



Kubla Khan: The Emperor of Everything

Kathleen Krull , Robert Byrd (Illustrator)

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Always cast in a supporting role in the many books about Marco Polo, the great Kubla Khan now takes center stage in a splendid picture-book biography. He is a wonderful subject—a man who liked to live large, building the imperial city of Beijing from scratch, siring a hundred children, throwing birthday bashes for 40,000 guests. He ruled over the greatest empire of the time, one that was lightyears ahead of Western civilization in terms of the arts, sciences, and technology. With astonishingly beautiful and detailed illustrations by Robert Byrd and a clever text by Kathleen Krull, this portrait finally gives Kubla Khan his due.

Kubla Khan: The Emperor of Everything Details

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From Reader Review Kubla Khan: The Emperor of Everything for online ebook

Rachel says

Kubla Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, is a lesser known emperor usually referred to in context of Marco Polo's travels. In Kubla Khan: Emperor of Everything Kathleen Krull presents a portrait of this ruler's life, accomplishments and the lasting impact he had on the world.

Before Kubla Khan's life the Mongolian empire had been no empire at all, warring tribes of Mongolians fought with each other, never united. When Genghis Khan was elected "the Khan, Khan of all Khans" he united the various tribes into a strong empire. After Kubla Khan came to power the Mongolians defeated China and Kubla Khan rose to the role of Emperor of China, where he developed the most ornate, over-the-top, and awe inspiring culture of its time. Under his rule the Chinese people had outlandish celebrations, studied the arts and sciences, developed farming techniques and created the first system of paper money. This book and its detailed illustrations provide an insightful peek into the life of an amazing Emperor.

Mickey Malmgren says

Kubla Khan: The Emperor of Everything details the grand reign of Mongol leader Kubla Khan. Taking over from his equally powerful grandfather Ghengis Khan, Kubla conquered almost all of Asia, and strove to advance farther west into Europe and east to Japan. He was a feared and revered ruler, who usually tried tolerance before force. While skillfully militaristic and often obsessed with his fame and reign, he also cared about the lives of his people to an extent not often seen in his time. Anyone could come and get food from the castle if they were hungry, and he spearheaded many public service projects such as making the Silk Road route safer and expanding the waterways for trade.

This book is a picturebook, but I wouldn't suggest it to many children under fifth grade. There's a lot of texts, and some requires a decent amount of pre-knowledge. It's full of interesting information, balancing broad history and unique factoids in a way that would keep even adults impressed at Kubla's reign.

The lavish pictures are intricate, colorful, and made in a distinctly Asian style. That is, there isn't much depth, landscapes appear flat, and rich reds and yellows are common motifs. The varied and detailed drawings mirror the complex text, making reading this book a rewarding experience, nothing like a textbook description of the Mongol Empire.

As I hinted before, I would recommend this book to older children. It would be great for use in a classroom. I honestly would have enjoyed this book and found it useful as a senior in highschool, studying world history and humanity. There's so much good information in it and the overall experience is transporting.

Meltha says

I admit it. Aside from the poem about the "stately pleasure dome" in Xanadu, I knew next to nothing about Kubla Khan as a historical person; heck, I wasn't entirely sure he was real, to be honest. This biography does

a good job of balancing the good and the bad, and it even manages to include information about his mother and second wife that makes them interesting and powerful people as well. I liked the illustrations quite a lot. They reminded me of some of the Indian art I've seen. I also appreciated the peritext of the endnotes, though that did technically lower this from 5 to 4 stars since it turns out that a lot of the book is conjecture since the sources on him are maddeningly vague, slanted, or otherwise messed with, meaning that a lot of what I had just learned was actually not absolute true, though it is a good estimate (this reminds me a lot of the issue with the Tomas de Torquemada bio). The other sources available balanced this a bit, though, and I did enjoy reading it. Children would be very entertained by the colorful pictures, but be ready to explain what a concubine is. The dude had over 100 kids. Let's just say he was prolific.

Heather says

A pretty awesome and interesting book for children about the life of Kubla Khan, Mongolian conqueror of China and much of the Eastern world in the 1200's--in essence, a total badass (but as a ruler, a fair and wise badass). The author didn't cite her sources in the text, but she did include in the back a disclaimer that the details of Kubla's life were sketchy and a list of sources that she used. During the story, she also made statements like "according to legend" to make it clear that what she was about to relate was not necessarily true. She also made it fairly clear when she was talking about Kubla's life specifically and when she was talking about Mongolian life of the period in general. She makes the argument that in some ways, Kubla had a role in the eventual European expansion into the New World since he opened his territory to visits from the West early on, especially and significantly that of Marco Polo.

The illustrator also had a comment that there is no definitive historical representation of Kubla Khan, so he used a compilation of different images for his depiction (incidentally, the illustrator was also the artist for *Good Masters, Sweet Ladies!*, the 2008 Newbery Medal winner). Fantastic, detailed, and colorful artwork.

Terra says

Kubla Khan: The Emperor of Everything shares a lot of information about the reign of a great Mongol leader. He was greatly influenced by his grandfather, Genghis Khan. Kubla Khan may be one of the least know rulers. There had never been an empire the size of his. Kubla Khan was born in 1215 A.D and grew up to became very powerful . He died in 1294 A.D. He wanted to conquer as far west into Europe and east to Japan as he could. He already had conquered a large part of the Middle East, Russia, Korea, and Tibet. When he decided to conquer a land, he would take almost a year to prepare for a battle. Like his grandfather Genghis Khan, he would first order a town to submit. If they did not, he would massacre the people. One of his many talents was that he was a skillful warrior.

Kubla Khan conquered land with Mongol warriors. They were trained to ride full gallop and shoot long-distance arrows with perfect accuracy. He had advisors from different lands to help him rule. One of his most influential achievements was building the capital of Beijing. After he conquered land, he wanted to find ways to improve the lives of his people. This was a characteristic not popular among rulers of his time. Among many things, Kubla greatly improved the postal system so that messages were relayed quickly and reliably. Kubla Khan's way of ruling is what allowed him to successfully conquer so many lands. He supported his people, fed the poor, and educated even the peasants. These are some of the reasons he was known as the 'Wise Khan'. This book does not only tell about Kubla Khan's life, it shows it also. The illustrations are detailed and colorful. The pictures make Kubla Khan's story more interesting.

The author did a great job of sharing the details of Kubla's life as an emperor. The author shares details about him as a person not just a warrior. It painted a great picture of what his life was like as a ruler. I also like that it discussed how he became so successful and his many accomplishments. The details on how he conquered really intrigued me. I would like the book to talk more about his family; after all, he had over one-hundred children and four wives. I would also like it if this book talked more of his childhood. It did not really talk about his parents or siblings.

I recommend this book because it provides a lot of information on Kubla Khan. As a 6th grader, I did not know anything about Kubla Khan before reading this book. The author has brought attention to one of the lesser-known rulers. I also recommend this book to learn more about Ancient Mongolian and Ancient Chinese culture. Many things Kubla Khan did still influence Asian culture today. He is credited with influencing Europeans, like Christopher Columbus, to explore west. This book left me wanting to read more on Kubla Khan. I think that it is a great educational book for students.

Shelli says

This is a fascinating larger picture book for intermediate/junior high age students about Kubla Khan, the great Mongolian conqueror of China and most of the Eastern world in the thirteen century. Before reading this I had never hear of Kubla Khan, the grandson of the famous Genghis Khan. It was also surprising and interesting to read so many similarities to Alexander the Great, both in their conquest of land and how they governed their people. (Although my daughter and I drew these similarities from our own pool of knowledge, not referenced in the text.) There is also a strong tie to Marco Polo in the story which much later contributed in the discovery of the America's. Super interesting and a wonderful resource when covering ancient history.

Mary Jo says

The biography Kubla Khan: The Emperor of Everything is written by Kathleen Krull. Kubla Khan is a historical figure that often gets overlooked, but this book lets the reader get to know the true Kubla Khan and the man behind his warrior image. At the end of the text Krull states that the information about Kubla Khan is "sketchy"; she tried to make sense of the facts that were available to her. This book covers his obsession with conquering and ruling by showing his hunger to add China to his empire. Krull also detailed his extravagant parties and palace, to his pet tiger.

This is a great representation of a children's biography because the person of interest, Kubla Khan, not only was he a ruler of nations, but he was a man that liked to live extravagant. The details about his lavish lifestyle entertain the young readers. The features in the colorful illustrations help keep the children engaged. This book would be considered a complete biography because it briefly touches on events from his birth in Mongolia to his death in 1292. This text is recommended for ages 5 – 10. It would only be appropriate for the more advanced readers in this age group. It has difficult vocabulary throughout and the plot covers events that would be challenging for younger readers to comprehend.

Claire says

Interesting subject, but would have benefited by having a Mongolian or Chinese illustrator. The mention of "the great age of European exploration" at the end of the book is problematic and unnecessary.

Heidi says

I enjoy reading books about the past, but most of what I've read in both children's and adult books has focused on the American experience. So I was thrilled to hear about this book. Kubla Khan was a man of contradictions. A just ruler under most conditions, his armies destroyed many villages, massacring any who refused to become part of Khan's growing empire. It was interesting to read about Kubla's mother who was determined to have her children make a mark in the world and did everything in her power to provide them with a chance to do so.

Clearly a man of great intelligence and leadership ability, Khan left a mark that can still be seen in Asia today. One thing I found especially fascinating was how involved in his life, his mother, and second wife were. In a time where women were seen as inferior and incompetent, these women had a big impact on Khan's life, personal and professional. The book is too long for a short read-a-loud, but there is plenty of detail for discussion.

The illustrations are very detailed as well as colorful and bright. The illustrations compliment the text beautifully. I highly recommend this book for those who enjoy reading about the world.

Robin Raines-Bond says

Beautifully illustrated account of Kubla Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan. The author's note explains that this is just a pieced together story from the little known facts of this great Khan who expanded the borders of his Mongolian empire throughout all of Asia and the Middle East.

Barbara says

Not much is known of Kubla Khan, and this book acknowledges that. However the author has done a great job of presenting as much as she can - and how impressive Kubla Khan was! He is the first ruler to use a lot of today's modern conveniences such as paper money, better methods of irrigation, the idea of rest stops along long journeys, providing food for the poor, building roads for safer travel. He also had many modern ideas such as freedom of religion, respect for science and medicine, and a champion of the arts. Yes the man pillaged villages and massacred everyone that did not heed to his rule - not a great quality. Yet he tried to get all men educated, from the rich to the peasants. Take the good with the bad I guess.

Marco Polo was the one who found Kubla Khan and wrote about all the beauty of Asia which of course inspired many others, like Christopher Columbus, to take to the seas and discover other areas of the world like the Americas. So thanks Kubla Khan for making such an impression because you indirectly brought the east and the west together! Good read!

Jackie says

Not as lengthy or interesting as some of Krull's other biographies, *Kubla Khan: The Emperor of Everything* nonetheless gives the young reader a glimpse into life of a dynamic and powerful leader of the times. Kubla Khan was born in 1215 and ruled the Mongolian Empire for much of the 13th Century, was a visionary and beloved leader, although cruel and barbaric in conquering other lands.

Concise and compact, this biography relies on the scant information available to us today and tries to paint a picture of the times. Marco Polo's *The Travels of Marco Polo* written in 1298 serves as inspiration for a young Christopher Columbus as he ventured west in search of a new route to China.

Illustrations are bold and severe, attesting to the subject matter, yet are child-like in other ways. A confusing mix of heavy subject matter and light-hearted depictions.

Annie Oosterwyk says

Reverse Mulan. It was an interesting story to add to my knowledge of that time period, which includes mention of Marco Polo's visit and was the inspiration for Christopher Columbus' travels.

Dori says

I found this delightful picture book in the museum shop at the Met, outside the World of Khubilai Khan exhibit. It's brand new, published in 2010. The story is well-researched and beautifully told, with lively language and rich detail. The illustrations are phenomenal! The map of the Mongol Empire in the end pages is charming, and you can learn a lot about the Mongols and how they lived simply by perusing the pictures on each page. The book is labeled "ages 8 up" – and it is indeed far more sophisticated than your average picture book. Highly recommended!

On Robert Byrd's website, he says "My canvas is a stage filled with characters like an opera." Precisely!

I have found many of Kathleen Krull's marvelous nonfiction books already on my shelves, including *Lives of the Writers* and *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez*. She has a website and contributes to a blog called I.N.K.: Interesting Nonfiction for Kids.

Tasha says

Get a real sense of the great Khan who ruled over the largest empire in the world during the 13th century. This picture book biography invites readers to be amazed by what Kubla Khan managed to create and build. The emphasis is on the Khan's achievements and the scope of his realm. There are so many little facts shared that are fascinating and engaging. They all demonstrate the largeness of his life and his achievements, from his one hundred children to the three million workers who extended the Grand Canal. The feel of the book is

rich and dramatic as well, thanks to the illustrations by Byrd. Filled with small details, the illustrations and words work together to really bring this legendary leader to life. While a boon for report writers, this is also a biography that reads aloud very well thanks to the engaging style.

Krull excels at making famous people from history more human. With Kubla Khan, she humanizes him by sharing his youth in Mongolia. Yet Krull allows Kubla Khan to remain larger than life, his power and success is so large that it would be wrong to minimize what he managed to accomplish. Krull also emphasizes the fact that the Khan was very open to different opinions and new ideas. His ability to remain open is what allowed him to become the leader he was.

Byrd's illustrations change as the Khan changes. The youthful years in Mongolia have a freedom to the illustrations with racing horses, hunts, and smoky battlefields. As Kubla Khan becomes more powerful and rules China, the illustrations reflect the Khan's own changes and adoption of the Chinese style. Beautifully depicted, the illustrations are detailed, rich and add to the deep texture of the book.

Highly recommended for all public library children's nonfiction collections, this is a dazzling biography. Appropriate for ages 8-11.
