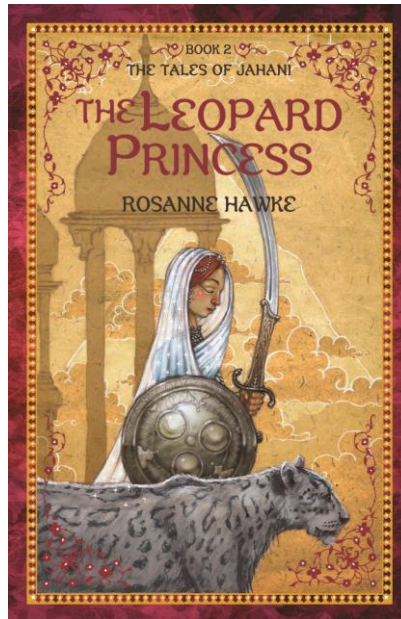


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# THE LEOPARD PRINCESS

## Rosanne Hawke



### Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian  
in context with the Australian curriculum  
(English)

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**SYNOPSIS**

*The Leopard Princess* concludes Jahani's treacherous journey north to the Qurraqoram Mountains. Hoping to lay to rest the frightful dreams that haunt her, Jahani is forced to leave the safety of the nomad camp to fulfil her destiny of freeing her people from tyranny and fear in order to restore peace to the kingdom.

Coming to terms with her true identity as the shehzadi, Jahani is challenged and threatened at every turn. With the help of her pari horse, Chandi, and the snow leopard, Yazan, she finds the strength, wit and determination of a true leader.

**THEMES**

Identity:

- Jahani discovers her true identity which enables her to fulfil her destiny.

Trust:

- Jahani must discern in whom she can and cannot place her trust.

Courage:

- Jahani's courage develops further as she learns to trust her instincts.

Belonging:

- Jahani returns to her home and feels a genuine sense of belonging.

**WRITING STYLE**

*The Leopard Princess* is written in third person, past tense and concludes Rosanne Hawke's two-volume Tales of Jahani series. Its historical setting of the Mughal Empire, combined with Azhar's flying carpet and the growing sense of resistance across the lands, results in a gripping story that is at times quite confronting. The inclusion of Hindustani, Burushaski and Persian languages is complemented by an extensive glossary. The text also features a detailed map of Jahani's journey, as well as a comprehensive list of the characters encountered on her travels. *The Leopard Princess* would appeal to middle-upper primary and lower-secondary readers.

**STUDY NOTES**

- Before reading *The Leopard Princess*, recount the main plot points and characters in *Daughter of Nomads*. Make predictions about *The Leopard Princess*, in particular how Jahani will develop as a character.
- When the nomads are attacked by Muzahid's men, Jahani courageously protects Yasmeen and Kamilah with the help of her scimitar. How does this scene foreshadow other events that later unfold in the text?
- Both Dagar Khan and Muzahid pose threats to Jahani's safety and to the peace of the empire. Create a character portrait of one of these two villains, outlining the role they play in *The Leopard Princess*.

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- Why does Muzahid chop off Rahul's finger? What does this reveal about Muzahid's intentions and his character?
- What is the significance of Yasmeen making special clothes for Jahani's journey north?
- How important is Anjuli to Jahani's life? Why is this the case?
- Rosanne Hawke uses figurative language to help enrich the text. As you read, keep a journal of this type of language and discuss how it contributes to the novel. Some examples include:
  - He was drowning, his lungs bursting like a goat skin full of liquid p10
  - Armed men swarmed the town like flies p48
  - The sun tossed pink and golden rays over the mountain highlighting a few late wildflowers that waved in the breeze p58
  - The river's roar became louder p60
  - The river beneath was white and angry, water splashing up like spirits trying to drag them down p61
  - Pink rays of sunlight shot over the scene p81
  - A stormy wind whipped about them, piercing their clothes with icy darts p90
  - Flakes like tiny shavings of coconut fell around them p117
  - She felt a chill slip down her back as if snowflakes had fallen there p117
  - One thought slid around like an adder p121
  - The wind grew so cold it bit through her cloak p134
  - Her eyes were stuck as surely as if they were sewn p148
  - Necklace of clouds p154
  - A river snaked around the township and all around, rocky black-and-purple mountains rose from the snow like jagged sentinels p155
  - It looked like a stark winter desert p155
  - He ... was like a pendulum constantly moving p205
  - The moon shone, making the snow below sparkle like zircon in a pari lake p217
  - She heard a loud rustle like dry leaves in the wind p264
  - Her grandmother's words floated into her head and settled like feathers p293
  - Soon angry shouts rose like a winter wind p309
- Why does Rahul say that 'peace without war is ridiculous' (p45)? Why is Jahani so determined to resolve the conflict peacefully?
- Jahani is constantly faced with feelings of abandonment, particularly as she has lost four mothers by the time she reaches the north. How does she deal with these feelings? How have they affected her choices?

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- What role does Ali Shah play in *The Leopard Princess*? When do you feel that you can trust him?
- Yazan tells Jahani that ‘you must be yourself’ (p87) What does it mean to be *yourself*? Who are *you*? What makes you unique from others? What elements contribute to your character? Represent these ideas in a format of your choice.
- Why does Azhar recoil as if ‘her words were a sword thrust’ (p92)?
- When does Jahani finally begin to accept that she is the shehzadi? How does this realisation change the way she thinks, feels and acts?
- Why is Rahul curt when Jahani suggests that he keeps being her brother? How would you describe their relationship?
- Why does Rahul believe that the truth is not important ‘when it would cause grief’ (p79)? Do you agree with him? Why?
- When Jahani learns she belongs to a real family, ‘a “fullness” ... descended on her, an after-feast feeling of peace and satisfaction’ (p83). Discuss Rosanne Hawke’s choice of words in this description. Why is it so effective in describing Jahani’s emotions?
- Why does Jahani think ‘it felt satisfying to have a man listen’ (p84)? How does this reflect the role of women during this historical period?
- In what way do the women in *The Leopard Princess* help one another? Why do they do so?
- Discuss the conversation between Jahani and Anjuli in which Jahani says ‘I don’t want war. There must be another way’, to which Anjuli replies, ‘try telling that to men’ (p86). In light of current global conflicts, write a modern-day perspective on the sentiments expressed by these two female characters.
- On pp96—98, Jahani flies Azhar’s carpet. Re-read these pages, in which ‘the carpet halted its descent, rippled as if it were water, bucked like a giant fish and rippled again’ and ‘responded sulkily like a recalcitrant kite’. How is the carpet like a character? What role does it play in *The Leopard Princess*?
- Why does Jahani describe Rabb’s smile as follows: ‘It was not a true smile – it had layers of calculation that she couldn’t fathom’ (p117)?
- Discuss the role that the animal characters play in *The Leopard Princess*.
- Discuss ways in which the following advice (pp197—8) can be applied to your own life:
  - keep persisting, to override ... doubts, to keep hope alive even when sorely treated
  - everyone has their weaknesses, but the great leaders overcome them

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- the path to greatness is simplicity itself
- practise kindness to others, which leads to justice and peace
- strive for wisdom
- a true leader serves the people.
- In the role of Jahani, Rahul or Azhar, write a series of journal entries sharing a few days of your journey. How are you feeling? What obstacles have you faced? In what ways are you fearful?
- How does Jahani's grandmother, Kaniza, give Jahani the courage to defeat Dagar Khan?
- Discuss Rosanne Hawke's use of the snake motif throughout the text to represent Dagar Khan and his evil plan. Likewise, discuss the eagle motif used throughout the text, for example, whenever Jahani is on the flying carpet.
- Why does Jahani become angry with Azhar for holding back his true identity? Is she being fair? Discuss.
- Discuss Hafeezah's proverb in relation to the characters and events in *The Leopard Princess* – 'No matter how shiny the mirror it is always black from the back' (p284).
- What role does Qadi play in the text? Use examples to help explain your ideas.
- Now that Jahani and Azhar are rulers, what changes do you think they will make within their kingdoms?
- Select a scene from *The Leopard Princess* to dramatise and perform to an audience.

**AUTHOR MOTIVATION**

*The Leopard Princess* began years ago when we were holidaying with our children in our favourite part of the Karakoram Mountains, Pakistan, during the time we were working there as aid workers. 'Tell us a story, Mum,' they asked and I began one about a lost child, who travelled to find her family. Since then, my daughter Lenore asked me many times to write this one, but there were always other deadlines. Finally I won an Asialink Fellowship in Pakistan with a proposal based on this project.

While writing *The Leopard Princess* I needed to make creative choices. How much history versus how much fantasy? Whether I could use historical people from the past and change place names. I decided to set the story within a historical period but not base characters on historical people. A few people from history are mentioned like Emperor Aurangzeb, but the only historical person who takes part in the story is the Mughal Princess Zeb-un-nissa.

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After deliberating how far I could play with history in the plot I decided the story would be fiction/alternate history: what could have happened if the little mountain kingdoms of the area now called Pakistan banded together and fought for their freedom.

My children are grown now but are still as excited by this story as when they were early teens. They have read drafts and given great advice; my son Michael also wrote Jahani's poems. They can't wait to revisit the settings of their childhood in print.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Rosanne Hawke is the South Australian author of twenty-five books. She lived in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates as an aid worker for ten years. Her books include *The Messenger Bird*, winner of the 2013 Cornish Holyer and Gof Award for Young Adult and Children's Literature and *Taj and the Great Camel Trek*, winner of the 2012 Adelaide Festival Awards for Children's Literature and shortlisted for the 2012 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. She is the 2015 recipient of the Nance Donkin Award; an Asialink, Carclew, Varuna and May Gibbs Fellow; and a Bard of Cornwall. She teaches creative writing at Tabor Adelaide and writes in an old Cornish farmhouse with underground rooms near Kapunda. [www.rosannehawke.com](http://www.rosannehawke.com)