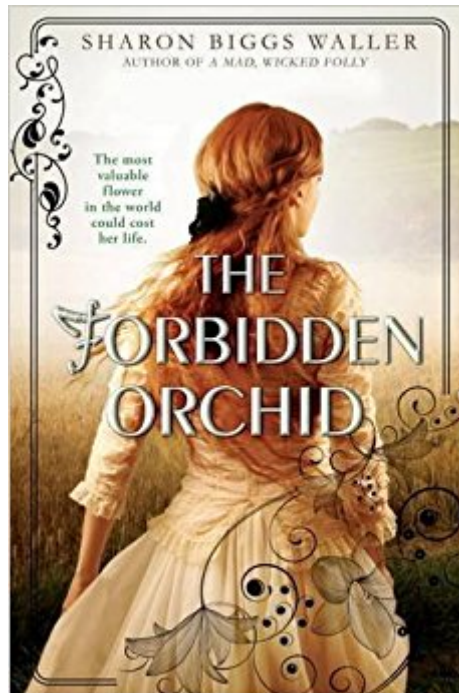




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The Forbidden Orchid



Synopsis

The adventures of a British girl in China, hunting for the orchid that will save her family. Staid, responsible Elodie Buchanan is the eldest of ten sisters growing up in a small English market town in 1861. The girls barely know their father, a plant hunter usually off adventuring through China, more myth than man. Then disaster strikes: Mr. Buchanan reneges on his contract to collect an extremely rare and valuable orchid. He will be thrown into debtors' prison while his daughters are sent to the orphanage and the workhouse. Elodie can't stand by and see her family destroyed, so she persuades her father to return to China once more to try to hunt down the flower – only this time, despite everything she knows about her place in society, Elodie goes with him. She has never before left her village, but what starts as fear turns to wonder as she adapts to seafaring life aboard the tea clipper *The Osprey*, and later to the new sights, dangers, and romance of China. She comes to find that both the world and her place in it are so much bigger than she'd ever dreamed. But now, even if she can find the orchid, how can she ever go back to being the staid, responsible Elodie that everybody needs?

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 830 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 416 pages

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

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Fiction > Social & Family Issues > New Experiences

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

* "Elodie and Ching Lan are feminists of their era, refusing to bend to the rules and limits placed

before them." "Publishers Weekly, starred review" "A historical romance with a strong female protagonist, sure to find fans." "School Library Journal, starred review" The characters are strong and full of life, and the plot combines the perfect amount of both adventure and romance. . . . This book is a must-have. "VOYA" Similar in tone to Libba Bray's *A Great and Terrible Beauty* (2003), "this is a perfect read for timid teens who dream of adventure." "Booklist" "Well-researched and filled with adventure, romance, and lots of tension" "this work of historical fiction has all the elements of an intriguing read." "Kirkus Reviews" A Junior Library Guild Selection "Nominated for the American Library Association's Best Fiction for Young Adults List"

Sharon Biggs Waller moved to England in 2000, where she worked as a riding instructor at the Royal Mews in Buckingham Palace and as a freelance magazine writer. These days she is a dressage rider and trainer and lives on a ten-acre sustainable farm in Northwest Indiana with her British husband, Mark. She is the author of three non-fiction books, as well as the YA novel *A Mad, Wicked Folly*.

The Forbidden Orchid is an engrossing book, with realistic characters and a compelling story. As historical fiction, it highlights a most interesting bit of the natural world that is not well known by most readers. This book is beautiful in many ways.

Another amazingly well written book! It's a must read.

Loved it!

My Thoughts: This was the first book I've read by Sharon Biggs Waller and I went in with high expectations because of all the amazing things I'd heard about this author's prior book, *A Mad, Wicked Folly*. Overall, I found this book to be an entertaining read and enjoyed the storyline and adventure. I did have some issues with the characters but I'll get to that in a bit. First, let's talk about the things I did enjoy. The setting was lush and I felt the descriptions lent themselves to very clear imagery and helped progress the story for me. The novel was told in first person from the main character, Elodie's, point of view. I really enjoyed that the novel's progress was split into three sections, one in England, aboard a tea clipper and then the final, in

China. My favorite section was the shortest, aboard the tea clipper. I felt that Waller did an exceptional job describing the boat and how it would feel to be Elodie traveling across the ocean for the first time. Where I had issues with this book was in the character representations. I felt like they were all caricatures of themselves. It's hard to explain but I'll try. Some of the characters felt like they played on a stereotype rather than on an in depth character. The two most obvious to me were Deacon Wainwright and Ching Lan. Wainwright was described and acted so much like Mr. Collins (of *Pride and Prejudice*) to me. He was bumbling, homely and sexually repressed. He seemed so typical of a clergyman it stood out to me. It wasn't enough to really deter from the book but it was something I noticed. As the story moved to China I noticed other characters feeling more stereotypical than well developed. I have zero knowledge of this time period or culture but certain things (language mostly) sort of felt like I don't know, cliché? It's hard to put my finger on it but it was bothersome for me personally. It left me feeling like more could have been done to bring something deeper to Ching Lan's character rather than her exotic description, concubine plight or her expressions of "Eewah" and "Eeai yah" I felt there was an opportunity missed to create a well developed, diverse character. My favorite character was Elodie's father. I felt he was possibly the most interesting character of them all and I enjoyed that he had elements that made him not the greatest man or father. Elodie herself was a decent main character though at times her character did aggravate me with her naiveté. There are several examples of her making decisions I found to be incredibly frustrating such as trusting someone when she had every reason not to and wearing completely inappropriate clothing for where she was. Those wondering about the romance- there was one (no triangle) and it was done fairly well. I was able to feel the character's chemistry and I felt it was believable. I think most readers will enjoy the relationship and how it develops. Final Thoughts: Though *The Forbidden Orchid* had some strengths-certain weaknesses stood out so strongly I had trouble looking past them. I wished that the author would have taken the opportunity to create a better diverse character and also give her main character some worldly sense. I wonder if you read this book yet did these things trouble you? Am I alone?

The Forbidden Orchid takes readers on an expedition back in time to the mid 1800's England and China. There they'll meet a strong willed character, Elodie, who will do everything she can to save her family, and help her father on a dangerous expedition to find a rare orchid. In her journey

she'll find her place in a world that wants to hold her back, and she'll realize that sometimes she'll have to do what she feels is right even when everyone else is telling her otherwise. I liked Elodie. She's a strong-willed, opinionated girl who doesn't let her society's acceptations hold her back from doing what she feels is right. She's also intelligent and thinks things through before making a decision. I admired how she weighed her options before taking action, especially during a time when it wasn't proper for a woman to speak her mind, or do things she wasn't allowed to do. Elodie took matters into her own hands and did what she needed to do, in order to save her family. I greatly admired her for that. She described herself best on page 365, "I loved my family, but I wanted to take my place in the world. My father had named me after a wildflower, and I knew now that wildflowers could not thrive inside of greenhouses." While it took awhile for me to really get into the story, I enjoyed the historical references, the historical settings of both England, and China, and sailing between the two countries. Waller does a wonderful job with bringing her research to life with life during this time, and the war on opium, the toll it took on its users, and those who sought to sell it. I was intrigued by the history of plant collectors. Elodie's father is a plant collector, and his search for a rare orchid not only cost him, but it takes a huge toll on his family. He was not a character I cared for whatsoever at all. The romance aspect of the story was something I wasn't a fan of either. I liked Alex as a character, and I know why their "romance" came about, and I respected him even more so for doing what he does for Elodie, however, being that she is a strong character, and as she describes herself, more of a wildflower, the forcefulness of the romance didn't fit her character. However, what transpires between Alec and Elodie is something that goes in line more with how society was at this time. This was an interesting book. I loved the diversity of it. I liked that it was something different than what I was expecting. I liked that it's a book that stands by itself. There's adventures, and history, which I enjoyed. Overall I didn't love it, and but I didn't not like it either. It's a good read that offers something different for YA readers who don't want to read another fantasy, contemporary or dystopian book.

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