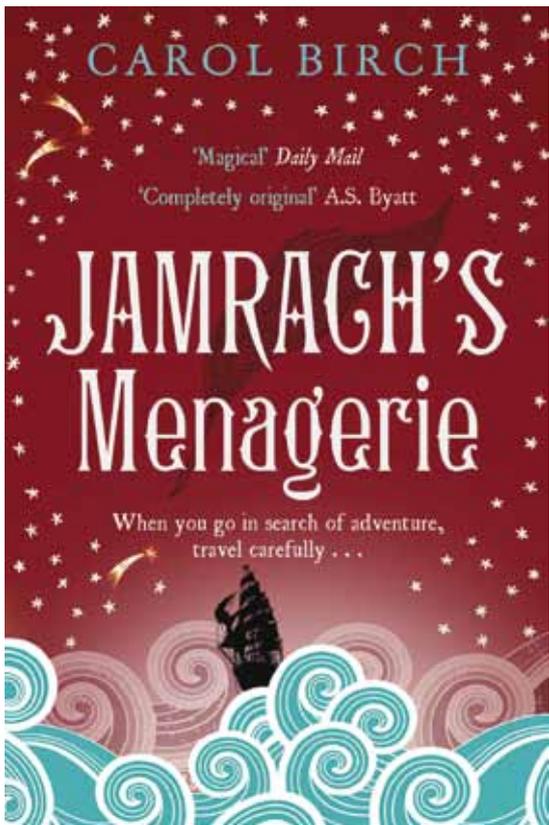




Reader's Guide



Other novels by Carol Birch

Life in the Palace (1988)
The Fog Line (1989)
The Unmaking (1992)
Songs of the West (1994)
Little Sister (1998)
Come Back, Paddy Riley (1999)
Turn Again Home (2003)
In a Certain Light (2004)
The Naming of Eliza Quinn (2005)
Scapegallows (2007)

Jamrach's Menagerie

Carol Birch

Canongate Books
£7.99

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About the author

Carol Birch is the author of ten previous novels including *Scapegallows* and *Turn Again Home*, which was longlisted for the Booker Prize. She has won the Geoffrey Faber Award and the David Higham Award. She lives in Lancashire.

Jamrach's Menagerie

'I was born twice. First in a wooden room that jugged out over the black water of the Thames, and then again eight years later in the Highway, when the tiger took me in his mouth and everything truly began.'

1857. Jaffy Brown is running along a street in London's East End when he comes face to face with an escaped circus animal. Plucked from the jaws of death by Mr Jamrach - explorer, entrepreneur and collector of the world's strangest creatures - the two strike up a friendship. Before he knows it, Jaffy finds himself on board a ship bound for the Dutch East Indies, on an unusual commission for Mr Jamrach. His journey - if he survives it - will push faith, love and friendship to their utmost limits.

Discussion points

Carol Birch was inspired by true events in writing this novel. Does this make a difference to the way you read it?

How does Carol Birch help the reader to understand the complexities of Tim and Jaffy's relationship?

How successfully does Carol Birch take pieces of history and weave them into the narrative?

"The novel (*Jamrach's Menagerie*) is a vehicle for the delivery of somatic shocks to the reader's brain". (Matthew Sweet, *Financial Times*). As a reader do you identify with this?

Working for Mr Jamrach, Jaffy is involved in the relationship between man and animals. What questions does the book ask about wildness and human nature?

Themed reading

Owen Chase *Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex*
Henry Mayhew *London Labour and the London Pool*
Herman Melville *Moby Dick*
Yann Martel *Life of Pi*

Useful links

Publisher's website

<http://www.canongate.tv>

Round up of reviews

http://theomnivore.co.uk/Book/6704-Jamrach_s_Menagerie/default.aspx

Interview with Carol Birch

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/8330691/A-Page-in-the-Life-Carol-Birch.html>