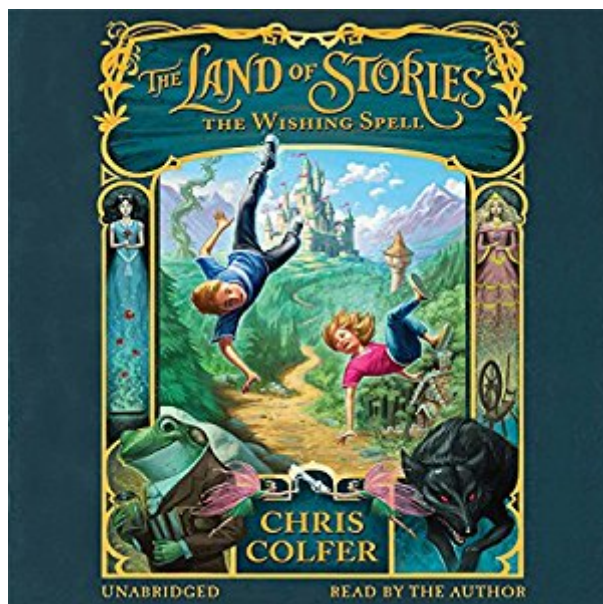


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The Land Of Stories: The Wishing Spell



Synopsis

Alex and Conner Bailey's world is about to change, in this fast-paced adventure that uniquely combines our modern day world with the enchanting realm of classic fairytales. The Land of Stories tells the tale of twins Alex and Conner. Through the mysterious powers of a cherished book of stories, they leave their world behind and find themselves in a foreign land full of wonder and magic where they come face-to-face with the fairy tale characters they grew up reading about. But after a series of encounters with witches, wolves, goblins, and trolls alike, getting back home is going to be harder than they thought.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A promising first novel from an imaginative young talent. Even though Colfer is a newcomer to the world of novel writing, I feel that he accomplished what he set out to accomplish with this book. Children (especially those who have feelings of inadequacy or who have suffered early tragedy, just like Colfer did as a child) will find lots of hope within its pages, along with bravery and kindness and self-acceptance. It's a book about how every seemingly happy ending creates a new set of struggles to contend with, which you have to keep trying your best to overcome -- while also making good moral decisions and finding some kind of peace in spite of hardship. It's also a book about how things often seem to happen for a reason, and how unexpectedly wonderful things can happen as a result of painful struggles. The book has some interesting meditations on the nature of deep loneliness and longing -- and what people are capable of doing to remedy those heartaches.

It's one of the strongest themes that run throughout the story. It appears as a theme in many ways with a variety of outcomes, and manages to be melancholy and uplifting at the same time, which is really lovely. Even with all of that sadness being examined so deeply, the book manages to be really funny and light. Another thing the book does strongly is preaching the power of understanding and compassion, even towards people who have done terrible things. It doesn't condone those terrible things, and it heavily emphasizes doing the RIGHT thing, but it deftly paints the characters as more complex humans than the classic Good Vs Evil stories do, which makes it all much more interesting and more relevant to real world conflicts.

I bought this for my sixth-grade class library. I read a lot of children's books so that I can make recommendations for my students. So, I wonder if I'm the only Glee fan to give Chris a poor review. Now, the premise is pretty good, and I love how all the kingdoms are next to each other, and there are parts so far that I have enjoyed. I am on Chapter 10 - about halfway through - and this is such a weak book. I think too many people were "supportive" before this book went to print. Where was his editor? I quote: Alex and Connor (the main characters) "were so petrified, they were paralyzed." Um, yeah, that's kind of the definition of petrified. Earlier in the story, when the twins were given the (magical) storybook by their grandmother (a book that had been treasured by generations of their family, apparently), Alex thinks "It was like receiving an heirloom from a relative that was still alive." Yes, Chris, getting a treasured family object from a visiting grandmother is a lot like receiving an heirloom from a living relative - in that those are exactly the same things. Last example, when the children are in the storybook land, and Alex is looking at the buildings of the city, she thinks "It was like being in a storybook." This is harsh, but there's an episode of "Friends" where Joey has to write an official letter, and so he uses a thesaurus to change every other word to a synonym, reducing the letter to gibberish. There's a place or two in this book where I imagine Chris did the same thing. This is why it's worth having a really good editor. I don't know if there were too many "yes-men," or if Chris Colfer refuses to listen to any constructive criticism, but I expected a lot more from him.

The main reason I am writing this review here is because I am tired of hearing only positive things about this book. I find it misleading and I know that there are many other better written stories for our readers. Chris Colfer is an actor on the television show Glee, and this book reads like a long drawn out screenplay. Descriptions are either nonexistent or so basic that my students could paint a far better image. When describing a cavalcade of knights arriving in front of the twins, Colfer describes them only by saying: "Their armor was clean and shiny." OK... Colfer puts most of his story in the

dialogue and the narration seems to be just a means to link those speaking parts together. He misses the beauty that can go into a well written narrative. A story should not leave its reader breaking away from the flow to consider how awkwardly written it is. Truly though, I could go on and on, and that would be too harsh. So, here are a few things that bothered me in a (sort of) list: The extreme overuse of poor similes: "Mrs. Peters was staring at her as if she had just witnessed a gruesome rural animal give birth." (I couldn't think of a gruesome rural animal... pig, cow, mouse. Dunno.) "Alex clambered up the tree faster than any animal she had ever seen in a documentary." (Doesn't that just flow off the lips.) Compares the witch with the gingerbread house to: "...staring at her as if she were a rabid Tyrannosaurus rex about to pounce on them at any moment." (#1 rabid T-rex. #2 would pounce be the best word to describe the movement of a T-rex? #3 the word rabies makes, I believe, 3 appearances. At least one more I flagged when the twins come upon some unicorns.) The similes go on and on and on and on... Lack of revision.

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