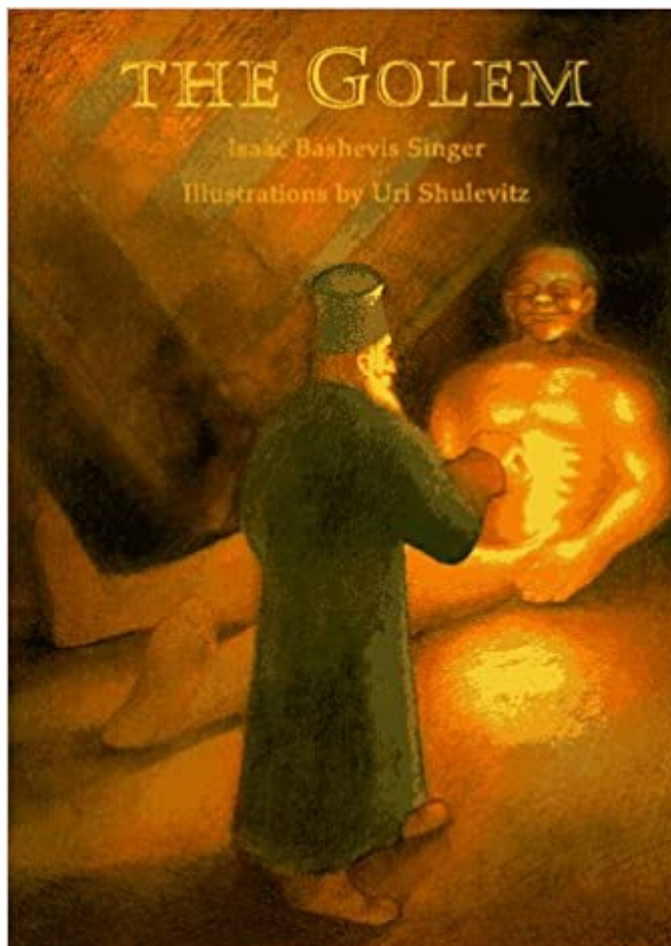


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# The Golem



## Synopsis

A clay giant miraculously brought to life by a saintly rabbi saves a Jewish banker who has been falsely accused in the Prague of Emperor Rudolf II.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 960L (What's this?)

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR); 1st edition (October 29, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0374427461

ISBN-13: 978-0374427467

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 6.2 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #731,487 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #94 in Books > Children's Books > Holidays & Celebrations > Jewish #120 in Books > Children's Books > Religions > Judaism #684 in Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Multicultural

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

PW described the Nobel laureate's interpretation of a Jewish legend as "stunning," adding that the black-and-white drawings are "superb." Ages 5-up. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Isaac Bashevis Singer's retelling of the legend of the golem is magical and compassionate, redolent with the warmth and philosophical wisdom for which this Nobel laureate is celebrated."

--The New York Times

There is a reason Isaac B. Singer won the Nobel Prize for literature, and it can be found in the novella, THE GOLEM. In very conversational, precise language, this is the quintessential storyteller at the height of his full narrative power. A page-turner, for sure.

This is a short (80 pages) story told in simple words about the plight of Jews in the 19th century and how a mystical creature saved lives but created some mischief in a small town in Europe...A small

gem!

The Golem, as told by IB Singer, is a traditional Jewish mystical short story of a superhuman giant, made of clay, who is brought to life by the most religious rabbi in order to save Jews in times of trouble. And although it is a "children's" story, there are many layers of symbolism to keep adults interested. This particular edition was especially well done. I appreciated the artwork and overall aesthetic presentation of the book. I came to this book after reading Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, the "Clay" in the title being the last name of one of the main characters, but also the substance from which the rabbi made the golem. Chabon heavily alludes to and borrows from this story, the Golem of Prague, though never quite lets the reader know that this is what he's referring to, almost assuming that the reader already knows about it, which is for most people not the case. So it was especially rewarding to finally read the story.

Classic book about a Jewish myth. I bought another book about the Golem at the same time and will continue to buy more.

Isaac Bashevis Singer has not equal, in this classic, simply told, droll gem.

The Golem is one of the best known Singer short stories. Its theme is a Golem, a mythical figure imbued with life by cabalistic magic to help the Jewish people in a time of need. This story begins with persecutions on Jews in Prague, which is when the Golem is sent to Reb Leib. After helping the Jews in their objective, Reb Leib decides to use the Golem, with its incredible strength, for a less noble pursuit, which is when the Golem starts to disobey him. The story unfolds with the Golem, a creature made of clay, turning more and more human, with the maturity of a child but enormous strength. The problems mount as the Golem destroys all in his way, falls in love (reciprocatedly) and gets drafted by the emperor. The short story evokes many deep issues, such as what it means to be human, what one should do with unending power, what one should do to preserve the peace, and many others. Though originally a children's story, any adult would enjoy it. It is the type of story that leaves one reflecting about certain issues for days.

I remember reading this book from a 1980's edition. The illustrations were all in black & white. I liked this version of the Golem because it gives a background into Jewish life in Prague in the Middle Ages, and how the Jews were pretty much at the mercy of the local populace and how the Jews

were required by law to be second-class citizens. My problem with the book is the last chapter, where the wife uses the Golem for some far-out treasure hunting project, breaking the "safety mechanism" in the Golem (in the original story the Rabbi just gets careless and uses the Golem for "help"). The part where the servant falls in love with the "evolving" Golem was silly. The story doesn't need a romantic subplot, and I can't see a love-struck teenage girl being attracted to a large clay statue. Nonetheless, the illustrations are great and any kid who likes Harry Potter ought to like this story.

This seeming children's story is really a parable for adults (which children can enjoy and eventually get on another level when they are ready). There are many well crafted sentences about the spiritual life, how to surrender into trusting God to take care of your life, about the hidden saints who help our life on Earth work, how to use our free choice, how to live in community with others, how to relate to believers and nonbelievers, how to handle being falsely accused, and how to be humble with power. You can taste a whole way of life behind the story which might be worth living or open it at random and find some messages that relate to challenges we meet in daily life.

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