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Castle Hangnail



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Synopsis

From the creator of Dragonbreath comes a tale of witches, minions, and one fantastic castle, just right for fans of Roald Dahl and Tom Angleberger. When Molly shows up on Castle Hangnail's doorstep to fill the vacancy for a wicked witch, the castle's minions are understandably dubious. After all, she is twelve years old, barely five feet tall, and quite polite. (The minions are used to tall, demanding evil sorceresses with razor-sharp cheekbones.) But the castle desperately needs a master or else the Board of Magic will decommission it, leaving all the minions without the home they love. So when Molly assures them she is quite wicked indeed (So wicked! REALLY wicked!) and begins completing the tasks required by the Board of Magic for approval, everyone feels hopeful. Unfortunately, it turns out that Molly has quite a few secrets, including the biggest one of all: that she isn't who she says she is. This quirky, richly illustrated novelÃ Â is filled with humor, magic, and an unforgettable all-star cast of castle characters.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Gr 4Ã¢â ¬â œ6Ã¢â ¬â •Molly, a 12-year-old witch, arrives as the new master of Castle Hangnail, despite some misgivings on the part of Majordomo, the Igor-like guardian responsible for the management of its legacy and various minion occupants. To keep the castle from having its magic

removed and its minions dispersed, Molly must perform a series of wicked tasks, which may be beyond the scope of her moral compass and her fledgling powers. Featuring a bevy of cute and unthreatening touches and populated throughout with spot illustrations, the book quickly establishes grounded and effective stakes. One the one hand, a character is a hypochondriac goldfish, but on the other, a child is responsible for the livelihoods of several adults and is hiding secrets that could drastically affect them. To have these aspects exist side by side so seamlessly is testament to the author’s careful maneuvering of tone, including a finale that solidly shows the story’s veneer of innocence is overlaid on significant and deadly consequences. While that depth could make the peril disquietingly real for younger readers, it offers a read with substance and resonance, despite the more whimsical trappings. An appealing fantasy for upper middle grade readers.Ã¢â ¬â •Benjamin Russell, Belmont High School, NH --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Awards and Honors for Ursula VernonWinner of the Hugo Award for her adult online comic DiggerDragonbreath: An IRA/CBC Chidren’s Choice"Great stuff for reluctant and rapacious readers alike."Ã¢â ¬â •BCCBDragonbreath: Attack of the Ninja Frogs: NYPL Children’s Books 2010: 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing, Kirkus Reviews 2010 Best Books for Children"Delightful."Ã¢â ¬â •School Library Journal Dragonbreath: Curse of the Were-Weiner: An Autumn 2010 Kids’ Indie Next List Pick, Kirkus Reviews 2010 Best Books for Children* "[An] impossibly droll escapade."Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus Reviews, starred reviewDragonbreath: Lair of the Bat Monster: A Spring 2011 Indie Next List PickÃ Â Ã¢â ¬â • Ursula Vernon

I have always enjoyed the way that Terry Pratchett books can be enjoyed on many levels. On the surface, they are... cute. There’s no other way to describe it. But dig just a tiny bit deeper and there is a world of intelligent commentary -- not HIDDEN from the mid-grade reader, just not bludgeoning them with "morality" or "ethics".Vernon has accomplished the same trick with Castle Hangnail. On the first-level, it’s a story about a little witch, a little castle, a little list of tasks to be accomplished. Molly is short and maybe a little pudgy, with fuzzy brown hair and brown eyes and decided opinions about gardening, food, and not wanting to be the Good Twin. She wants to be a Wicked Witch, but not an EVIL Witch, and she has a kind streak a mile wide, which is not at all the same thing as being Nice, or even Good. I feel like it’s a loving nod at who Granny Weatherwax might have started out as, without being tediously derivative. Molly is herself.I just handed this book to my 12 year old, who squealed and said, "YAY NEW URSULA." I’ll append his review, but so far he has forgotten he has

an open bag of Cheezits by his hand -- too busy reading.On another level, Molly has a lot of grown-up problems. She is battling to be recognized as competent at her job, because she doesn't look like what people expect. She has impostor syndrome, and is pretty sure she is not qualified, even though she is managing all her tasks competently. And then there is the abusive friendship she has been in, where someone older and more powerful than she is has made her feel weak and powerless, and somehow to blame for that. I'm not saying a 12 year old will say, "hey, I'm in an abusive friendship", but I hope that sometime in their lives they will think of Molly saying "no!" and firmly stopping someone from making her feel bad. That would be a beautiful outcome.I loved Molly, of course, in her kindness and flailing and willingness to really work at a problem. I also loved the Majordomo who has his own relationship traumas and angers to overcome. The supporting cast was all lovely and warm and individual, even Dragon the Donkey and the non-speaking characters. It was very much a story about community and mutuality.The writing was wry and funny without being inaccessible for moderate readers. The illustrations, as one expects, are charming and just faintly creepy. The book as a whole is just.... lovely, and it makes me happy to have read it and happy to give it to my kids.Read if: You like spunky, practical heroines. You are not on a medical regimen that prevents giggling.Skip if: You are allergic to girl power or the thought that 12 year olds can change small parts of the world.Also read: The Tiffany Aching books in the Discworld series.

My six year old and I loved this book! Vernon does an incredible job of writing head strong, independent young characters who find for themselves clever and positive ways to put their more troublesome behavioral traits to good use. Her books are wonderful for any kid who feels labeled as a troublemaker or an outcast. We are big fans of the Dragonbreath and Harriet Hamsterbone series. This book starts out a bit slow compared to the books in those series, but is also more complex. Once everything is set up, the story really takes off and is a real page turner. Even as an adult reader, I felt invested in the young protagonist. I worried for her when things looked bleak and cheered her on when she faced her greatest challenges. The plot is engaging and often comical, while the subtext will pull at readers heart strings as Molly comes to realize an inner strength she didn't know she had and develops relationships with the supporting characters.

This young-at-heart listener *should* really be ashamed at how much this book amused and thrilled, but... Alas, nope! This is my first exposure to Ursula Vernon and immensely enjoyed this adorable, charming story. Molly, a twelve-year-old, just want to be a wicked--but not evil--witch and does not want to be the *good* twin. When she finds out that Castle Hangnail needs a new master, she tells

her parents it’s a summer camp, and breaks a few rules, to jump at the chance to try to fill the post. To accomplish this, she sets out pretending the be the recipient of one of the Board of Magic’s invitations. Once at Castle Hangnail, she finds a wonderful old castle and a group of amazing minions. Guardian, on whom she bestows the name Majordomo, is suspicious, but allows her entrance. Molly soon finds out there is a list of tasks that must be completed if Castle Hangnail is going to be allowed to remain a place of magical residence. She sets forth to do so--while intending to do no true EVIL--along the way, while trying to keep her true identity a secret. I really could go on and on about the wonderful creatures and magical charm, but I’m trying to keep as spoiler-free as possible.This book is really one of the most fun experiences I’ve had with a book in a long, long time. It’s told in a light-hearteed, yet intelligent manner. It definitely lacks the tongue-in-cheek cynicism you’ll find find in some other children’s literature (Dahl or Snicket). Even though there are some important concepts like the importance of friends and friendship discussed, I never felt :"talked-down-to" because it’s all very subtle. The subject of abusive "friendship" is also present, but it’s not like being hit over the head with a morals sledgehammer.I think anyone that likes a good magical fantasy, and has any inner child at all, will at least like this book. Yes, you have to be able to suspend disbelief, but it’s so charming and fun, it’s really not hard to get sucked right in to the story. While meant for younger readers, there’s plenty here to explore for all ages, including some nice word-choice for vocabulary and discussion. If you like magical cute books or shows with sometimes darker themes (Harry Potter, The Munsters, The Addams Family, Ruby Gloom), this book may for you.I mostly listened to the Audible Edition, but I did pick up the Kindle edition. There are charming, too cute to be truly spooky illustrations int he Kindle edition. Tara Sands’ narration was bubbly and youthful. I though her voice fit the story quite well and that she did a nice job with the material.

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