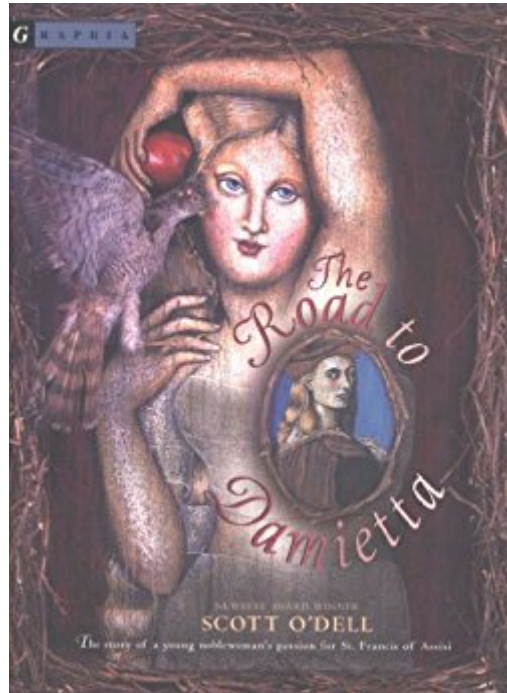


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The Road To Damietta



Synopsis

Rich in the atmosphere of thirteenth-century Italy, *The Road to Damietta* offers through Ricca di Montanaro's eyes a new perspective on the man who became the famous Saint Francis of Assisi, the guileless, joyous man who praised the oneness of nature and sought to bring the world into harmony. "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace," he said. "Where there is hatred, let me sow love, where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I loved this since I was a teenager. It's well written and thought provoking. It does drone on a bit.

I read this book many years ago as an adolescent and through the years carried a strange, bittersweet recollection of the story. Now that my daughter is nearing on that stage in her life, I thought I'd give it another read to see if she might like it only to discover that I am still susceptible to the rich, lyrical, historic beauty of Scott O'Dell's novel. This is the story of Francis of Assisi, as told

through the enamored eyes of young Ricca di Montanaro, a fictional contemporary. Her story is not just the point of view for this historical novel, but the decadent substance of the book. Through Ricca we see in full color the vibrancy of 13th century Italy. The pettiness of the noble and merchant classes, the undercurrent of treachery in the church, and the breathtaking beauty of an already ancient landscape. At the beginning, Ricca and her friend, Clare, swoon over Francis Bernardone's playboy antics. But when Francis infamously strips naked in the public square and declares himself a mendicant for Christ, their paths diverge. Ricca's continued obsession with Francis disregards completely his devotion to peace, nature and God. Her jealousy of Clare's burgeoning involvement with Francis's way of life is one of many clear illustrations of just how blind her 13 year old mind is to his commitment. Even a brief stint in an Italian convent cannot shake her conviction that Francis can and will change for her, if she can only prove her love. Soon, all of Italy is religiously obsessed: the Fifth Crusade has begun. The Road To Damietta is a journey that Ricca undertakes to follow Francis, and it ends in heartbreaking realizations for both of them. The notion that I could be as moved by this story as an adult as I was as a child is a clear indication of Scott O'Dell's master craftsmanship. As an adolescent Ricca was my best friend, my mirror, my secret identity. As a grown woman and mother, she is my daughter, my coming-of-age memories, my first heartbreak. The setting is as brilliant as any photograph and the story is a country road through it. But the characters are our portal into that world and they compel us urgently, faithfully, and beautifully to the end of that road.

It was a pretty good book with a very satisfying ending. It has St. Francis in it, which made it kind of religious. Ricca, the main character, was very annoying.

This book was perfect for my sons schooling

I think I was eleven or twelve when I read THE ROAD TO DAMIETTA for the first time. I was in the middle of a serious Scott O'Dell binge and had just moved back to the States after living in Italy for a few years. So it had the added attraction of taking place in that country I loved at a time when I was having a fair bit of trouble transitioning back to the American culture and pace of living. I'd already burned through *Sarah Bishop*, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, *The Serpent Never Sleeps*, *Spanish Smile*, and *Streams to the River, River to the Sea* by the time I came across a copy of THE ROAD TO DAMIETTA in a narrow, dusty bookstore in West Yellowstone. My copy had the cover you see above on the left. I have always liked it. Though the French cover in the middle is also quite

nice. I have to be honest and say that the current cover on the right kind of scares the crap out of me. Don't think I would ever have picked it up based on that cover alone, which would be a shame as it's really a beautiful book and one of the first young adult historical fiction novels I ever read. O'Dell was great for introducing me to so many time periods I was unfamiliar with as a young teen. Ricca di Montanaro is thirteen years old and irrevocably in love. The object of her affections is Francis Bernardone--the son of a wealthy merchant and general bad boy about town in Assisi. Though most of the men look down on Francis, most of the women in town follow him with their eyes and stay up at night whispering word of his exploits to one another. Ricca and her best friend Clare di Scifi are no exception. But when Francis publicly renounces his father's fortune in favor of a life of poverty and spirituality, Ricca's hopes are shattered. Over the next several years, Ricca determinedly follows Francis, alarming her parents and family with her single minded pursuit of a man who has left behind all things worldly. When the fifth Crusade marches to Damietta, Ricca joins the march because Francis is there. It is at the fateful walls of Damietta that she sees firsthand the horrifying depths that violence and passion can reach when employed in the name of God. Disillusioned, his health ruined, Francis returns to Assisi and Ricca, as ever, follows him home one last time. I have always found the history of St. Francis a fascinating topic. This is a fictionalized account told through the eyes of a young woman who decides she will love this young man for the rest of her life. It is an interesting specimen as Ricca herself is not very likable. She has many qualities I admire, including her doggedness and determination to remain true to herself. And she clearly recognizes something in Francis very early on that others do not. At the same time, she can be petty and unbelievably blind to realities, and these flaws persist to the end of the story. Normally, I might dismiss her out of hand. But for some reason her story (and particularly Francis') still resonate with me. I'm not sure if Ricca ever truly understands the man who became a saint. She and he are different kinds of creatures entirely. But in the end she does come to understand herself. And thus she achieves a kind of peace, I think. This is a novel about transformation and unrequited love, of human suffering and divine faith. It is haunting and real, never dipping into a cloying, romanticized take on the historical events it fleshes out. It is probably my favorite of O'Dell's many novels and, when I had the opportunity to travel to Assisi a few years ago, it came back to me with a vengeance as I walked the rose and white cobblestones of that hilltop town and remembered Francis and Ricca.

I found this book very interesting, but I thought it was a little adult. Some parts are very good, but I takes a while to get to the climax, or the turning point of the story. My favorite part of the story was

when Ricca goes to Egypt with Francis Benardone, or known as Saint Francis of Assisi. I think this book should be recommended for children 12 years of age. I learned about Saint Francis of Assisi. Thanks for reading my review.

This novel is not the type you can pick up and enjoy. It is depressing, and after reading the book myself I felt really down. It was so frustrating because the whole time the girl was following after this guy who was so selfish and wasn't even worth her time. I cannot relate to the heroine, didn't she have any pride? I don't care if it is educational or whatever, it was the most disappointing and frustrating book I have ever read, and I have read a lot of books. I would NOT recommend this book to anyone, especially not to children.

The book was written to portray St. Francis of Assisi through the eyes of the heroine, who was consumed by a kind of love for him. I did not consider the book, and the actions, views and motives expressed to be edifying at all. If you want to read about St. Francis, look for another book.

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