had before I ordered it from the library. This was a masterpiece. She totally could have embellished the story and made a five hundred page book, just out of the first one. But this book is perfection just the way it is. We have a detailed history (one and a half pages as the prologue), a dramatic plot complete with battles and inner conflict for our character (and don't forget a budding romance), plot twists like crazy, and a total cliff hanger at the end. I will also admit, that I read the prologue and then immediately ordered the whole trilogy from thriftbooks. I'll be getting it this week ;) This series is totally making my favorites shelf! If any of you out there enjoyed *The Mountain's Call*, *Green Rider*, *Arrows of the Queen*, etc etc (basically horse fantasy) you will love this book! I definitely recommend it! Five out of five stars to *Birth of the Firebringer*!

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### **Rachel says**

Though Meredith Ann Pierce has clearly thought through the rules under which her society of unicorns should operate, there is something about this book, the first in the *Firebringer* trilogy, that doesn't quite click. Readers who can slip easily into the blatant personification of the unicorn characters will likely enjoy this book, but as a reader I would probably have more enjoyed a novel that takes a further step away from writing about humans, and challenges the reader not only to empathize with non humans, but to empathize with non humans that actually think in a way different from humans.

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### **Rhianon says**

This was *the* first true fantasy story I ever read as a youngster. It was what led me to other authors, like McCaffrey, and my continued descent into UF and the entire paranormal genre.

I still have the original mass market paperback that I bought from the school's book club.

And yet... I never even *knew* there were sequels to it.

I think one of the things I liked about Pierce's writing, and this book in particular, the most -- was the worldbuilding. The way she took a nonhuman sentient species and gave them an entire society and culture, a structure of religious beliefs and even racial taboos... If I'm entirely honest, I must lay the blame for the greatest influence on my writing right here.

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## **Shane says**

This is a moving and timeless book about growing up. Reading it is one of my fondest childhood memories. Whenever a thunderstorm is rising, I think of it.

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## **Ursula says**

### **My Rating**

5 stars

### **Book Series**

Book 1 of the *Firebringer* series (3 books).

### **My Thoughts**

I can't say much about this book because I read it so long ago. I'm giving it 5 stars because I loved it every time I read it.

### **Conclusion**

Hard-core fantasy about unicorns. Not for everyone, but I loved it.

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## **Kat says**

Gorgeous writing, epic storyline, and UNICORNS. Super awesome warrior unicorns with magic and visions and prophecies and ancient mortal enemies that they sing songs about and what I'm saying is that this book is awesome and you should read it. Because unicorns.

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## **Kelsi says**

Wow. Just, wow. This book is breathtaking. The rich storytelling, fantastic world building, unforgettable characters, incredible deliverance and fascinating plot make readers unable to put this book down. You'll be flying through the pages and before you know it, you'll be finished, awed. 5 out of 5 stars, a favorite for years to come!

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## **Kachera says**

As a kid I bought this book for the cover - It had a unicorn, and I was horse crazy. I dove in and fell in love, though I'm sure I missed all the subtext about how Jan's journey might perhaps relate to my own young teen-aged struggles. None the less, I cherished this book, and years later read it again as an adult with new perspective. I love it even more now.

This is the kind of book all parents, uncles, aunts, anyone who mentors kids should pass on to the young

readers in their lives. It is full of lessons on persevearance, learning from others, believing in yourself, and being a part of the whole even when you might feel like the odd one out. Lesson we could all stand to hear more often as teens or adults.

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### **Raven says**

One of the best books I've read in a long time.

It starts off slow. Typical misfit prince who doesn't see things his father's way. As the story progresses there is increasingly a sense that things aren't quite what they seem. The mythology is rich, the storytelling is excellent, and the characters are real enough that you rage when they rage, or feel wonder when they feel wonder.

Earlier this week I asked a friend why I subject myself to things that inevitably leave me feeling what my generation is calling 'triggered', his response was that I appreciate beautiful things, even when they hurt me.

Nothing captures that sentiment as thoroughly as this book.

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### **Noella Van Looy says**

Yan is een jonge eenhoorn, de zoon van de eenhoornprins. Hij houdt er niet van om volgens de regels van de groep te leven, wat hem meer dan eens in moeilijkheden brengt. Maar uiteindelijk blijkt dat er voor Yan een grote taak weggelegd is. Samen met zijn vriend Dagg en de jonge vrouwelijke krijger Tek kan hij de troep voor een ramp behoeden.

Een boek dat je niet kan wegleggen!

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### **Emily says**

Another childhood favorite I will never tire of rereading. Pierce has perfected high fantasy without resorting to swordplay -- or even humans in this case. Perfect for fans of The Last Unicorn, The Princess Bride, and The Neverending Story (all of which you MUST read in novel form, they're all extraordinary).

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### **Jennifer says**

I KNOW I've read this book before. In fact I'm sure I've read the entire series. The title and plot synopsis was so familiar to me, but I didn't remember the storyline in any sort of detail. I must have read it when I was young.

Having said that, this book reads very maturely for YA - I find that it's written in a more classic style. So, I'm delighted to have rediscovered it. The trouble now, will be in obtaining the other 2 books in the series.

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## Lauren Schumacher says

This weekend past, my husband Terry and I had to make a 15 hour overnight drive from Georgia back home to Massachusetts. Our chariot was a rusted-out U-Haul with no cruise control. Terry experiences motion sickness while reading in the car, and the noise of the cabin made it difficult to understand podcasts through the small speaker we'd brought with us, so he did much of the driving while I read to him over the roar of the highway. I'd set aside an anthology of short horror stories that I thought looked intriguing for exactly this occasion--but it proved to be really, hilariously bad. We threw it aside after the first story about a haunted doll (v. original) failed to impress.

I looked at the small, ancient paperback I'd impulsively stuffed into my purse, intending to reread on my own, and asked Terry if he was up for a middle-grade fantasy read about warrior unicorns. Obviously, I would not have married him if his answer were "no." I shouted the entire novel to him over the course of our long drive, reaching the last page as signs for our town began to appear on highway exit ramps.

This was my favorite book as a child. I assumed it was because, well, unicorns. Meredith Anne Pierce was, for years, the only person onboard the tribalistic-warrior-animal-middle-grade-fantasy train, and she kicked it off in glorious style, with the best possible animal to make into a badass society of warriors, UNICORNS, OBVIOUSLY. And there is a tremendous amount of skill and craft that sets Pierce apart. She's almost bafflingly good at world-building; I read her fabulous *Darkangel* trilogy 2-3 times before I realized I was reading sci-fi disguised as fantasy. Pierce's language is also a standout quality of her writing; reading aloud is not forgiving to boring internal prose, and *Firebringer* is crammed with interesting word choices and turns-of-phrase that invoke a deep sense of history and culture for her characters. Speaking of characters, they are stock, but that is appropriate for this age demographic, and she performs a neat trick of walking them down predictable paths in their first book, then doubling back to strange and more difficult terrain as their stories deepen in complexity. All of that remained intact in this, my first re-read in a decade.

...But that is not the reason this was my favorite book.

This was my favorite book because it started the process of my atheism.

An ardently devout Catholic for the early part of my life, I threw myself into the church with rabid enthusiasm, seeking the comforts of tradition, community, and a sense of purpose. My early years were very unhappy, and the church was the only place giving me a message that resonated with my internal struggle. I spent a lot of time thinking about how the people who had been abusive to me would one day have to hear God giving them a Ru-esque reading of all the horrible things they'd said and done to me, while I sat at his right hand, nodding smugly. As an adult this all sounds ridiculous, but it reinforced my survival strategy: suffer, don't fight back, wait for someone powerful to notice and intervene. Ascribing to this mythology gave me tiny fragment of the senses of control and identity I couldn't find elsewhere. So I clung to my religion with all my might...until about the time I read this book.

Jan's journey is an escape from ingrained dogma. His people worship a mother-goddess who looks like them, talks like them, thinks like them, values their values, hates their enemies, punishes their sins, and watches everything they do, ready to strike the moment they set one cloven unicorn-toe out of line. Throughout the

course of the book, Jan leaves his lil' unicorn hometown for the first time, and is confronted with events that contradict this tribe's mythology. He meets people who aren't like him, and sees instances where religious dogma brings out the absolute worst in his own kind. Although he maintains unshakable faith in his goddess's existence, he begins to question the authority of her more terrestrial interpreters.

Eventually his goddess is reveal to be real, but she is quite beyond the big-bearded-sky-unicorn depicted in the lore of his people. Rather, she's a quasi-benevolent cosmic presence that orchestrates a never-ending dance of life and death. She gives Jan a Pale Blue Dot moment, showing him his own people, then zooming out to see how they are just one tribe among many, and one species among many, in a tiny corner of a huge world, that floats around a star with other planets, which floats around a galaxy with more stars, that spins in a vast and unknowable universe. She follows this up with, essentially: "So, uh, I'm super busy, tbh I super don't care about the dumb laws y'all make for y'allselfes. What is even up with those."

It was the first time in literature (or life) I had encountered the viewpoint that spirituality and religion are not necessarily intertwined, and in retrospect it was the first Jenga block removed in the tower of my own dogma. I, like Jan, was so close to my own religion that I ignored its obvious contradictions and deficiencies by habit. The Catholic hell is populated with stillborn babies, saintly people raised in other religions, and indigenous people living beyond the contact of Western missionaries--I knew this. And I knew it *felt wrong*, very wrong--but I accepted it, because that was The Way Things Worked. In doing so, I accepted the dominion of a god who, under this logic, was far worse than genocidal. Nazis killed, but it was MY god who sent them to everlasting, unescapable torture. And believe me, I know it sounds a bit ridiculous to compare my spiritual journey to a middle-grade children's novel about anthropomorphized unicorns... But Jan's nativist punitive religion shared so many of the qualities of my own that it was impossible for me not to being to draw patterns. The unicorns are made in their goddess's image, and she is their favorite--isn't that weird? That of all the tens of thousands of species that exist on our relatively insignificant planet, the cosmic deity has ONE special favorite? Like god is a giant unicorn playing Sims?? Heyyy, isn't that just like how we think about OUR species...? The parallels were obvious but also completely sailed over my head over years of rereading these books. But it planted invaluable seeds in the garden of my sixth-grade brain, which would eventual sprout into critical thinking, objectivity, empathy, morality, and a global perspective. I entered this series at an age where I was still seeking out the comforts of tradition, and I exited with a healthy suspicion of traditions, and the undeserving authorities they propagated.

...Also, one of the unicorns is a beard. I mean, they all HAVE beards, they're classic less-horse-more-goat/deer models...but one of the unicorns IS a beard. This unicorn society is so perfectly repressed, I do declare.

Anyway, this book is amazing. The later books only get better, as the religious angle sharpens and the characters are dragged into deep, dark, unexpected places as a result. I am beyond thrilled that this series was recently republished. I hope it will continue to work its way into the hands of the kids that need the very affirming messages it insidiously communicates.

#GayAtheistUnicorn 2016.

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## **Brennan says**

I thought this would read kinda childish based on the concept, but I was v pleasantly surprised by the use of language and some of the beautiful sentences. The plot was intriguing, the conflict exciting, and I am more than excited to read the rest of the series.

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## **Jennifer says**

yes, this is a young adult book about UNICORNS...but it will always be one of my favorites as it was my very first taste of fantasy fiction, this book is the one that got me addicted to reading! And I only picked it up by accident when I was in 6th grade. (ok, so I think I might have been 21 when I stopped believing in unicorns, yes i am a dork, suck it!)

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## **Amanda NEVER MANDY says**

I don't remember how this book ended up in my hands but I do remember the condition it was in, missing cover with pages torn and corners bent. I found a sleeve of plastic and gently wrapped it up, deciding the best place to store it was nestled in the stuffed animal net hanging above the top right-hand corner of my bed. High and out of reach for a younger sister that couldn't keep her grubby paws off of anything I owned and especially treasured.

I adored this book from the second I laid eyes on it and it is one of the few books I have read multiple times. It captured and held my imagination like no other book I had read before it and whenever I look back to my childhood reads, it's one of the first to push to the front of my mind.

I still have the tattered, well-loved copy stored away and it is one of my dreams to get my hands on a pristine copy to place alongside it.

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