



Varenka | The Magic Paintbrush

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Two admirable picture books in this attractive North-South imprint reflecting valuable work, much of it from overseas.

Varenka is the tale of a Russian woman's steadfastness in the face of invasion by an occupying army. The pictures are generous, expansive, and catch the spirit of community within the tale. Though the language is wonderfully poetic, the illustrator has the courage to let her pictures point the story's climaxes: see the breathtaking double-page spread in which the soldiers struggle through the snow.

Janosch's pictures in **The Magic Paintbrush** are bolder, more child-like, an imaginative feast. The story of the little boy whose magic brush enables his wilder imaginings to take shape is splendidly served by the artist. Those pictures illustrating the hero's dreams, taking revenge on the bossy adults, touch chords with sixes up to eleven-year-olds. The series is to be commended: sturdy formats make them excellent value, my school librarian co-readers think.

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