



## Children's column - Beedle the Bard

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*I am disappointed about The Tales of Beedle the Bard . Not about the book, which is clever and entertaining, but about the sales price. I wish the book trade would - belatedly, and for once - sell this volume at the cover price of £6.99. It is £3.49 at Tesco's, Waterstone's, on Amazon, and at W H Smith, though from 3-8 December it is only 99p at Smiths IF you spend another £15 (including on stationery or gifts). At Borders it is £5.29 online, though on launch night it was £4.99 and while stocks lasted came with two free books, Jonathan Stroud's The Amulet of Samarkand and Justin Somper's Demons of the Ocean - each the first in a series, and thereby properly encouraging future sales. On the whole, though, such an opportunity has been thrown away over the years by the discounting of the Harry Potter books.*

Meanwhile Amazon seems to have been rewarded for its winning bid at Sotheby's of £1.95m for the handwritten 'Moonstone' edition by having the exclusive right to sell the £50 Collectors' Edition (of up to 100,000 copies). At least, whatever the sale price, £1.61 per edition still goes to Rowling and Baroness Nicholson's charity the Children's High Level Group.

Of course, what the reader is getting is only four new stories, not five: the fifth story, The Tale of the Three Brothers , is quoted in its entirety (give or take a couple of altered words) in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, because Beedle is the book that Dumbledore bequeaths to Hermione, in order to help her and her friends identify the three crucial magical objects that are the Deathly Hallows: the stone of life, Death's invisibility cloak, and the elder wand. Albus Dumbledore's notes on the story are a new addition, however, as are J K Rowling's illustrations. Throughout, these reveal Rowling to have a talent for decorative line, with elongated figures as in medieval illumination, even if there is something not quite right about her drawing of a falling horse.

One quibble: in the seventh book, Hermione is alerted to the importance of The Tale of the Three Brothers by Grindelwald's mark, a circle inside a triangle, at the head of the story. (This mark appeared on the spine of Deathly Hallows.) In this printed book, the mark is not there.

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