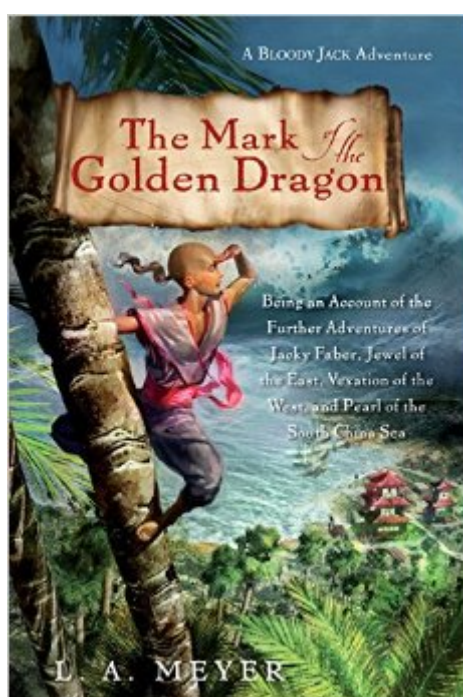


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The Mark Of The Golden Dragon: Being An Account Of The Further Adventures Of Jacky Faber, Jewel Of The East, Vexation Of The West (Bloody Jack Adventures)



Synopsis

Jacky Faber embarks on another rousing adventure to delight her ever-growing legion of fans. The irrepressible Jacky Faber, condemned for life to the English penal colony in Australia for crimes against the Crown, has once again wriggled out of the grasp of British authorities. Back on her flagship, the Lorelei Lee, she eagerly heads back to England in the company of friends and her beloved Jaimy Fletcher. But when the voyage is waylaid by pirates, storms, and her own impetuous nature, Jacky is cast into a world of danger that extends from the South China Sea to the equally treacherous waters of London politics. With the help of her loyal friends, Jacky meets her enemies head-on in this tale of love, courage, and redemption.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have been following the Bloody Jack series for a long time now. The first book "Bloody Jack" was marvelous. It showed a great deal of historical accuracy and realism, featured a interesting cast of characters and plenty of high adventure, and best of all, introduced a feisty, saucy, adventure-loving girl with a strong voice and a great force of personality that drove the story. "Bloody Jack" was essentially a coming-of-age story for Jacky, and "Curse of the Blue Tattoo" was a solid, character-driven continuation of her story. "Under the Jolly Roger" marked a return to the sea, and also introduced many plot elements that are now very familiar to Jacky fans -- Jacky dabbling in piracy, Jacky "picking up" new vessels, and Jacky constantly finding herself on the wrong side of the law. While weaker and less character-driven than the previous two, it remained solid and added

a wide collection of colorful characters to the story. Then came "In the Belly of the Bloodhound", a new dark note for the series--and one of its best, if not THE best. The story was focused, the characters vividly drawn, and far more rounded than they ever had been... or ever would be again. Yes, just as the series seemed to be finding its footing, it somehow stumbled. Perhaps the author confused the dark, adult tone of "Bloodhound" with sensationalism and sensuality, because that's what found its way into the rest of the series. The last three books in particular have frustrated me because, as Jacky Faber gets older and finds herself in more and more "adult" situations, she hasn't seemed to actually grow up any. In Books 1-4, there was actual character development. It wasn't always positive and it sometimes progressed in fits and starts, but it happened. The Jacky Faber that prances her way through Books 6-9 is not visibly more mature in any way than the Jacky Faber of Book 1, and at times seems considerably less mature than the Jacky of Book 4. This is especially evident in "The Mark of the Golden Dragon". Despite knowing full well that all her friends think she is dead and her beloved Jaimy has gone crazed from grief and has thoughts only for revenge on those responsible for her "death". Jacky takes her good ol' time getting 'round to dealing with that. After all, that's no reason to interrupt Jacky's fun in dressing up like an Oriental prostitute and indulging in "everything-but-sex" with one of her old flings, is it? Jacky even gets called out--beautifully, I might add, and quite justifiably--by one of her friends for her behavior... but she thinks about it for a couple of paragraphs and then continues on in the same course of behavior. Not only does she treat Jaimy abysmally, but she pulls her circle of friends into danger time and again and seems to think nothing of it--taking it for granted that they will always be there for her. Quite frankly, this heroine is no longer heroic. She was less self-absorbed when she was twelve years old. Not only has the heroine stagnated, but so have the plots. The "Eastern adventures" which feature so prominently on the cover and subtitle are rushed and largely pointless. They are even more improbable and contrived than Jacky's usual exploits--which is saying quite a lot! I suppose that taking poor Ravi along was supposed to make Jacky's adventures in the East a little more plausible as well as developing Ravi's character, but it fails on both counts. Ravi remains the two-dimensional caricature he was in the previous book (and still comes across quite disturbingly as Jacky's slave boy), and the adventures remain hurried, forgettable nonsense. The London portions of the plot, which are the story's real meat, are stronger and actually very interesting in concept, but too much of the intrigues and action are pushed aside in favor of more pointless fluff of Jacky flirting with a relationship she knows can't go anywhere. The "historical in-jokes" finally went too far. I thought they had gone too far in "Rapture of the Deep" when Jacky supposedly met "Aunt Jemimah". But I was wrong. No, in this book, we must not only reveal that Jacky's old classmate is Dolley Madison and that Lord Byron

and Samuel Coleridge are old friends (and implied to be the gay lovers) of Higgins, but we will also be treated to Jacky meeting all sorts of historical personages, like the Duke of Clarence (ie, that short dude with the bad skin from "Amazing Grace") and King George (yes, that King George), and, of course, Jacky waving the "I was the lesbian almost-lover of Cheng Shih" card she picked up last book all over the place. That's not what really puts things over the top, though. That would be the "reference" to "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes. I say "reference" because a reference would be echoing the language once or twice, or including a few nods, like Bess' name. When entire sections of your novel only make sense because "that's what happened in the poem", then it ceases to be a reference and becomes something uglier and cheaper and closer in kin to plagiarism than a respectful nod. I will say that this novel kept me reading to the very end. Part of that was the hope, however faint, that Jacky and Jaimy might finally get together now that Jaimy's scuffed his white-knight armor enough to be a match for Jacky's hopelessly soiled garments. (After Book 5, it was quite apparent that she would never be a good girl long enough to match HIM) Alas, not only did that not happen, but the way they were ripped apart was so arbitrary and unnecessary that it makes me think the author has no plans to allow Jacky and Jaimy to sail off into wedded bliss any time in the near future. An unfortunate decision. The bloom is off this rose and with the steady decrease in quality of the books, the promise of a conclusion is about the only thing that could entice me to keep reading.

Jacky Faber's piratical adventures are fast paced and engaging in this ninth book of the continuing series. Jacky continues to do her best for herself, her love(s) and her friends, but the consequences of her actions now catch up with her and as she says, she can be very hard on her friends. Meyer creates characters with depth and purpose, and the historical detail and characters he weaves into the narrative will make the people who recognize it smile, but does not disrupt the flow of the novel for those who don't. I highly suggest this series to young women especially. Despite a certain amount of moral ambiguity in her stories, Jacky Faber may not be a role model exactly, but she is an intelligent and strong young female with depth and courage. I have read all of the Bloody Jack Adventures and especially look forward to the next installment, as this one ended in a bit of a cliff-hanger (as usual).

First of all, let me clarify that despite my doubts and disappointment with elements of these books from #6 onward, I have continued to read them...but this is the first that made me literally throw the book at the wall in disgust. As for what is positive about the book: 1) I certainly liked the not-so-little

literary references that L. A. Meyer affectionately scatters through his books (this includes Sherlock Holmes, "The Highwayman," and Higgin's implausible "association" with a few handsome young literary talents...Lord Byron, to name one).2) Also, for the first time in a good long stretch of books Jacky gets significantly called out for her often indecent, irrational, and, let's be honest, selfish behavior.3) Her little stunt (SPOILER HERE) of imitating a mermaid to put the brakes on a passing ship was hilarious and exactly the sort of ridiculous stunt that makes me love her character.4) Also, if you have not gathered this from other reviews, this book sees Jaimy truly going off the deep end at the news of Jacky's demise...in the most romantic, dangerous, and sexy way possible. I'll admit, Jaimy's suicidal "letters" to his thought-to-demised Miss Faber are exactly the sort of angsty, twisted things that I adore in literature. I thought, 'Fantastic, now he's an anti-hero.'5) Finally, the concept of Jacky worming her way through London's glittering circles and seedy underbelly seemed a fine prospect for a novel, if disappointing in its delivery. (indeed, this is what the novel is about, not Jacky's professed adventures in the East)Okay, now for the not-so-fun portion of this review. The main problem with this novel, for me, was the fact that nearly every promising element listed above (as well as some not listed) failed my expectations. Jaimy's madness remains largely unexplored. Jacky's excursion in the East (comprising less than half of the novel) is wildly implausible at every turn, rushed, and scattered with flat characters. In fact, the overall pacing of the novel seemed awkward. Despite what its cover might imply, the meat of the action happens in London--the first half of the book seems like an attempt to get Jacky out of the previously set-up plot as quickly as possible. When Jacky and co. do return to London, only a few pages are devoted to the return trips, which, according to the previous book, would have taken at least 4 months. And after a surreally action-packed first half, the book spends inordinate amounts of time with Jacky simply fluttering about London on the arm of one of her returning male "acquaintances." Returning to my first point, this book disappointed me most in the lack of development for what could have been very dramatic moments of development for Jacky (and Jaimy too). The series has always tended to dwell on her adventures rather than any sort of self-reflection, but this book throws out points that could be potentially the most dramatic in the series. (Does Jacky really love Jaimy any more? Will she ever abide her promises to return to a safer lifestyle and stay? How will she deal with Jaimy's madness, and is she willing to give him up for someone else, when he has been willing to do that for her on more than one occasion? And, perhaps most interestingly...how will Jacky reconcile her desire for freedom and adventure with her love?) However, none of these questions are satisfactorily addressed. Much like installments #7 and #8, such matters are brushed away in favor of jaunts that have little to do with the core plot. This worked for the first few books, but we need to face facts:

Jacky is growing up, and it is far past time that she confront some of these questions. These are the same questions that have plagued readers and occasionally Jacky since the first book...yet they are continually ignored, and Jacky becomes more and more static a character without this sort of development. There is, also, (I feel obligated to mention this) a surplus of sexual references, and vulgarity in this book. I don't really care, but some of it was rather pointless. I believe this series still has the potential, however slim, to redeem itself...but I've been waiting for that to happen for 3 books. Jacky was, in my opinion, developed fairly well from books 1-5, while the series still managed to be raucously entertaining. "The Mark of the Golden Dragon" falls short of those wonderful first installments, and even of its more recent predecessors. Had these books grown up with Jacky's character, I would have been happy for the series to have continued as long as it has. But they haven't. I give it 2 1/2 stars...because, however much I disagree with the author's choices, I can't deny that the 9th installment is still a mostly entertaining novel. But this series has gotten so truly bad that I'm very near giving up on it.

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