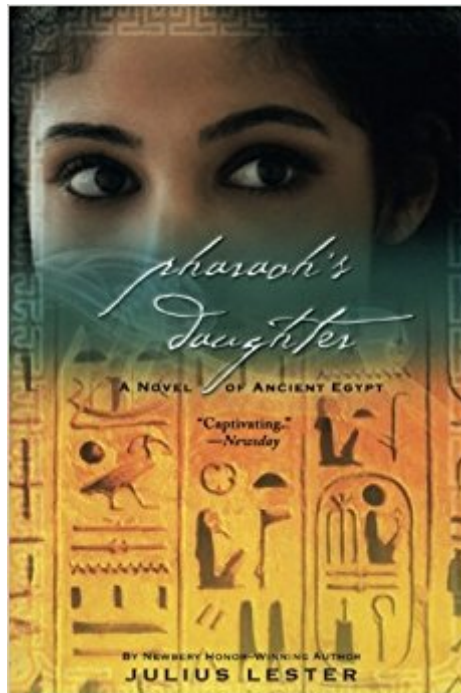




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# Pharaoh's Daughter: A Novel Of Ancient Egypt



## Synopsis

Born into slavery, adopted as an infant by a princess, and raised in the palace of mighty Pharaoh, Moses struggles to define himself. And so do the three women who love him: his own embittered mother, forced to give him up by Pharaoh's decree; the Egyptian princess who defies her father and raises Moses as her own child; and his headstrong sister Almah, who discovers a greater kinship with the Egyptian deities than with her own God of the Hebrews. Told by Moses and his sister Almah from alternating points of view, this stunning novel by Newbery Honor-author Julius Lester probes questions of identity, faith, and destiny.

## Book Information

Paperback: 182 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; 1 edition (March 9, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0152066624

ISBN-13: 978-0152066628

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.6 x 6.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 54 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #321,939 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in [Books > Teens >](#)

[Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Adoption](#) #68 in [Books > Teens >](#)

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

In his introduction to this engrossing novel of ancient Egypt, Julius Lester says, "It is difficult not to see Charlton Heston when one thinks of Moses." But not in this book. Lester's Moses is a bungling teenager, scared and confused as he tries to find the courage to decide who he is and what he believes in. Raised as the pampered grandson of Pharaoh, he enjoys the attentions of three mother figures: Yocheved, his birth mother, who constantly implores him to return to his own people; Almah, his older sister, who has left her traditions to dance naked as a priestess of the goddess Hathor; and Batya, Pharaoh's daughter, who saved him from death when he was a baby. But now his anger at his unresolved split identity has goaded him into a terrible act of violence--an act that will have a

vast impact on history. Julius Lester, a distinguished African-American writer best known for his Newbery Honor Book *To Be a Slave*, startled the literary world in 1981 by converting to Judaism. In *Pharaoh's Daughter* he follows the time-honored Jewish tradition of Midrash--a way of exploring a sacred text through the use of one's imagination. Armed with an impressive knowledge of the Hebrew language and the history of ancient Egypt, he jolts us out of our expectations and brings a fresh and richly detailed perspective to the Exodus. As Moses flees with his father's blessing--"You must go and come back and teach us all to be free"--we can only hope that Julius Lester plans to tell the rest of the story. (Ages 12 and older) --Patty Campbell --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"The author imagines a titillating paradise within the pharaoh's walls and makes a compelling case for [young Moses] caught between the faith of his Hebrew mother and his adoptive family's aesthetics and beliefs," wrote PW in our Best Books citation. Ages 10-up. (Feb.) nCopyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I really love this book - both from a history point of view and from a dramatic point of view. I first read this book when I was in middle school and I really liked it a lot. I thought it was a great book - it taught about another culture/religion/way of life, while also keeping an adequate amount of character drama in the book to keep my attention. I have read complaints about the nudity in other reviews, but it is not like anyone is having sex - the book simply states that the religious dances are done in the nude, which is a fact, not a fantasy. I do not feel this book is inappropriate for the age group it was written for. I was fascinated by the story, and have recently reread it and I still think that it is an interesting read. It teaches you about finding your own path while not forgetting where you came from, and how to find the strength to be your own person.

When I discovered that this book was going to be about Moses, I almost didn't read it. "The 10 Commandments" bothers me so much with its inaccurate portrayal of the ancient Egyptians. *Pharaoh's Daughter* was nothing like it! The author really did well in putting the reader back in that time, using words and phrases that fit the time, names that would have been used... and best of all, the characters were more true to what we know of that time! It was so beautifully written, I wanted to drench myself in it.

12 year old daughter loved it!

This is a very good book and I loved reading it.

Good book

interesting story

The story of Moses, hidden among the reeds and found by a princess of Egypt, is one many of us remember hearing from earliest childhood. We know that from the moment of his rescue, Moses went to live at the pharaoh's palace, accompanied by his own mother as his wet nurse at the suggestion of his sister. The mention of the sister is often overlooked; it is this character that Julius Lester has chosen to illuminate in his young adult novel. Almah, sister of Mosis (as he is called here), goes with her mother and younger brother when they are taken to the palace, and it is Almah who is most accepting of the turn her life has made. Though she has always felt herself to be different than her family, the speed and ease of her transition into Egyptian life amazes not only Almah but the pharaoh as well. So taken with Almah is he that he claims her as his own daughter, but will she be able to fully leave her Hebrew past behind her? Lester's novel moves between Almah's point of view and Mosis's, though it might have flowed more smoothly had it remained with just Almah's. The conflict Mosis feels for his Hebrew family and his Egyptian life is heartfelt, and Lester shows us an unsure young man whose life has been shaped by the three women who have raised him. Almah is a strong personality who finds her own way but at major cost to her familial ties; I enjoyed reading her point of view and felt she spoke clearly and engagingly. Lester went to great lengths to show both the Hebrew and Egyptian sides, and I very much enjoyed this different take on a story I felt I knew well. This is a short, easy book; quite well-written and thought-provoking. Thank you to the Historical Novel Society for providing a copy of this novel for review.

The Bible does not name the sister of Moses who watched him while he hid in a basket on the Nile, but the Hebrew word used describes a woman of marriageable age. Could Moses have had another sister? Julius Lester uses the viewpoint of this imagined--but very possible--sister to tell the story of the Habiru (Hebrew) and Khemetian (Egyptian) peoples during the time of Mosis' (Moses') upbringing in the court of Ramesses II. The author uses ancient Egyptian and Hebrew words and

names whenever possible to remove images of The Ten Commandments and Prince of Egypt from readers' minds. He asks us to consider that the story we've been told was from the view-point of the Hebrews, embittered by years of slavery; he asks us to consider the Egyptians anew. The author attempts to give an historically accurate view of the New Kingdom of Egypt. In order to keep the story as authentic as possible, he has Mosis speak in an unusual way, attempting to create his "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue" description from the Old Testament. Stories are even more subtle than non-fiction and evoke even more emotion and can therefore be even more persuasive, especially to young minds that have not moved into the final stages of development, so this book should only be read by children who have entered the third and final stage of mental development (as discussed in *\_The Well-Trained Mind\_*.) To Christian parents, this is a Biblical story told from a non-Biblical perspective. The point-of-view for most of the book is Mosis' sister, Almah, who embraces the gods and goddesses of Egypt, even becoming a priestess of Hathor. There is nudity in religious circumstances and lust is discussed briefly. Many characters argue in favor of many gods and the strongest believer in Ya (the Biblical God) is portrayed in a negative light. Despite all the possible drawbacks, this book shines fresh light on the struggles Moses and his family must have gone through in his early life. It is also a great discussion starter. Have your mature thirteen or fourteen year old child read this along with a study on ancient Egypt, then discuss family relationships, different viewpoints (is one always right and one always wrong), can a god meet a woman's needs (or does she need a goddess to understand her), etc. The author includes an author's note and a glossary in the back of the book. Read the glossary BEFORE you read the book; save the author's note for afterwards. In the author's note, Lester explains his purpose, some of the efforts he went through to be accurate historically, and the textual reasons he made some of the decisions he made. Very informative. Summary: Mosis' part in the dialog may make this book seem poorly developed or for a younger age group at first--until you realize that Mosis is supposed to speak poorly and it is intentional. Instead, this is a great story told in an engaging way from a refreshing viewpoint which I recommend, but only for mature thirteen year olds and older. A sort of *\_The Red Tent\_* for teenagers, without all the sexuality. This book touched me and I became misty-eyed towards the end.

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