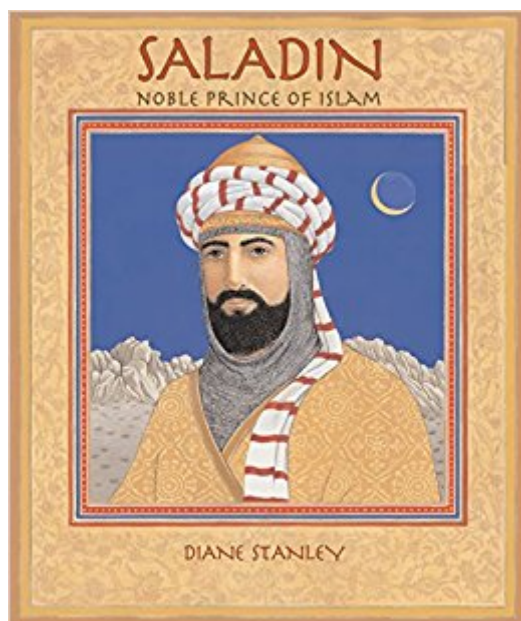


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# Saladin: Noble Prince Of Islam



## Synopsis

Forty years before the boy was born, a horde of bloodthirsty barbarians thundered out of the west and conquered his native land. They had succeeded because his people, ever at war with one another, had not fought together to defend their cities. In time the boy was destined to become the very leader that was needed, a man with the courage and vision to unite his people and face the most fearsome and brilliant warrior of the age. The time was the twelfth century; the barbarian horde was the armies of the First Crusade; the great warrior was Richard the Lionhearted; and the leader was Saladin. This is more than the other side of a familiar Western story, the Crusades. It is the tale of an extraordinary man, remarkable for his generous and chivalrous ways, a warrior who longed for peace. Courageous in battle and merciful in victory, he would be revered even by his enemies as the "marvel of his time." In her vibrant narrative and magnificently detailed illustrations inspired by the Islamic art of the time, Diane Stanley presents a hero whose compassion, piety, tolerance, and wisdom made him a model for his time -- and for ours.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Meeting the high standards set by her previous picture-book biographies, Stanley (Michelangelo; Joan of Arc) here focuses on the 12th-century ruler known as "the Muslim saint-king" who was

"praised even by his enemies as 'the marvel of his time' " and crystallizes many of the issues still at the root of conflicts today. Stanley begins with a concise overview of the First Crusade, then hypothesizes about the impact of the Franks' murderous conquest of Jerusalem on the young Saladin, a devout Muslim (after listing Jerusalem's importance to the "three great religions," the boy poses a question: "Couldn't everyone just share it?"). The author outlines religious practices, the political history of the Middle East and of Western Europe, and the vexed military campaigns for Jerusalem, once again demonstrating her trademark ability to research and then distill complex topics in terms accessible to middle-graders. She painstakingly builds readers' sense of Saladin's integrity and skilled leadership. For example, when his army was poised for certain victory over the Christians holding Jerusalem, he wrote to a knight proposing generous conditions for their surrender: "I believe that Jerusalem is the House of God, as you also believe. And I will not willingly lay siege to the House of God or put it to the assault." Stanley's precise, detailed artwork pays homage to period architecture. She evokes the colors of Persian miniatures (and medieval stained glass) as her paintings incorporate the complex patterning associated with Islamic art. Portraits of Saladin at home, sitting in front of gorgeously tiled walls with his family, arrayed in sumptuous robes, are particularly effective in conveying the richness of the subject's world. Readers are certain to be intrigued. Ages 8-12. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 3-7-Attentive readers of this book-those who can wrest their eyes from the illustrations-will learn some history, some geography, and quite a lot about Islam, as well as about the life of Salah al-Din. (One interesting fact is that he was neither an Arab nor a Turk, but a Kurd.) Even more important, however, may be the chance to put oneself in the shoes of "the enemy," an exercise that is as useful today as it would have been in 1099. Anyone who still harbors romantic ideas about the Crusades will be disabused of them here. The harsh glare of history scours secular and religious leaders alike. Even Richard the Lionhearted appears as both a brilliant commander and "an obnoxious bully," and in light of his slaughter of 3000 hostages at Acre, who could disagree? Saladin is not depicted as flawless, and the attitude of Islam toward women is noted. Yet, on the whole, the great and generous Muslim leader is portrayed as being far nobler than any competitor. Each full page of text is a mini-chapter, a self-contained part of the overall narrative, so that readers can pause and linger over the opposing full-page illustration. These pictures, enlivened by saturated, jewel-like blues, reds, and greens, combine Western realism with pattern and composition recalling Turkish miniatures. Countless details of dress, armor, domestic interiors, and landscape evoke the period and setting. The beauty and sophistication of Islamic culture shine

through Stanley's glorious pictures. A timely and splendid addition to the author's earlier biographical profiles. Patricia D. Lothrop, St. George's School, Newport, RI Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Meeting the high standards set by her previous picture-book biographies, Stanley here focuses on the 12th century ruler known as "The Muslim Saint-King" who was praised by his enemies as "the marvel of his time" and crystalized many of the issues still at the root of conflicts today. Here is Saladin, the Kurdish warrior who liberates Jerusalem from the crusaders. A devout Muslim, a young Saladin upon learning of Jerusalem's importance to the "three great religions" asks simply "couldn't everyone just share it?" In her vibrant narrative and magnificently detailed illustrations inspired by the Islamic art of the time, Diane Stanley presents a hero whose compassion, piety, tolerance, and wisdom made him a model for his time - and for ours. Teachers/Librarians: this is a great book for 4th - 7th grades, Social Studies/Language Arts/Art. And look also for an unexpected Diane Stanley work, *Fortune*, the story of a young Persian woman who teaches her fiancé (and us) important lessons. Is this an unusual female for this part of the world? Not to anyone who knows Middle Eastern women! In true Stanley detail, the illustrations are like fine Persian miniature paintings! Long out-of-print (but available from ! ) this is a favorite of this reviewer.

Having finished "The Crusades of Richard the Lionheart" by Fiona Clarke, I thought it was important that my seven year old get the opportunity to see the other side of the story. Diane Stanley's "Saladin: The Noble Prince" is a first rate biography of the Muslim hero who took and then defended Jerusalem from the Christians. Seeing that there is always another side in history is a great lesson for a young child. But note, this is definitely not a book for those who see the West engaged in a manichean struggle with Islam. Saladin is just too sympathetic a character to fit into this world view. This is a great book and I would highly recommend it for anyone studying the Middle Ages.

Once again Diane Stanley has written a splendid, gripping, dramatic history. Once again the illustrations are gorgeous. Once again the book dares to challenge children to grasp complex and deep content. Once again the prose and flow make the book hard to put down. The author is careful and tactful in handling certain rather gruesome and brutal details. She does not bowdlerize, or skip or gloss over; nor does she dwell on the horrors. They are quietly and neatly related as required to understand the story; then she moves on. Also recommended: by the same author, biographies of Cleopatra and Queen Elizabeth

Very picturesque book.,I gave it to my 8 year old grandson for His birthday..he said he liked the book, and Saladin ...I think Saladin isn't taught in American schools because of western countries prejudice against Islamic people..That's shameful..

words cannot, explain what this book and this mans life mean to me, excellent reading and a great source of knowledge

My son needed this book for a book report. It was written perfectly for his grade level and he found the information he needed for his report.

Beautifully produced piece of literature/art specifically for young people. A rarity amongst Islamic history/youth literature.

A beautiful book and well illustrated, sure to be a classic. As I note, the book is certainly one-sided. It seems the author cannot say anything negative at all about Saladin, and cannot say anything good about the Christians. This is not to say that the book is not historically accurate, but the historical details depicted are very selective, and sometimes misleading. The book begins, e.g., by noting that the Muslims had been in possession of the Holy Land for several hundred years, and that Saladin ruled peacefully and treated Christians fairly. This is true, but it could also be mentioned that (1) the Muslims had taken the land by force from Eastern Christians who had previously lived there peacefully, (2) Christians had held Jerusalem peacefully for several decades before Saladin invaded and took it by force; (3) previous Muslim rulers, before Saladin, were far from fair and peaceful, and often sanctioned the massacre of Christian pilgrims, and (4) so great was the distress of the native Christians that the Emperor of the East, Alexius, wrote to the Pope to request a Crusade in the 11th century to liberate the region from the occupying power of the Muslims. None of this is even alluded to. Also, less peaceful episodes of Saladin's rule, such as his mass execution of Christian prisoners of war at Hattin in 1187, are not mentioned. Less savory aspects of his life, such as his polygamous marriages to multiple (very young) wives, are glossed over as acceptable ('...because Islam allows four marriages'), without noting the rather disturbing aspects of such practices. While the author praises Saladin for not killing prisoners of war taken in Jerusalem, she does not mention that they were sold into slavery instead. This is not to say the book is not without its value, or that I would expect such details in a book like this, but I think the book could have been

a little more 'fair', or historically accurate, while retaining a basically positive outlook on Saladin, whom I do not deny is certainly a chivalrous man for his time. But he was, nonetheless, a man of his time, and the author seems determined to make him more than that.

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