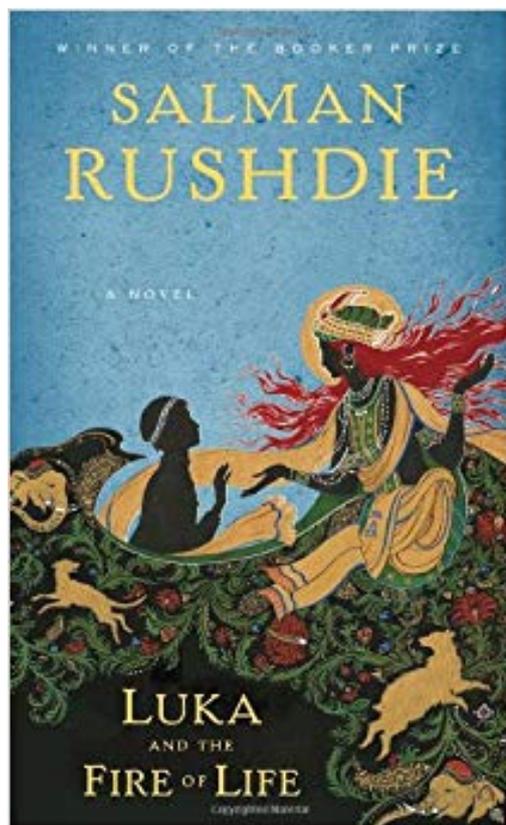


## Luka and the Fire of Life *by* Salman Rushdie



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Like all children about to set off on an adventure, Luka Khalifa is a special kid. For one thing, his father is the famed storyteller Rashid Khalifa, “the Shah of Blah,” “the Ocean of Notions.” For another, Luka’s older brother, Haroun, had already had an adventure of his own, travelling to a previously unknown moon and overthrowing a terrible enemy who threatened the Sea of Stories. Finally, and most importantly, Luka’s mother announced on the day of his birth that her newborn son had the power to turn back time; after all, he had been born well after his parents’ youth. Plus, he was left-handed. So it is only a matter of time before Luka finds himself in the midst of a great adventure. It begins, however, with something Luka gives very little thought to. When the Great Rings of Fire circus comes to the city of Kahani, Luka stops to watch the animals and performers troop through the streets. When he sees that the gentle beasts are treated cruelly by the brutish leader of the circus, the hard-hearted Captain Aag, he does what any other kid would do: he curses the circus master. The difference between Luka and other kids, however, is that Luka’s curse comes to pass. An evil fate befalls the circus, and the next morning, outside Luka’s door are waiting a circus bear named Dog and a circus dog named Bear. They have come to be Luka’s companions. But curses are not things to be thrown about lightly, and Luka’s first experiments with magic soon come back to haunt him, as a mysterious illness takes hold of his beloved father. Just when it seems that Rashid Khalifa will fade away altogether, Luka is visited by a flock of hideous vultures bearing a message from Captain Aag, threatening vengeance for the boy’s curse. The next morning, he looks out into the street and sees an apparition that looks exactly like his father. As he dashes out into the street to try to make sense of this double, he stumbles, and when he regains his balance he realizes he has somehow stepped into the World of Magic. And so begins his adventure. In the company of Bear, the dog, and Dog, the bear, and led by this troubling version of his father, whom he calls Nobodaddy, Luka must do what his mother said he was born to. To save his father, he must work his way upstream, against the current of the River of Time, and do what has never been done: he must steal the Fire of Life. The episodes of his quest are hair-raising and often hilarious. Luka and his companions must make their way past the many dangers of the River of Time as they head upstream.

Some, like the Old Man of the River, are there to guard against intruders. Others, like the rats of the Respectorate of I, are merely ill-tempered. And the most perilous dangers aren't enemies at all, but the simple fact that it's difficult to go upstream, and if you do you'll have to pass the Swamp of the Mists of Time and the Whirlpool of El Tiempo, to say nothing of the Rings of Fire. But the World of Magic is not all hostile, and as he works his way towards his goal, Luka makes many friends, receives help from strangers and even falls in love. By the end of his adventure, the whole World of Magic has been stirred up like a hornets' nest by the young intruder. Still, the best adventures aren't about swashbuckling or narrow escapes; they're about learning something about the world and about yourself. As Luka is drawn deeper and deeper into this strange world populated by nearly forgotten gods and figures from exotic myth, it is not the World of Magic that comes into focus for him, but his relationship with his beloved father back home in bed, the storyteller who conjured this whole world out of nothing by the sheer force of his imagination. In the end, Luka's adventure is quite literally a race against time. But to succeed, the young boy must not only make his way to the Fire of Life - to return, he must convince the angry gods of the truths he has learned on his quest. Only when he has changed the World of Magic can he return to his own world and his father's bedside. Weaving together bits of mythology, fairy tales, children's puns, metaphysics and echoes from well-known tales as different as **The Matrix** and **The Wizard of Oz**, **Luka and the Fire of Life** becomes a story about things as intimate as a boy's love for his family, and as sprawling as the meaning of life itself.



## Reviews of the **Luka and the Fire of Life** by Salman Rushdie

Mr.Death

This is an amazing book! Rushdie wrote an earlier book, "Haroun and the Sea of Stories" for his son Haroun and wrote "Luka and the Fire of Life" for his son Luka. Both of these are "children's" stories in the same way that Alice in Wonderland is a "children's" story--the simple story carries very deep messages. Since the author is Salman Rushdie, you can be assured of extraordinarily imaginative and unpredictable turns of events and deeply satisfying word play and just plain fun in both books. "Haroun" is a passionate defense of freedom of speech written by an author who was hiding to protect his life because he had exercised freedom of speech in his "Satanic Verses" and was separated from his family. "Luka" is a tender tale of a son's finding his courage while undertaking an amazing adventure in order to save his father's life. The characters and plot twists in both books are wonderful! Buy this book; buy the earlier one; ENJOY THEM BOTH IMMENSELY!!!

6snake6

I bought this book because one of my grandchildren is an avid writer and reader of magical realism and because one of my ex-students, now grown and a mother of two, is embarking on a career devoted to writing such books. My four-star evaluation, rather than a five-star, is based on my tastes alone. Although I do not especially enjoy this kind of book, I was especially pleased and fascinated by the historical and literary allusions woven into the narrative. The maternal figure is powerful and certainly not cuddly, while the paternal is distinctly less prudent and thoughtful. These parental

models are interesting contrasts to what the perfect set of American parents are supposedly ideal today.

Raniconne

I rated this 3 stars, but there were parts of this books that I loved and parts that were dull, so thus, 3 stars.

This is a sequel of sorts to Haroun and the Sea of Stories. While Haroun was written during a time of great personal trouble for Rushdie, that book is joyous and passionate and flows naturally. "Luka and the Fire of Life" centers around Haroun's much younger brother, who has always yearned for his own adventure. Taking the structure of a video game, with "levels" and progress that must be saved from level to level, Luka journeys to their father Rashid's imaginary story world in a desperate effort to save Rashid from dying as a result of a curse. Of course, the writing is beautiful with clever wordplay and humor, but the plot isn't as compelling and the characters aren't quite as charming, and overall it felt a bit derivative, compared to its predecessor. Still, a worthy read.

Qucid

Salman Rushdie's "Luka and Fire of Life" has simple story line. Luka is a twelve year, left handed boy who excels at video games who saves his father's (The Shah of Blah) life via an alternative reality. While reading this book I kept thinking what a wonderful video game this would make and how educational it would be with all the ancient Gods and Goddesses from all over the world.

Also included in this delicious little world are flying/swimmin elephants who do not forget anything, a Queen of Otter the Insultana Soroya who flies Solomon's flying carpet. Also there is the ghost image of Luka's father who travels with Luka on this journey-whose best interest does this Nobodaddy have at heart.

There is also a delicious dictatorship of Rats that the sassy Insultana Soroya loves to attack. The rats represent order while Soroya represents disorder. Is there a balance between the two?

I have to admit first of all, I am a Salman Rushdie addict. I love the way he writes--rich, full of texture and delicious details all woven into an almost poetic delivery. This book clearly expresses that and Rushdie's brilliance and imagination.

When I read this book, I had been on a long serious, educational book journey and needed something just a bit different...like a "Shadow of the Wind" type book. This was a perfect match. It was not an addictive book where I could not quit reading till the wee hours of the morning, but it was a lovely book that gently timed my pace as I read it.

There is also quite a bit of dry, tongue in cheek humor that might escape youth or teens that read the book but they would love the video game analogies and all those Gods and Goddesses.

Jek

I bought this book with great expectations. Having read much of Rushdie's fiction including Haroun...Stories, which I remembered fondly. I always read out loud, and having a fair amount of theatre and oral interpretation in my history I enjoyed reading Satanic Verses, Haroun And The Sea Of Stories, and Ground Beneath Her Feet, especially Haroun..., the prequel to Luka...for the music of English spoken by Indian characters through the gifted hands/ears of the inestimable Salman. Perhaps -as Terry Gilliam cautioned his Japanese audience before the premiere of The Imaginarium Of Doctor Parnassus: "Please lower your expectations"- I should have given the book a chance without expectations brought about by the countless hours of enjoyment spent reading Rusdie's other works. I found it more difficult to fall into the music of the language. The story did not engage me on that level, but it did through Rushdie's Sheherazade skill in creating tension which made me turn the page to complete the latest adventure, only to morph into a new one. It is OK reading compared with

an "excellent" which I would give the other three examples cited above. In a year I'll give it another chance with the required distance and a renewed sense of wonder; If I can manage it. Ramzi Masarweh  
Thetalen  
Rushdie wrote this novel for his youngest son, and he brings to it his inimitable imagination and wit. It's a novel that will fascinate both children and adults, who will appreciate some of the more obscure references and wordplay.  
Vichredag  
Rushdie is great for both kids and adults.

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