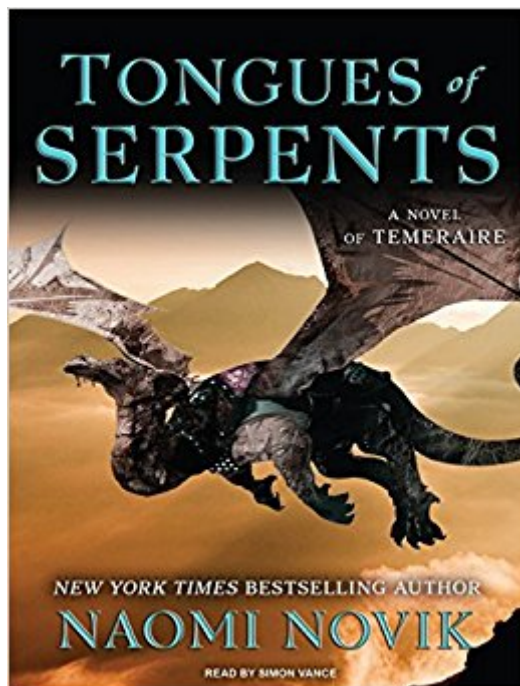


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# Tongues Of Serpents (Temeraire)



## Synopsis

A dazzling blend of military history, high-flying fantasy, and edge-of-your-seat adventure, Naomi Novik's Temeraire novels, set in an alternate Napoleonic era in which intelligent dragons have been harnessed as weapons of war, are more than just perennial bestsellers—they are a worldwide phenomenon. Now, in *Tongues of Serpents*, Naomi Novik is back, along with the dragon Temeraire and his rider and friend, Captain Will Laurence. Convicted of treason despite their heroic defense against Napoleon's invasion of England, Temeraire and Laurence—stripped of rank and standing—have been transported to the prison colony at New South Wales in distant Australia, where, it is hoped, they cannot further corrupt the British Aerial Corps with their dangerous notions of liberty for dragons. Temeraire and Laurence carry with them three dragon eggs intended to help establish a covert in the colony and destined to be handed over to such second-rate, undesirable officers as have been willing to accept so remote an assignment—including one former acquaintance, Captain Rankin, whose cruelty once cost a dragon its life. Nor is this the greatest difficulty that confronts the exiled dragon and rider: Instead of leaving behind all the political entanglements and corruptions of the war, Laurence and Temeraire have instead sailed into a hornet's nest of fresh complications. For the colony at New South Wales has been thrown into turmoil after the overthrow of the military governor, one William Bligh—better known as Captain Bligh, late of HMS *Bounty*. Bligh wastes no time in attempting to enlist Temeraire and Laurence to restore him to office, while the upstart masters of the colony are equally determined that the new arrivals should not upset a balance of power precariously tipped in their favor. Eager to escape this political quagmire, Laurence and Temeraire take on a mission to find a way through the forbidding Blue Mountains and into the interior of Australia. But when one of the dragon eggs is stolen from Temeraire, the surveying expedition becomes a desperate race to recover it in time—a race that leads to a shocking discovery and a dangerous new obstacle in the global war between Britain and Napoleon. *Tongues of Serpents* is the sixth entry in Naomi Novik's Temeraire series. Books one through five are available from Random House Audio.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The somber sixth installment (after 2008's *Victory of Eagles*) of the Napoleonic era adventures of Capt. Will Laurence and Chinese-British dragon Temeraire opens with the pair exiled to New South Wales for saving French dragons from a plague while England and France were at war. The government of the colony is hotly disputed, and both the deposed royal governor and the insurrectionists hope to ally with Laurence and his draconic companions. When a dragon egg is kidnapped, an expedition over the Blue Mountains turns into a frantic hunt for the culprits. Novik fans will be glad to see their old favorite characters growing and changing yet still very much themselves, but the lack of significant interaction with native Australian humans or dragons leaves a certain emptiness at the heart of the story, exacerbated by long stretches of travel through physical and emotional desolation. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The sixth installment of Novik's fantastic series introduces Temeraire and former captain Laurence to New South Wales. Laurence, technically a transported prisoner, is escorting three eggs to form a covert in the colony there. The eggs are destined for such second-rate officers willing to make the long trip to the remote colony, including Captain Rankin, whose cruelty killed his former dragon. On arrival, the ship is met by former governor William Bligh, deposed through mutiny by the New South Wales Corps. Bligh wants the dragons to reinstate him in his post; the mutineers are determined to retain the upper hand. Discipline is lax and quarrels are the order of the day, including those between Temeraire and Iskerria, a snobbish beast. To escape all this, Laurence and Temeraire take a mission to find a way through the Blue Mountains and explore the interior of the continent. But one of the dragon eggs is stolen, and the exploration turns into a desperate rescue mission. Temeraire fans have waited two years for this book but should find themselves richly rewarded. The characters are as riveting as ever, the setting is new but convincing, and the plot, with its first-class balancing

of Laurence's and Temeraire's internal and external struggles, shows Novik's continued excellence as a novelist. --Frieda Murray --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I'll spare you the summary of the book in this review and just get down to brass tacks. I'm a fan of the series (some books a little more than others) and love its premise, but was highly disappointed in this installment. This was especially upsetting coming off of the excitement and trial of Victory of Eagles. Tongue of Serpents had virtually no action, with an extremely dry, drawn-out, and boring (approximately 200 pages) chase across the Australian outback. For the first time in the series, I started skimming whole pages just to get to something interesting. Even the characters lacked substance and interest (including the new dragons). There seemed to be sparks of plot development that could have been followed to make the story more engaging (e.g., the possible Letter of Marque and privateering for Laurence and Temeraire; engaging with Jia Zhen for opening greater trade in the port of Larrakia with China; developing some kind of relationship with the sea serpents; or even allowing Laurence to work some of his aggression out on Rankin). Unfortunately, this book seemed to be a calculated attempt to extend the series and set conditions for further installments. While a shrewd marketing plan, after waiting more than a year and a half for this book, I felt cheated as a fan. I'm also getting a little tired of how meek Laurence has become after being such a force to be reckoned with in earlier books. If you're a fan of the series, you'll probably want to suffer through the book just so you feel complete for the next installment. But I urge you to wait for it to come out in paperback or at least get it from your local library to save the wholly unjustified \$25 hardcover price. I expect the next book to be better and truly hope that Laurence and Temeraire start displaying and engaging in acts of a little more action and excitement. I just wish I didn't have to wait another year and half for something that should have been present in this book.

I have been following the Temeraire series after purchasing the 3 book collection In the Service of the King on a whim. I enjoyed the previous installments (some more than others) but knew going into this one this isn't fine art just passable Pop-fiction and indeed it has been enjoyable up till now. This installment is BORING, the plot is essentially a framing device. It starts in the British penal colony of Australia in the port town of Sydney which was kind of bland in execution even the fist fight was just blah. The middle part and the vast majority of the book consists of wasteland-wandering in the outback where descriptions of cooking kangaroo and Temeraire's increasing effeminacy (seems just too worried about Laurence's clothes, in fact all of the dragons including the new ones just seemed overly concerned about their captains' status and clothes while simultaneously starving and

dying of exhaustion) abound, and the latter third part which is the most interesting part of the book save for the non-ending probably intended as a cliff-hanger. It wasn't it just sucked. The endless and ultimately pointless wandering reminded me of almost the exact same scene in another dreadful book, *Eragon*. This book just seemed not only a "money-grab" or a way to write off an Australian weekend for the author but a lazy

introduce-new-characters-for-the-next-slow-moving-installment. This book could've been condensed greatly with more action and adventure (the lame bunyip-dragon-snakes did not add anything) in it mayhap even some character development (it was that boring) as Temeraire and Laurence seem hardly changed from the last book. I actually advance-ordered this, needless to say I'll wait awhile for a mass of reviews to pile up before I even contemplate buying the next one.

Other reviewers have done a great job detailing how this book was a waste of time and money. No plot, no characters, perhaps 2 action sequences but page after page detailing the fabulous new bejeweled robe of the protagonist and what kangaroo stew tastes like, etc. Spoilers below, but it's not like there's much plot to spoil. I just wanted to point out that this book is one long shaggy dog story. We start with a tale of colonial intrigue, but that's dropped in favor of a wagons ho story which is then ended in favor of a chase story which is then dropped in favor of a monster horror story which is abandoned for a cautionary tale on the evils of mercantilism and mean people. In each case, the writer fails to resolve anything in a satisfactory way. For example, much is made during the long chase sequence about how the egg thieves are very close, but are able to evade the dragons searching for them. At no point is it ever explained how the thieves (apparently random aborigines) are able to evade a flying search party for what must be months of travel. Also, the author has a bad habit of making the supporting cast of British characters completely unappealing, they're all just straw men designed to make the protagonists look smarter and better by comparison. In comparison, every non-European culture is so advanced that you have to wonder how the European powers were able to colonize so much of the world despite being too stupid, too bigoted, and too inflexible to compete with pretty much any culture they encounter.

Naomi Novik is an amazing writer. Her word choices and phrases are an absolute pleasure to read - and she writes about intelligent dragons with no filter who embarrass their riders and delight their readers, what's not to love. The novel is in the Temeraire series and is a solid entry. I won't spoil even one word of it here, but I recommend it to anyone looking for a bit of fantasy, alternative history, excellent battle writing and engaging, well thought out characters. Novik's words flow and

her love of history comes through in the detailed reimagining of Napoleon's wars. Give this book and more importantly this writer a chance - chances are you'll fall in love.

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