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The Magician King: A Novel



Synopsis

Return to Fillory in the riveting sequel to The New York Times best-seller and literary phenomenon of 2009: *The Magicians*. *The Magicians* was praised as a triumph by readers and critics of both mainstream and fantasy literature. Now Grossman takes us back to Fillory, where the Brakebills graduates have fled the sorrows of the mundane world, only to face terrifying new challenges. Quentin and his friends are now the kings and queens of Fillory, but the days and nights of royal luxury are starting to pall. After a morning hunt takes a sinister turn, Quentin and his old friend Julia charter a magical sailing ship and set out on an errand to the wild outer reaches of their kingdom. Their pleasure cruise becomes an adventure when the two are unceremoniously dumped back into the last place Quentin ever wants to see: his parent's house in Chesterton, Massachusetts. And only the black, twisted magic that Julia learned on the streets can save them. *The Magician King* is a grand voyage into the dark, glittering heart of magic, an epic quest for the Harry Potter generation. It also introduces a powerful new voice, that of Julia, whose angry genius is thrilling. Once again Grossman proves that he is the modern heir to C.S. Lewis and at the cutting edge of literary fantasy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Can it possibly be only two years since I read Lev Grossman's *The Magicians*? If you asked me about that novel, I would immediately tell you that I loved it. Apparently, that's about all I could tell you. Having just read Grossman's engaging follow-up, I regret not having reread, or at least brushed up on, the first novel. References to prior events were plentiful, and rather than jog my memory,

they highlighted just how fallible it is. Hopefully yours is better, or you will take the steps I didn't prior to reading the sequel. Oh, and it goes without saying that if you haven't read the first novel, don't start with this one. Nonetheless, my inexact memory did not keep me from enjoying the latest adventures of Quentin Coldwater et al. Even I recalled that at the end of *The Magicians* Quentin, Julia, Elliott, and Janet had left our world to become the co-queens and kings of the magical (and not fictional after all) land of Fillory. The end. I thought that was the end. It was a good ending, and I didn't expect any more. As we catch up with Quentin and co., they are living their "happy ever after." It's glorious. It's perfect. It's boring. To some degree, this has ever been the issue of life in a magical world. Quentin is itching for a quest, but this is countered by the reasonable fear of screwing up a perfect life. When a safe-looking mini-quest comes along, Quentin goes for it--and screws up his perfect life. The mini-quest evolves into a major-quest with the highest of stakes. While this primary drama is unfolding, there is a second story being told in reflection. *The Magicians* recounted the education and coming of age of Quentin, Elliott, and Janet. Finally we learn what "hedgewitch" Julia was doing all of those years, and how she learned her craft. It would be an understatement to say that she took a different path. It's a fascinating counterpoint. Along the way of these twin narratives, we meet many new characters and revisit old ones. I've now read three of Mr. Grossman's four novels, and I've enjoyed all of them. If I had to pick out the one thing that sets his work apart, the word that comes to mind is "unpredictability." When you read as much as I do, a lot of storytelling becomes formulaic. This isn't always a bad thing. Formula can expedite storytelling or give shape to a narrative. In any case, I think most avid readers begin to get a feel for where a story is likely to go. But not with Mr. Grossman. I never know. I don't have a clue. I just know that he's going to pull something different and unexpected out of his magician's hat. Additionally, it's always a pleasure to read his prose. And he's a champion at world-building. I adore the world he's created in Fillory, and the dozens and dozens of pop culture references found throughout the text increase the fun and anchor that world to the reality of our own. It's not merely Rowling and Lewis and Tolkien. It's *Die Hard* and *Star Trek* and *D & D*. It's Elmer Fudd, Dr. Suess, and GEB. It's Disney, Dr. Who, and Discworld--and too many more to ever list. I've rated this novel down one star only because I didn't love it quite as much as its predecessor. I had the opportunity to speak to Mr. Grossman briefly at BEA. Expressing surprise at the sequel, I asked if there would be more books in the series. He told me that he thinks there will be a third, making it a trilogy. This second book comes to a shocking and unresolved conclusion. So, to Lev Grossman I say, "Damn straight there will be a third book!" It can't end like this. And while clearly I have NO idea where the tale will go, I WILL be along for the ride.

Not as good as The Magicians. This book felt rushed to publication, as the author seemed to default to "the item magically appears so that quest could be completed..." theme over and over and over. My impression of the first book was that the reader would come to that same conclusion (that fortuitous events mystically occurred occasionally in order to move the quest along), but in the first book, such intervention of "fate" seemed indirect and subtle. In the sequel, the appearance of the missing items doesn't surprise the reader (or the characters within the story) and appeared to be the norm and not the exception. I still love the author's books and his numerous references to modern events and terminology, but overall, the book was mildly disappointing. The first book seemed so "meaty," with exhaustive portions of the story containing riveting explanations of unusual people, places, events, emotions and relationships. (Who didn't love the development of friendships and antagonistic relationships at Brakebills?). The sequel, on the other hand, seems rushed, with very little for us to sink our teeth into. In the first book I found myself loving (and rooting for) many of the main characters and I empathized with so many of the characters in so many of the scenes. Who wasn't heartbroken when primary and secondary characters died in the first book? In the sequel, the characters seemed to simply be scenery. They just seemed emotionally checked out and disconnected from each other (none of them seemed to rely on each other for anything in the least). I didn't find myself emotionally invested in the characters in the sequel. It almost seemed like most of the characters showed up for brief cameo appearances, but the characters almost didn't acknowledge each other being in the same scene at the same time and their friendships and their relationships didn't evolve. They didn't love, fight or hate. I think the author lost sight of the fact that we the readers loved the interaction between the characters in the first book most of all (even above the occurrence of the remarkable events themselves).

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