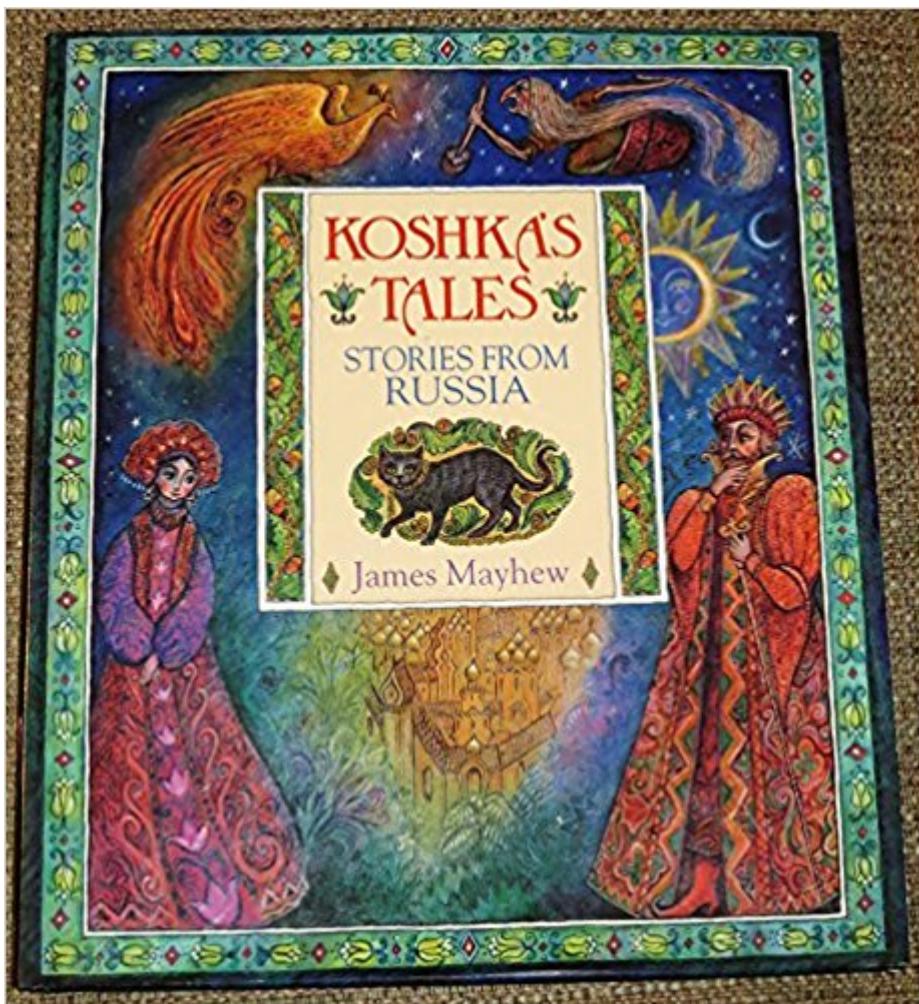


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# Koshka's Tales: Stories From Russia



## **Synopsis**

The wise old storytelling cat, Koshka, recounts the magical legends of Russia as she sits in an oak tree on the remote Island of Bouyan telling stories to the Tsarita and her son. These enchanting stories are beautifully illustrated in full color in the rich tradition of Russian folk art.

## **Book Information**

Age Range: 7 and up

Hardcover: 77 pages

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## **Customer Reviews**

A vibrant and accessible collection of five Russian folktales is woven together by the spirited narration of Koshka the cat. In the first episode, "The Tale of Tsar Saltan," a tsaritsa hopes to bear seven sons but is thwarted by jealous sisters. She is cast upon the sea, one son hidden with her, and surfaces on a distant island where dwells Koshka. The garrulous cat spins stories of such legendary figures as the Firebird and Baba Yaga, with each tale interspersed with further developments concerning Tsar Saltan and his wife. Linked in this way the stories suggest the wonderful richness and complexity of the Russian storytelling tradition. Mayhew acknowledges his debt to opera, and his love of ornamentation is evident in dramatically bordered text and illustrations that sparkle like a Faberge egg. Ages 5-up. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 2-5-Mayhew has interwoven five Russian folktales into one narrative. As the framing tale, he uses the story of Tsar Saltan, who is tricked by his envious sisters-in-law into throwing his wife into the sea. Arriving on a distant island, the tsaritsa and her son (whom she'd hidden up her sleeve) are befriended by a magical black cat, Koshka, who not only helps solve their dilemma but wiles away

the time by telling them tales of the Snowmaiden, Sadko the Minstrel, the Firebird, and Baba Yaga. While this integration of the separate stories is ingenious, at times the strain starts to show, e.g., when the tsaritsa's evil sisters continually run back to Baba Yaga for advice on how to outwit Koshka. Mayhew does a commendable job of presenting sources for his retellings, which are drawn from both opera libretti and books. His full-color illustrations, placed mostly on the borders of each page, combine layers of watercolor, ink washes, pen and ink, and gouache. They are highly stylized and suitably mirror the action of each tale. At times, the faces of the human characters seem inconsistent, but given the high overall quality of the illustrations, this is a minor flaw. While the audience for this book may be limited, it does offer a new and vital interpretation of traditional Russian folklore. Denise Anton Wright, Illinois State University, Normal Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Baba Yaga threatens to eat people, and the queen's sisters are really awful, so be careful who you choose for an audience. (There are stories with no troubling villains, but read it through first.) Russian fairytales, explaining the firebird, the snowmaiden, and others are told well. I would buy the book for the illustrations alone--exquisite! I also appreciate the Russian folklore background that inspired ballets and operas of Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, and Stravinsky.

Magnificent rendition of classic tales. I have even named one of my cats Koshka!

This beautifully rewritten story of intertwining folk tales is one of the best gifts my kids ever received. The stories are spellbinding individually, but told in the context of a story-within-a-story, they become mesmerizing. I once read one of the stories to my son's 3rd grade class and all the kids wanted me to come back to read more of the stories and to find out what happens to the prince and his mother. This is a must-have for any library.

I was looking for this for so long! I'm on a mission to find all the books I loved from my old library as a kid, and this one always stood out in my memory for the main storyline and the beautiful artwork. So happy to have my hands on it again!

One of the most gorgeously illustrated collection of Russian fairy tales. All of them are tied in beautifully as well.

I found this book years ago and have been reading it to my high school speech and debate classes for the past 6 years. Not only does it give me a chance to model readers theater/expressive reading, it helps me expose my students to a culture they are unfamiliar with through storytelling. Throughout the semester I read one story at a time and they anticipate my Friday readings. This year I had a Russian exchange student and she helped me in teaching the class the history of these stories (and helped me with my pronunciation of many of the names). I am now purchasing a second copy to keep at home so that I can soon read it to my baby son.

The book is made up of several stories linked together. It is very captivating, and with a interesting twist in the end. The stories are beautifully told and is great for reading aloud. We have been reading 1 story every one or two nights (some stories are longer and we split into two nights), not only was my daughter eager to listen to the next story every night, but I too, couldn't wait and was so looking forward to see what happens in the next story. I must say it has been one of the most captivating read aloud books we have read together.

I loved this book, as did my 6- and 10-year-olds. It is based on folktales of Russia, but old folktales can be harsh and crude for our modern sensibilities. Attempts to rewrite their plots can sound corny and "politically correct". Mayhew's rewriting avoids all these pitfalls. It is a work of art in its own right, sounding to our ears more authentic than the originals. The details he adds, the lyrical prose, just the right amount of repetition - all add up to a story that we love to read and children love to hear.

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