



The Wooden Prince

John Claude Bemis

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The automa Pinocchio has always been duty-bound to serve in the floating palace of Venice's emperor. So when Pinocchio finds himself locked in a trunk and delivered to a new master - a wanted criminal and alchemist named Geppetto - he is curious about everything around him. But most curious is the way Pinocchio seems to be changing from a wooden servant into a living, human boy. Before Geppetto and Pinocchio can uncover the mystery surrounding the automa's transformation, Pinocchio is stolen away. Determined to find Geppetto again, Pinocchio begins a harrowing journey across the Empire, where danger in the form of half-beast outlaws and winged airmen abounds for a lost automa.

Meanwhile, Princess Lazuli, the daughter of the ruler of a magical kingdom called Abaton, is also on a quest through the emperor's territory. Her father, Prester John, has been captured by the Venetian Empire, and Lazuli is desperate to rescue him. With the emperor's airmen closing in fast, Lazuli learns the only hope for saving her father-and her beloved home-lies in Pinocchio and Geppetto.

The Wooden Prince Details

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From Reader Review The Wooden Prince for online ebook

Catie Currie says

This was certainly interesting. I generally like retellings of classic fairy tales/stories as long as they aren't too similar, so I did like that aspect. I kind of feel like it dragged on a bit, probably 50 pages or so could have been trimmed and it would have been better, less fluff. Also, I have never encountered such a complicated audio book!! I can understand why a lot of people didn't really like it or found it distracting, but I really liked it actually. I found that the constant sound effects drew me into the story rather than take me out of it. It was weird for sure, but kinda a good sort of weird.

(read with little brother)

J. Else says

Immersive fantasy with steampunk elements. A heartfelt journey of discovering the joys and kindness of humanity.

Disney's "Pinocchio" wasn't a movie I much cared for. I felt it an odd and frightening look at how bad things happen to good-intending people.

While this book takes elements from the original story but enhances them. From magical lands to a princess trying to rescue her father to an outcast alchemist to the faithful wooden puppet, this story shines a fresh new light on an old tale. I thoroughly enjoyed Pinocchio's point of view and innocence. The ensemble around him was also fantastic.

Very enjoyable retelling. I'd definitely read book 2 of this series!

Vicky says

3 Stars for the Story - 0 Stars for the Audiobook.

I paid \$3.95 for this audiobook during an Audible sale. It was not worth it. The narration itself was good, not in the kind of way that I would run out to buy every book ever narrated by Ralph Lister, but in the way that I wasn't bored listening to him.

However, this audiobook has *sound effects*. Awful, awful sound effects. At the very beginning of the book, Pinocchio is in a wooden crate and is hearing a discussion taking place outside the crate - the dialogue is muffled and I thought it was clever. But it was downhill from there. We meet Maestro (Bemis' shout out to Jiminy Cricket) who has a chittering cricket like echo imposed over the narrator every time he talks. We have Princess Lazuli, the blue fairy, who has a tinkling noise reverberating over her voice. When Pinocchio stands up there's the sound of gears whirring (he's an automaton instead of a marionette in this rendition). In some of the more action-packed scenes of fights and chaos I felt like I was listening *through* the sound effects to hear the narration. It was really distracting and took away from the story.

The story itself was a clever retelling of Pinocchio. Similar enough that many of the same ideas still stand, but different enough that Bemis made it his own. The Wooden Prince is a fun, insightful read for the intended age group - but it lacked some depth for me as an adult reader. We got to learn a lot about Pinocchio, but many of the other characters seemed lifeless. Definitely, recommend it for the middle grades, but probably won't pick up the next in the series (and definitely won't pick up the next audiobook).

Brittany says

As far as a young adult or preteen book goes, this was splendid. If you want an adult rating, don't go into it expecting mature reading. The story was a different spin on Pinocchio and one I rather enjoyed. Some of the story remained the same, but I assure you this is worth the read if you enjoy fairytale re-tellings.

Kristen says

The audiobook was well done but the story was so-so. Somewhat enjoyable.

Morgan (The Bookish Beagle) says

The book is curiously too detailed and very shallow at the same time. I don't feel like I got to know the characters very well, aside from Pinocchio, and there were a LOT of characters. The story races on and jumps from place to place at a frenetic pace. That being said, I really liked the Venetian setting and the mixture of historical fiction with myth and fairy tale. I hate the animated movie Pinocchio but I really enjoyed this version of the story! Pinocchio is a wonderful, strange, fascinating character that made me think about humanity a lot. I was also wrapped up in the story and wanted to know what was going to happen. I didn't feel much emotional attachment though. It was a clever, creative retelling that could have used more depth and less characters/settings.

Andersreads says

I have probably said this before, but I am not a huge fan of fantasy literature. But sometimes a book comes along that I actually enjoy reading. The Wooden Prince is such a book. Not only is the writing well done, but the interesting characters and the conceit of how Pinocchio turns from automa to human and then back to automa again elevates the novel above the typical hero-on-adventure-battling-against-great-odds-but-you-know-he-or-she-will-win plot. Cleverly written by the author of the steampunk fantasy, The Nine Pound Hammer, Claude Bemis has written a fantasy book where I want to read the sequel.

Becky says

First sentence: By the time Pinocchio arrived in the village of San Baldovino, he was bursting with impatience to get free. Being locked in a trunk shouldn't have bothered him. He was an automa, after all.

Premise/plot: Think you know the story of Pinocchio? Think again! Bemis asks readers to join him on a fantastical journey. In the original story, Pinocchio is almost always unlikable; he is always rebellious and disobedient; he is more an object lesson than a 'real boy.' In this new novel--the first in a series--Pinocchio has a chance to be THE HERO.

My thoughts: Bemis has created a complex fantasy world. I wish I'd known about the glossary sooner. But reading the glossary after I finished the novel helped answer a few remaining questions I had. I really liked the world he created. Perhaps I wouldn't have loved this new fantasy world so much if I hadn't been drawn in by the characters as well. But what I loved most of all is his spin on the original, there are elements that do feel familiar. But everything has been spun about--and all for the better. There are still moral elements in this one. But instead of feeling like a lesson on how not to behave, a lesson about the consequences of disobedience, it has become more a series of lessons on how valuable life is and how essential friendship is. I loved seeing Pinocchio in a whole new light.

Amanda says

I really enjoyed this retelling of Pinocchio. It was imaginative and well written and fascinating. I will have to see if Bemis has written any other fairy tale re-vamps.

Carolyn says

The Wooden Prince is a great re-telling of Pinocchio featuring wood-and-clockwork automatons (automatons), and the mystery, and discovery, of who one is. I loved the Italian renaissance/steam-punk feel, but didn't enjoy the writing all the much. (Ironically), it felt mechanical and clunky, rather than fluid. I do love a good fairy tale re-imagining though! For fans of Pinocchio, classics re-told, alternative histories.

Jon says

I NEED this book.

Ms. Arca says

3.5 because I had to calculate in amazing things with just okay parts. The very beginning is good, but then it gets slow and the writing style / character voices weren't my favorite.

!! HOWEVER, the story itself was fantastic and woven in all kinds of delightful and intricate ways. I was glued to find out what would happen next in the journey.. I really loved the plot!

Rachel says

Pinocchio. The story of a wooden puppet who becomes a real boy.

5 stars for world building

1.5-2 stars for character development

4 stars for creative retelling.

This is a highly original and creative retelling of Pinocchio. There is magic, talking animals, mechanical automatons, and a war between the humans and the Abatonians (magical creatures/land/race). The world was beautiful. The mechanical caterpillar, the flying soldiers, mechanical lion. Even the fact that pinocchio is an automaton was wonderful. It was truly an original retelling.

But as thrilling as the world was, the characters were dull. They were like a half baked loaf of bread. Good on the surface, but undercooked and doughy underneath. Most of the names and characters blended together. I wasn't emotionally invested in any of them.

I'm leaving it with a solid 3 stars. As much as I loved the world and retelling aspects, I kept putting the book down with little desire to pick it back up. I think this would make a great animated series. One that could invest time on building out the characters. I think the visuals would also help identify which characters were which.

Brandy Painter says

Originally posted here at [Random Musings of a Bibliophile](#).

Pinocchio has never been a favorite of mine. Not the original novel. Not the Disney movie. In *The Wooden Prince*, John Claude Bemis retells this old story in a way that works for me as it never had before.

Pinocchio is an automa who serves in the doge's palace until he is stuffed in a box and sent to the alchemist Geppetto. As soon as he is placed in the box, Pinocchio begins to change. He feels. Automa are not supposed to feel. He is soon united with his new master who has been declared a traitor to Venice and is in hiding. Together Pinocchio and Geppetto must try to escape the soldiers chasing them and figure out why Pinocchio is changing from a wooden automa into a real boy. Before they can get far, they are separated and have to endure many trials to reunite, solve the mystery, and save a magical kingdom.

The Wooden Prince is a steampunk fantasy that takes place in Venice and references many real world places. The structure of the plot follows the original story in many ways. There are scenes that will be familiar to those who know Pinocchio. Bemis included all the iconic moments. What he did that I liked was change the thematic presentation up a bit. It is about community, friendship, family, and sacrifice. There is also an exploration of what it means to be real and alive. Beyond that, Bemis just made the plot more fun. There is a lot of action and it is fast paced.

The fast pace of the plot makes it hard to connect on a deep level with any of the characters. There are also quite a few characters to get to know. However, Pinocchio is one I was invested in. I had a discussion with some people on Twitter a few months ago about how difficult it is to make inanimate-objects-come-to-life

have real stakes. Bemis manages that here and manages it beautifully. This ties into the themes brilliantly too. The books is peopled with a cast of human and magical characters that do add to the story even if they're characterization is not filled out well. Maestro, the tiny sarcastic musical cricket, adds a subtle humor. Pinnocchio befriends chimera in the forms of different animals and the fairy daughter of a magical immortal king. All of these combine to make the story both familiar and brand new.

I can see this appealing to kids who love anything that reminds them of Disney (it is published by Disney-Hyperion) or are just into magical tales with animal/human friendships.

Michelle Leonard says

This steampunk retelling of the Pinocchio story completely swept me away. I became a Bemis fan after reading the Clockwork Dark trilogy. I love how those books were infused with Southern American folklore and felt sure that he wouldn't be able to pull anything of that magnitude off again, but whoa! Bemis transported me to Italy during the time of the Venetian empire in grand style. Deep world-building interwoven into the plot plus the empathy Bemis builds for Pinocchio's journey to become a real boy made page turning easy. Magic carpets, flying airmen, an immortal Prester John, elemental creatures, alchemy, automa, seven-league boots, and the darling and smart Lazuli. What else could I want? How about Book 2!
