



A Plague of Bogles

Catherine Jinks

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“This is top-notch storytelling, full of wit, a colorful cast of rogues, and delectable slang.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review of *How to Catch a Bogle*

Jem Barbary spent most of his early life picking pockets for a wily old crook named Sarah Pickles—until she betrayed him. Now Jem wants revenge, but first he needs a new job. Luckily Alfred the bogler, the man who kills the child-eating monsters that hide in the shadows of Victorian London, needs a new apprentice. As more and more orphans disappear under mysterious circumstances, Alfred, Jem, and Birdie find themselves waging an underground war in a city where science clashes with superstition and monsters lurk in every alley.

A Plague of Bogles Details

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Author : Catherine Jinks

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From Reader Review A Plague of Bogles for online ebook

Stacy Mozer says

Book Two in this dark, middle grade historical fantasy by Catherine Jinks was just as exciting as the first. I would definitely recommend the book for an older middle grader and lovers of the last books in the Harry Potter series.

Pop Bop says

A Near Perfect Fantasy Adventure for Younger Readers

I'm a big fan of the "Last Apprentice", (aka "Spook's Apprentice"), series by Joseph Delaney. It's rich, deep, and filled with action, suspense, and deeply engaging characters. It does no disservice at all to these books to observe that this series is very much like a simpler, crisper, more accessible variation on that story for younger readers.

Here, our hero, Jem, wants to be an apprentice to a retired/reluctant Bogle hunter. We have a bright, sharp, courageous lad. We also have Birdie, a smart, feisty female sidekick. We have a grizzled weary Bogle hunter. And, we have a vast collection of Victorian characters - colorful, engaging, and covering the spectrum from comic diversions to weighty presences.

I say this is for younger readers just because everything is laid out in an entertaining and rich, but entirely accessible fashion. Good guys are good guys. Bad guys are bad guys. Action is crisp and clear. The plot is straightforward. While there are no info dumps there are many conversations that lay out and explain the action in an unobtrusive way. The setting is Victorian London, but the setting offers color and fun and isn't at all just a dreary or tedious reflection of the author's research into the era. Indeed, while we occasionally go off on a bit of a Victorian London city tour those bits are interesting and spirited enough to not slow down the action or the pacing.

Alfred Bunce, the Bogle Hunter, is a bit crusty around the edges, but he is fundamentally sound, wise and reliable. So, we end up with two juvenile heros being guided, protected and watched over by an experienced, dependable adult. The whole feeling is upbeat and comfortable, even in the most dire predicaments.

The characters develop as the story progresses, but this is a suspenseful actioner first and foremost. The pacing is fast and furious, with occasional pauses for comic, plot, or local color relief. Bogles devour babies and children, but this isn't a gore fest or a creepy horror tale. It's fantasy, but without magic or sword-in-the-stone angles, so it reads much more like a ripping yarn than like a magical fantasy.

This is the second book in the series, but it seems that a lot of people have come across it without the benefit of having read Book One. That's O.K. because the author fills in the backstory in the first chapter such that a new reader will feel comfortable and oriented from the start. This book is written from the point of view of Jem rather than Birdie, (who was featured in Book One), but that just adds variety to the series as a whole. And since Jem is a personable, appealing and relatable narrator, with just the right touch of innocence and vinegar, he works very well as the central character.

The upshot is that this works on a lot of levels - characters, plot, quality of writing, ability to engage the reader - and seems to be a solid choice for a new fantasy reader.

Please note that I received a free advance copy of this book in exchange for a candid review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.

Pat says

Catherine Jinks' writing is always a joy to read and this story, concentrating on Jem who begins to lure out bogles, is rich in detail and characterisation.

Ms. Yingling says

In this sequel to *How to Catch a Bogle*, we find Jem Barbary at loose ends after he is fired by the grocer for eating cheese off the floor. When he is passing a sideshow, he hears Mr. Lubbock say that Birdie McAdam is working there, and when Jem finds out she isn't, he goes to find Alfred Bunce and tell him about the deception. At the same time, a bar maid finds Alfred and wants his help in getting rid of a bogle in the basement of the tavern where she works. Alfred agrees reluctantly, taking Jem with him as bait, because Ned is selling fruit (and Alfred is manufacturing fly paper in his flat). Soon, Alfred is besieged from all sides by people wanting help in dispatching bogles. Soon, even Birdie is brought into the efforts, even though she is living a cushy life with cakes and singing lessons at the home of Miss Eames. There are an unhealthy number of bogles around the new Holborn Viaduct building projects, more than would have been displaced by the building. Mr. Lubbock wants in on the action, and tries to convince Alfred to take paying "tourists" with him to the kills, but the bogles are becoming more and more horrific. Jem is glad to be working with Mr. Bunce again, and is using his spare time to try to hunt down Sal Pickles... who ends up being the key to the bogle infestation in a particularly abhorrent way. In the end, Mr. Bunce is hired (in an unofficial capacity) by the London Sewers Office to control the bogle problem. There is a third book out in Australia, *A Very Singular Guild*, but no idea when this will be available in the US.

Strengths: This was delightful, mainly because all of the characters were so plucky and undeterred. Sure, Jem may have no shoes and very little food, and his brand new jacket may get ruined by bogle goop, but he just keeps plugging away. Things aren't perfect for Birdie, and she whines a tiny bit, but only because she wants to be more useful. Whew. After all of the sad and depressing books in middle grade, reading about children being eaten by horrific monsters was cheerier than many books I've read in a while. Like Jonathan Stroud's *Lockhart and Co.*, this series is an action packed sojourn in a rather seedy, but somehow still delightful London.

Weaknesses: Modern readers might not quite know what "baby farming" means, so a little more description of that would have been good, since a key plot point hinges on it. Still, readers who want monster tales will enjoy this.

Sarah Waters says

I would love to give this 3 and half stars. Such a great series!

Angela says

This is a review of the audiobook version. First thing I have to congratulate the narrator on truly bringing the story to life! Her various voices, ability to sing the singing parts, and perfect East End accents were great. On to the book itself...I actually picked this up not realizing that it was the middle book of a trilogy, but I wasn't lost at all. The author is skilled at introducing readers to the historical setting, characters, and, most importantly, the practice of bogling. I was engrossed with the suspense throughout the book as over and over young Jem (and sometimes Birdie) stood in the salt circle singing to attract one of the gruesome and deadly bogles. Jinks also aptly captures the nature of her characters, from enterprising Jem to tired and resigned Alfred to indomitable Birdie. The story was an excellent mixture of adventure, history, fantasy, and character study. I can't wait to read/listen to the others in the trilogy!

Jack Vinson says

Listened to the audio book on a car trip and enjoyed.

Heather Rauch says

This second book is as adventurous as the first. Don't look for anything deep here, just interesting characters doing interesting things.

Jessica F says

Solid sequel. Looking forward to the finish!

Heather says

This is the sequel to *How to Catch a Bogle*, and like that book, it's middle grade historical-fiction/fantasy: Victorian London, with child-eating monsters called bogles. Birdie McAdam was the child protagonist of that book, and she's still present in this one, but now her acquaintance Jem Barbary takes center stage: Birdie is no longer an apprentice to the bogler Alfred Bunce, and Alfred is maybe not even killing bogles anymore anyway, though Jem would love to be his apprentice if he were. Early in the book, a barmaid changes Alfred's mind about his decision to stop bogling: a scullery maid has gone missing in the basement of the place where this barmaid works, presumably eaten by a bogle, and the barmaid harps on how she'd hate for the next child her boss hires to suffer the same fate. Alfred is a tender-hearted guy and can't say no, and ends up taking Jem along to help with the job.

Once word gets out that Alfred is killing bogles, he keeps getting requests for further jobs: lots more kids have gone missing, all in the same neighborhood. Which is weird, because bogles are normally solitary creatures who don't live too close to one another. Jem is excited to be working as Alfred's apprentice, but also having kind of a hard time: being a bogler's apprentice means acting as bait to lure the bogle from its lair, and that's pretty terrifying. But his athleticism serves him well: he has tumbling skills and uses them to get out of a bogle's reach more than once. Meanwhile, though, he's not just thinking of bogles: he wants revenge on his former master, Sarah Pickles, who ran a gang of child pickpockets. Some people say she's dead, but Jem doesn't believe it, so he's keeping an eye out for her as he and Alfred go about their bogling

work.

While I was sad, at first, that this book had shifted focus from Birdie to Jem, I was won over pretty quickly. I like how the book explores how Jem's past has shaped him (he's shrewd, and doesn't trust adults; it's not until the end of the book that he realizes he can actually trust Alfred, who really is a good guy), and I like the descriptions of how he uses his physical skills in his work: there's a whole section of descriptions of Jem climbing up things that made my rock-climbing self really happy because it captured the experience/focus of climbing so well. I also like how much cool Victorian infrastructure this book has in it: the newly-constructed Holborn Viaduct, and sewer tunnels, and the railway sidings at Smithfield Market.

Amy says

I enjoyed the first book in this series more than this one, but A Plague of Bogles was still good for multitasking. It is obvious with the way the book suddenly ended that there is/was another book to come. "The Last Bogler" is not available through my library, but I may get to it someday. I don't like to leave a series without completing it.

Susan says

I did not really like this series.

I could not understand all the stories that were happening at the same time.

Michael Lent says

Well-researched and exciting follow-up. Characters are heart-felt and nuanced. Action is wall-to-wall and surprising. A bit dark in places but my kids hung in there. Led to frank family discussion about life in 19th century England.

Gaby says

After reading the first in this series I immediately purchased all three for our school library. A Very Unusual Pursuit certainly deserved to win CBCA's Book of the Year for younger readers. It is a mixture of historical fiction, horror and thriller - in one story! It is well written and the characters are clear and consistent. The settings and character descriptions are so vivid and interesting, they would spark great discussions with students.

Although it is on the yrs 7-9 PRC, I would be happy with children from 10+ reading this story - so long as they are aware that it can get quite scary. I will be reading A Very Singular Guild before it makes its way to the library shelf!

Manvinder says

A lovely sequel to the previous book. I really like how the author uses lots of (correct) slang!

I'm looking forward to the last book in this fantasy trilogy!
