

Lady of Bohemia

Book Club Kit



A Novel by
Sara R. Turnquist

About Sara R. Turquist

Sara is a coffee lovin', word slinging, clean Historical Romance author whose super power is converting caffeine into novels. She loves those odd little tidbits of history that are stranger than fiction. That's what inspires her. Well, that and a good love story.



But of all the love stories she knows, hers is her favorite. She lives happily with her own Prince Charming and their gaggle of minions. Three to be exact. They sure know how to distract a writer! But, alas, the stories must be written, even if it must happen in the wee hours of the morning.

Sara is an avid reader and also enjoys reading clean Historical Romances when she's not traveling. Her books range from the Czech lands to the American Wild West and from ancient Egypt to the early 1900s. Some of her titles include *The Lady Bornekova*, *Hope in Cripple Creek*, *The General's Wife*, *Trail of Fears*, and the Convenient Risk Series.

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Q&A With Sara Turnquist

Tell us why you have written a book set in the Czech Republic. This is different from most of your other works.

I spent several summers teaching English in the Czech Republic. While there, I fell in love with the people, the culture, the atmosphere, the architecture... everything—and their history. It inspired the first book of mine that was published, and continued to inspire the whole series.

What drew you to set your novel during the Hussite Wars?

This is a major piece of Czech history—these religious civil wars between the Catholic Church (in the medieval period) and the pre-Protestant. The history inspired me, and the area (landscape, architecture) inspired the fictional romance side of the story.

What was life like for people living in the Czech Republic at this time?

It was rough. Everything was in upheaval because of the war. The Hussite army was made up of a few nobles and farmers, and peasants. Yet God was with them. But as the war continued, there was infighting, civil unrest, and just fatigue. Never mind that the medieval period had its own brand of difficulty.

Who was Jan Hus, and how is he important to the story?

Jan Hus was a philosopher and academic. His theological ideas were inspired by John Wycliffe's teachings. And then, because he opposed some of the Catholic practices, the rising king at the time took advantage of the situation to rid himself of Jan Hus (a rather vocal opponent to his rule). Jan Hus was, in the end, martyred for his faith. This sparked the HUSSITE Wars, where his followers rose up and actively, physically started an uprising against the Royalist Catholics.

How did you research daily life in 15th-century Bohemia?

Good question! Most of the really good resources are in Czech or German. I read neither. But found some great places to do research on the medieval period in general and the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Hussite Wars specifically. Some through general books, but my favorite resource was a book called *Warrior of God*, about Jan Zizka, the leading general who led the Hussite mismatched army victoriously. The book gives me a very “boots on the ground” look at the war/combat/battles. What the weather was like, how the interactions between the men looked, etc.

Q&A With Sara Turnquist

Were there any surprising facts about the Hussite movement or Czech history that influenced the story?

The fact that the war lasted 15 years! The other historical things that are going on during the time, such as translating scripture into languages other than Latin. It was not acceptable, but it was happening. There was also an early gun used called a “hand cannon” that was exactly like it sounded.

How did you balance historical accuracy with storytelling?

There is a saying that goes something like, “If you run dry on fiction, add more history. Then, if the fiction runs out, add more fiction.” So, the history is important, but sometimes details have to be altered for the sake of the story. Though, when that happens, I put it in the author’s note, so everyone knows that I realize it was (intentionally) flubbed a bit. And we’re talking, changing the details, not changing major events.

How did you approach writing characters whose worldviews might be different from modern readers?

It is hard. Because it’s not truly fair to put today’s cultural and social awareness and discernment on historical figures and times when the mindset was just different. There were individuals who, for example, opposed slavery when it was the common mindset and an accepted practice, but I can’t change that the general mindset was that. So, I can only control the character fighting against what is generally accepted. And my source of truth is always the Bible.

What was the hardest scene to write, and why?

It was difficult to write about some of Pavel’s physical, mental, and emotional hardships. And his spiritual journey where he is struggling to trust God in the midst of all that is happening and what might be happening to his wife and son.

Diary Entry

Response to Joan of Arc Letter

Joan of Arc sent this letter to the Hussites in March 1430. She was unhappy with their leaving the Catholic Church. Read the letter and on the next page, create a diary entry in response .

Jesus ✝ Maria

It has been heard of me that you, through a foolishness and the seduction of the Devil, conduct yourselves badly in the faith of Christ, and that you destroy and overthrow the possessions of His Church and pursue and slay Christians unless they agree with you in your error. What I have heard of you causes me great sorrow, and I would send you my letters and messages by some others, if I thought that you would believe them; but since I do not believe this, I will tell you, by the authority of the King of Heaven, my sovereign Lord, for the support and defense of His holy Church, and of the faith, and for the destruction of your bad faith and of your heresy, to abandon your evil opinions and your vile superstition, and return to the holy and true faith, and to union with our holy Church, without which you cannot be saved.

If you will not do this and abandon your errors, know that you will be defeated by the power of God, and by the blows of those who strike against you, and that you will be driven from the face of the earth.

Given at Sully, the twenty-third day of March, in the year of Our Lord 1430.

✝ Jeanne the Maid ✝

Diary Entry

Response to Joan of Arc Letter

Dear Diary,

Discussion Questions

Read these questions in your book club and talk about your answers.

- How does the author bring medieval Bohemia to life? Which descriptions of the setting stood out to you most?
- Did the novel help you better understand the causes and stakes of the Hussite Wars? What surprised you about this period?
- Which character's beliefs or loyalties were most compelling – and why?
- Were there characters caught between different sides of the conflict? How did they handle divided loyalties?
- What role does religion play in driving the plot and character decisions? Did the book portray religious faith more as a force for good, evil, or something more complicated?
- Did the language or dialogue feel authentic to the period? Was it accessible or challenging?
- Which scene had the strongest emotional impact on you – a battle, a betrayal, a personal loss?
- How did the author balance historical fact with fiction? Were there moments where you could tell they were "teaching" history versus telling a story?
- Who was your favorite character?
- Was there anything surprising about the story?

Dear Reader

Dobry Den! (Good day!)

I am so honored that you have taken this journey through the Hussite Wars with me. And with these characters. It is so hard to say farewell to them. The first book of mine that was published was the first book in this series. So, these characters have quite literally been with me my entire publishing career.

And, uniquely, each of the characters in this series is inspired by an actual person that I know. So, the attachment to these characters goes beyond simple figments of my imagination.

But I pray that you have felt connected to them as well. And have enjoyed being along for their journeys through the Hussite Wars. I will always have an extra special place in my heart for Pavel and his friends ,and Karin and all the wives.

And so, I will say farewell to them all. But I only have to say farewell to you until the next book, the next series, the next group of characters.

Rozlouceni (farewell),

Warmly,

Sara



Book Club Menu



Anaicka Vitek's Goulash

- 2 pounds beef chuck or shank
- 1 ½ pounds onion
- 4 Tablespoons pork lard (or sunflower / canola oil)
- 2 Tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon caraway seeds
- 2 Tablespoons sweet paprika powder Hungarian-style (optionally, add 1 tsp hot paprika powder)
- 4 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram
- 4 cloves garlic
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 Tablespoon all-purpose flour to thicken the goulash, optional
- 4 cups water (or beef stock)

Directions

- Before you start cooking: Peel 1 ½ pounds onion and chop it roughly. Cut 2 pounds beef chuck or shank into 1 ½-inch pieces. Crush or grind 1 teaspoon caraway seeds.
- Melt 4 Tablespoons pork lard over medium-high heat in a saucepan with a thick bottom (I use a heavy iron cast Dutch oven). Fry onions until almost brown. Keep in mind, it takes time! Stir frequently to avoid burning. Finally, add caraway seeds and stir for another minute.
- Add beef chunks, season with 2 teaspoons salt, and fry them from all sides until a golden brown crust is created. Expect the meat releases some juices when fried. Stir frequently, and scrape off the burnt residue on the bottom of the pot with a wooden spatula. If necessary, reduce the heat or add a spoon or two of water.
- Lower the heat down to medium, and add ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper, 2 Tablespoons sweet paprika powder, and 2 Tablespoons tomato paste. Fry for 1 minute while stirring. The base can't get burned, or else the goulash will taste bitter. Add 1-2 spoons of water to prevent burning.
- Pour in 4 cups water, so the meat is almost covered. Add 4 bay leaves. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a minimum, cover with a lid and allow the beef to simmer for 2–2.5 hours or until soft.
- Check the goulash from time to time. Add some water if the level of liquid in the pot falls. When the gulas contains too much water, cook it uncovered at the end. The liquid will be reduced, and the gulas will gain a richer flavor and a nice red color. Stir occasionally.
- When the beef cubes are soft, add flour to thicken the stew: Take off the pot's lid. Using a small sieve, carefully dust the surface of the stew with 1 Tablespoon all-purpose flour. Do not stir. Cover with the lid and leave to cook for a further 15 minutes. Remove the lid and stir. The sauce will be just thick enough!
- Remove bay leaves, add 4 cloves garlic and 1 teaspoon dried marjoram Stir well. Season with salt to your liking. Cover with a lid and let it rest off heat for 10 minutes.

<https://www.cooklikeczechs.com/gulas-czech-beef-goulash/>



Zdeneks Favorite Kolace

- 3 and ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk warmed to 110–115°F (38°C)
- 1 and ½ teaspoons instant yeast
- ½ stick unsalted butter
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 2 yolks
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- For an egg wash: 1 egg
- Fillings for kolache: to your liking

Directions

- Pour 3 and ½ cups all-purpose flour into a mixing bowl. Add 1 and ½ teaspoons instant yeast and ⅓ cup granulated sugar, and mix them together using a handheld wire whisk.
- Heat 1 cup milk to 110–115°F (38°C). Whisk in 2 yolks and ½ teaspoon vanilla extract, then pour the mixture into the flour.
- Begin kneading the dough using a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook. Start on low speed and mix for about 1 minute until the ingredients are roughly combined.
- After the initial mixing, add ½ teaspoon salt and softened (or slightly melted) ½ stick unsalted butter. Gradually increase the speed to medium-high and knead for 8 minutes.
- Transfer the dough to a clean bowl using the dough scraper. Cover with plastic wrap and let it rise in a warm place until doubled in volume—this usually takes about 1.5 hours, depending on room temperature.
- While the dough rises, get the kolache fillings ready.
- Once risen, turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Dust the top with flour and fold the edges toward the center. Knead gently to tighten the structure, then place it seam-side down, cover with a towel, and let it rest for 10 minutes.
- Divide the dough into equal pieces, each just under 2 oz (55 g). Use a kitchen scale if you want evenly sized kolache—this recipe makes about 15.
- Take each piece and pull the edges toward the center, sealing the seam with your fingertips. Place seam-side down on a very lightly floured surface and shape into a round using your palm.
- Place the shaped balls seam-side down on a parchment-lined baking sheet, leaving about 2 inches (5 cm) between them. Cover with a clean towel and let them rest in a warm place for 30 minutes.
- To shape the centers, use a flat-bottomed container wrapped in a clean towel and dipped in flour to prevent sticking. Press down in the center of each dough ball, then press gently around the edges to form an even indentation.
- Lightly beat 1 egg with a fork and brush the edges of each kolach. This egg wash gives them a beautiful golden shine when baked.
- Spoon the fillings into the center. Make sure all fillings are at room temperature.
- Preheat the oven to 340 °F using the fan/convection setting. Bake for 12–13 minutes until the edges turn a nice medium brown.
- Remove the kolache from the oven and let them cool on a wire rack.

<https://www.cooklikeczechs.com/ceske-kolace-authentic-recipe-for-czech-kolache/>



Dowager Baroness Marketa's Bread Dumplings

- 3 ⅔ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ¼ cup lukewarm milk
- 1 ½ cup bread cubes made from stale white bread, cut into ⅓-inch pieces
- 1 egg
- 1 ½ teaspoons active dry yeast or 20 g fresh yeast
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon granulated sugar

Directions

- Make ahead: Cut the stale white bread into ⅓-inch cubes. If the bread is too soft, bake the cubes in an oven preheated to 350 °F for 10 minutes to toast the
- Activate yeast: Stir ½ teaspoon granulated sugar and 1 ½ teaspoons active dry yeast into ½ cup of lukewarm milk. Let it sit in a warm place for about 10–15 minutes until a bubbly foam forms on the surface.
- Pour 3 ⅔ cups all-purpose flour into a mixing bowl and add ½ teaspoon salt. In the remaining lukewarm milk, whisk 1 egg by hand, then add the mixture to the flour. Finally, pour in the activated yeast along with its liquid.
- Knead the dumpling dough until smooth, either by hand or using a kitchen mixer with a dough hook attachment. Once smooth, gently fold in 1 ½ cup bread cubes until evenly incorporated. NOTE: If the dough is too sticky, gradually dust it with 1 to 2 tablespoons of flour, kneading it in until the texture becomes smooth and manageable.
- Shape the dough into a ball and place it in a clean bowl. Cover with a kitchen towel and let it rise in a warm place for 45 minutes, or until it doubles in size.
- Meanwhile, prepare a pot of gently boiling salted water for cooking the dumplings, or set up a steamer if you prefer to steam them.
- Once the dough has risen, divide it into two equal portions. Shape each piece into a cylinder, making sure it is slightly smaller than your cooking pot or steamer to allow room for rising. Keep in mind that the dumplings will expand as they cook.
- Boiled dumplings:
 - Boil the dumplings in simmering salted water for 18 minutes, flipping the roll halfway through (after 9 minutes). Cover the pot with a lid while boiling.
- Steamed dumplings:
 - Steam the dumplings for 25 minutes in a pot with a suitable steamer insert or in a steamer covered with a lid. Do not flip the dumpling while steaming.
- Finishing:
 - Take out the cooked dumplings carefully. A large dumpling spatula might be useful.
 - If you boiled the dumplings, prick them immediately a few times with a fork. Pricking the rolls when taken out of the water is necessary. Otherwise, the steam would remain inside, and the dumplings wouldn't be as fluffy as they should be.
 - You do not prick steamed dumplings, since they don't absorb as much water as their boiled siblings.
- Slice dumplings into ½-inch thick pieces and serve warm as a side dish.

<https://www.cooklikeczechs.com/houskove-knedliky-czech-bread-dumplings/>



Patricie's Wedding Vanilla Crescent Cookies

Vanilla crescent dough:

- 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 stick unsalted butter cold
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts shelled (or pecans)
- 1 egg yolk

For coating:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup powdered sugar

Directions

- Grind $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts and put them in a bowl.
- Add 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups all-purpose flour, 1 stick unsalted butter cut into pieces, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered sugar and 1 egg yolk.
- Using your hands, work the ingredients into a compact dough. Be patient; it takes about five minutes for everything to come together nicely.
- Shape the dough into a cylinder, wrap it in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for two hours to rest.
- After resting, unwrap the dough from the foil. Knead it briefly to soften, then divide it in half. Roll each half into a long cylinder about 1 inch (2.5 cm) in diameter. Slice into equal-sized pieces.
- Roll each piece into a strand app. 2 inches (5 cm) long. Gently bend the strands into crescent shapes and arrange them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
- Bake in a preheated oven at 350 °F for 8 minutes.
- Let the crescents cool for 5 minutes on the baking sheet, then roll each one in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup powdered sugar.

<https://www.cooklikeczechs.com/vanilkove-rohlicky-czech-vanilla-crescents/>

Thank you so much for reading
The Lady and Her Mission.

Would you like for Sara to visit
your book club? She can visit
in person or virtually. If you
are interested please
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