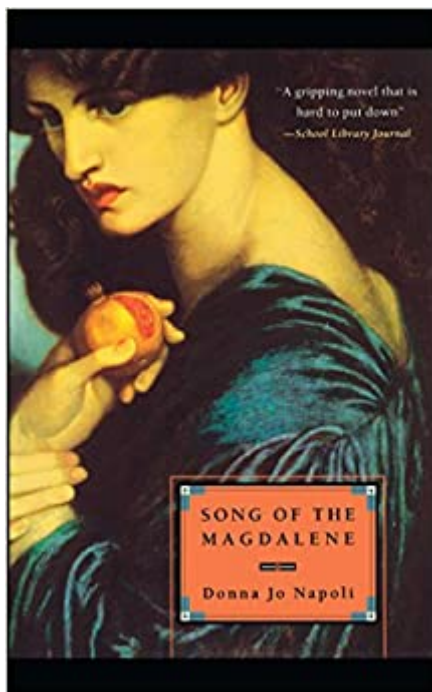


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# Song Of The Magdalene



## Synopsis

The story of a teenage Mary Magdalene -- here called Miriam -- is finally told.... When the world goes dark and her mind explodes within her, Miriam's future is shattered. In ancient Israel such seizures make her unclean. If anyone finds out about them, she will be an outcast. Only Abraham -- the son of Hannah, her caretaker -- shares her secret. Abraham, too, is afflicted -- a perfect mind in an imperfect body -- and to the villagers he is an idiot. To Miriam he is a savior....

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This novel imagines the youth of the girl who would become Mary Magdalene and the events that shaped her into a powerful Biblical figure. "Readers may come away with new thoughts about a different era," said PW. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 7 Up-Napoli has created two stories in this intriguing novel. One is the creation of a plausible explanation for the brief mentions of Mary Magdalene in the New Testament. The second is that same tale seen as a story of a young woman who finds herself an outsider. The narrative is rich with modern issues of gender, disability, violence against women, and spirituality. Miriam describes her life from age 10 to 16 when she is deeply troubled by the occurrence of "fits," which over the years come upon her 7 times. She is driven in her loneliness to explore nature and to learn the songs and poetry of her faith. Her closest relationship is with severely disabled Abraham. As teenagers, the two become lovers, briefly, before he dies. Pregnant, Miriam withdraws into herself until, after being

raped, she loses the child and is forced to seek shelter elsewhere. In her travels, she hears of the great healer Joshua, or Jesus. At the end of the tale she finds him; she is cured of the seven devils and becomes a follower of the Master. Knowledge of ancient Hebrew culture, an ability to express the feelings and anguish of an intense young woman, and skillful weaving of plot and character create a gripping novel that is hard to put down. The necessity of finding an ending compatible with the Biblical scene in which Mary Magdalene first appears does in the end constrain a plot that is otherwise highly inventive and complex. Napoli has taken up a challenging and possibly controversial topic and created an interesting book that should lead readers to look further into both Old and New Testament histories. Shirley Wilton, Ocean County College, Toms River, NJ Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It is so difficult to find quality biblical fiction that is not agenda driven, saccharine, or revisionist. That's what makes this novel such a treasure. So much do I love this book that I have ordered a library bound copy. Miriam is a young woman living with her widowed father, a hand maid, and the hand maid's disabled son Abraham. Based on Donna Jo Napoli's description, Abraham has cerebral palsy. Miriam, an open hearted, open minded young girl, builds an intense bond with him, as she can see beauty and wisdom in him that few others can. Miriam also has a health condition of her own that she must keep quiet. She is blessed with a warm, loving family, but she is living in a difficult, dangerous time. Due to society's intolerance and violence, she must leave her beloved family for their protection. Looking to start a new life, she encounters Jesus. The novel is a speculation of Mary Magdalene's life before she met Jesus, and it's actually quite plausible. Besides Donna Jo Napoli's sweet prose and gentle manner, the book is well researched. It is unbiased. It gives a vivid image of ancient Israel/Palestine. I love all of Donna Jo's books- written for girls but not in a sappy, patronizing way. Nor does she rely on shock value to lure readers. This is the best book of her collection, in my opinion.

Very perceptive novel of how horrible life must have been for a person with disabilities, in biblical times. The author's search for historical facts must have been a real education and seem to accurately convey as much fact as can be gleaned from a very short biblical verse. In those days many just considered women to be chattel and worse if they had any physical ailment. My bible study group liked the book and we all came to the conclusion that Mary Magdalene was an epileptic.

I purchased this book because I love Donna Jo Napoli books and historical fiction. I thought my 13 year old daughter would read it. However, in browsing it I found myself enthralled by the story and read it all in two days. Lovely story. I would highly recommend for children or adults.

A beautiful retelling of the Tale of the Magdalene, giving her a voice. I always hate when I hear her described as a prostitute in church. Fiction, but lovely to hear her sing. Illness, love, loss, family, society and a woman's place in first century Israel.

Another excellent twist of an old story by Donna Jo Napoli.

Song of the Magdalene -Donna Jo Napoli This was a book of very good quality, bordering on excellence. I believe this book could be read at the grade seven or eight level, although the subject matter is more appropriate for grades nine to eleven. This book would appeal to most regular readers, but not all. The timeline of the story is around 05 AD to 25 AD. Set in what is now Israel, this book has vivid scenes in mostly the town Magdala, and also various other places along the River Jordan. This book is an excellent reference to get a view of life in this time and place. Song of the Magdalene is a fictional story of the young Mary Magdalene. Her family a quite respected in her village, and they are not poor, to say the least. Miriam lives with her father, her servant friend Hannah and Hannah's paraplegic son Abraham. At the age of ten she leads a rather normal life until the occurrence of her first fit.(seizure) In her culture and religion having a physical affliction is seen as evil and a fit represents an evil spirit entering your body. Miriam is a smart girl; because of this she knows that she must not let anyone find out about her fits, or she will be labeled as impure and be a social disgrace. To hide she spends her days in the valleys and forests, when she should be doing chores, preparing herself to be a wife. Eventually Abraham, who is always stuck at home, convinces Miriam to bring him along on her excursions. Because he joins her, when she has her second fit he finds out about them, he assures her neither of them are evil. As they become closer Abraham teaches Miriam to sing the Song of Songs and to read the torah, two skills only men regularly have. They grow very close and an incident soon after sends Miriam's world spinning. All her secrets torn open, all her lies exposed. She is sent away. After much searching she finds herself, and the story ends where the fact from the bible begins, as Miriam meets Jesus. This book is very factual and the religious aspects of it are quite realistic. It is interesting to compare the social roles of men and women portrayed in this book to those of today, it sure has changed. I would

consider this book quite an easy read with mature subject matter, which is not the best combination. Although Overall I would consider this book extremely good in all aspects including writing, historical facts, reality and to top it all off an adventurous story line.

This historical fiction book is a story of a 1st century Jewish girl, Miriam, and the story is told through her eyes, of her life from age 10-18. Miriam lived with her father and their maid Hannah along with Hannah's handicapped and socially outcasted son. Over the years, Miriam and Abraham's love develops much to the dismay of society. Miriam realizes that she is pregnant, but Abraham dies of an illness before their child is born. Miriam is forced to become a pariah after she is raped and her child is lost, and she embarks on a journey to find reknwon Jochanan, a man who takes in social outcasts. What I really enjoyed about this book was the author's ability to take a Biblical character and create a fictional story about her life as well as incorporating historical facts. Also, the ending was such that it made the entire story believable. One negative factor of this story is that the first half is extremely boring; it focuses more on the setting rather than the plot. Overall, the final result of this book was satisfying and I would recommend this novel to anyone who would enjoy learning about 1st century Jewish culture.

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