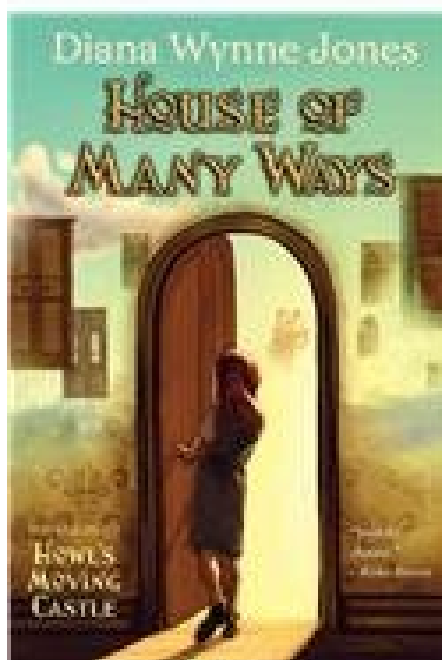




House of Many Ways

Diana Wynne Jones

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House of Many Ways Diana Wynne Jones

When Charmain Baker agreed to look after her great-uncle's house, she thought she was getting blissful, parent-free time to read. She didn't realize that the house bent space and time, and she did not expect to become responsible for an extremely magical stray dog and a muddled young apprentice wizard. Now, somehow, she's been targeted by a terrifying creature called a lubbock, too, and become central to the king's urgent search for the fabled Elfgift that will save the country. The king is so desperate to find the Elfgift, he's called in an intimidating sorceress named Sophie to help. And where Sophie is, the great Wizard Howl and fire demon Calcifer won't be far behind. How did respectable Charmain end up in such a mess, and how will she get herself out of it?

House of Many Ways Details

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From Reader Review House of Many Ways for online ebook

Sesana says

My least favorite of the Castle books, which still means that it's quite a good book. Sophie, Howl, and Calcifer are here, of course, and for much more of the book than they had been in Castle in the Air. They steal every scene they're in from Charmain, the newly introduced lead character.

Charmain is almost the entire reason why I felt like House of Many Ways didn't live up to the other Castle books. As a protagonist, she's a hard sell. She's cross and somewhat lazy, to the point that it took me almost the entire book to warm up to her at all. She snaps at poor little Waif, who I picked as an all-white, female version of Benji, and I just couldn't take that. She does start to improve, and she can do the right thing, even courageous things, when pressed, but she has to be pressed. And even then, she's all too willing to escape into a book instead of do what needs to be done. Case in point: (view spoiler)

I can't help but feel that I would have liked the book a lot more if it had been from Sophie's perspective, or even Peter's. I feel like they would have had attachments to more than just the books right away, and almost certainly had more interesting internal dialogs. But Charmain's is the POV we're stuck with. The plot itself also takes a little too long to get into full swing, but it's solid enough.

Ana Rilo says

He de decir que, si bien empecé con ilusión a leer, las primeras páginas me hicieron creer que me decepcionaría. Como estaba escrito, como empezaba... no me convencía. Pero según avanzaba fui descubriendo el punto fuerte de esta historia, de lo que cuenta y cómo. Consigue coger a ese adulto y volverlo por unas páginas un niño. Ahí está la magia.

Es como un cuento, simple, entretenido, pero no por ello malo ni mucho menos

Mi reseña completa: <https://armasdetinta.wordpress.com/20...>

Emma (Miss Print) says

“House of Many Ways” is Jones’ third novel featuring Howl and Sophie, following “Howl’s Moving Castle” from 1986 (also a movie adaptation made by Hayao Miyazaki in 2004) and “Castle in the Air” from 1990. Although all of these novels stand alone very nicely, certain nuances of the story will make more sense if you read the novels in sequence. Certain characters’ cameo appearances will also be more satisfying with the background afforded by reading all three novels.

This particular story starts in High Norland with Charmain Baker. Born to lovely parents determined to make their daughter respectable, Charmain is ill equipped for almost everything besides eating and reading—a fact that has escaped the notice of her parents and doesn’t much bother Charmain.

The only problem with her tame existence is that Charmain is unable to do the one thing she has always, desperately, wanted to do: work in the royal library with the elderly Princess Hilda and her even more elderly father, the king of High Norland.

As part of her plan to gain entry to the library, Charmain agrees to watch the royal wizard's house while he undergoes treatment from elves for a mysterious illness. Upon her arrival at the house, it becomes clear that this house-sitting venture will be more than Charmain had expected what with the angry kobolds and the sudden arrival of the wizard's new apprentice, Peter. It may, however, also be exactly what she needs.

There are a lot of reasons that I like this book and its predecessors in the series. Diana Wynne Jones has a particularly charming writing style that is both cozy and engaging. There is something decidedly old fashioned about the prose, ranging from the chapter titles reminiscent of those found in E. M. Forster's "A Room With a View" to the swift and casual narration so similar to the voice Jane Austen favored in her novels. At the same time, amazingly, Jones integrates elements of the fantastic like magic and wizards and elves without ever seeming outlandish or contrived.

"House of Many Ways" is a particularly appealing title, by an already well-liked artist. First and foremost, for obvious reasons, I like that Charmain is a bookish character who wants to work in a library. The other characters that populate this novel, including some from both "Howl's Moving Castle" and "Castle in the Air," are original and appealing though not by any means perfect.

Even Charmain, the novel's heroine, has moments where she is quite mistaken about a variety of things. Happily, never long enough to become problematic for readers. At the same time, it is refreshing that Charmain is utterly useless despite her being so well read. When she arrives at the wizard's house she cannot cook, wash clothes, or do many other things that most people take for granted.

This story is about magic and a fair bit of adventure. But it is also about what every college senior has to think about sooner or later: being an adult. As the novel progresses, Charmain learns about more than books and magic, she learns how to grow up and take care of herself, even when that means admitting she might need some help.

You can find this review and more on my blog [Miss Print](#)

Exina says

Oh, my Gosh, what an awful, disappointing story! What antipathetic and helpless characters! I was extremely irritated by Chairmain and Peter. Even Sophie and Howl are annoying. The 'lubbock', this purple-hued insect, is ridiculous. Even the last action scene is lousy.

Though I liked Mr. Baker, the kobolds, and Calcifer, it is not enough even for two stars.

Heidi says

Diana Wynne Jones may be my favorite author for those days when life seems altogether mundane. For those days when I need some magic and adventure, but I also need a helping of the charmingly flawed and stubbornly relatable. House of Many Ways, DWJ's final book in her Howl series does just that. There's something incredibly gratifying about having a go-to author whose books you can pick up in a time of need and know for certain that she'll pull through for you. Returning to the world of Ingary, though this time in the neighboring country of High Norland, we get to fall in love all over again with a new cast and see more of our beloved Sophie, Howl, and Calcifer than we did in the previous installment, Castle in the Air. Not to

mention, we get to see some great bits of the terrible tantrums of a wizarding toddler with Morgan, and welcome back Jamal and his dog who received a lovely position as a royal cook for the King of High Norland at the end of Book 2.

House of Many Ways is primarily a story about young Miss Charmain (not Charming—at least not with a good deal of work) who longs only to spend her days in the proper way—with her nose in a book. Through familial circumstances, she finds herself house sitting for her Great Uncle William, the royal wizard, and through even more unexpected circumstances finds herself in the company of Peter and Waif. Peter appears to be the magician’s apprentice who can never get a spell to go right, and Waif is the odd little stray dog who attaches herself firmly to Charmain’s side. Charmain finds it easy to brush off Peter and responsibility to seek employ in the royal library, where she soon finds herself wound up in the mysterious disappearance of the King’s gold, the strangers from Ingary who are determined to help, and the creepy Lubbock that lives in the meadow. When will one find time to pick up *Memoirs of an Exorcist* for a little light reading?

Charmain is the kind of cautionary tale any one of us avid readers can’t help but love. We all identify with a character who wants only to sit around and read all of the time, but we also realize how frustrating this can be when the world at large is attempting to have an adventure around us. We all must put the book down and roll up our sleeves at some point, but with laundry breeding in the kitchen and taps missing from the sink, this is hardly an exciting prospect. Charmain has been brought up to be “respectable” as her mother would have it—but as Peter says, it’s hardly respectable to not know how to do things. She’d argue that she’s neither lazy nor stupid, but that she just hasn’t bothered looking around the edges of her mother’s way of doing things. Charmain has an introspective state in which she is able to recognize her own faults, but hardly feels the need to rectify them. She really wants to be kind and not hard hearted, but it can be ever so difficult.

I have to admit, I do believe I like the House of Many Ways more than I like *Howl’s Moving Castle*. Not the book—the actual physical structure. The home of Charmain’s Great Uncle William is full of unexpected turns and surprises, with layers and passages that take one in all sorts of varied directions—even through time! To me, being able to reach all of these far strung places from my own home seems vastly more convenient than a castle that can be moved places...though I suppose one’s far less likely to get lost from *Howl’s*.

I just loved everything about House of Many Ways. I was completely charmed by Charmain, Peter, and Waif while still getting a good dose of past characters. The pacing was impeccable with never a dull moment, and there were magical surprises sprinkled throughout its entirety. There are truly calculating villains who don’t like crumpets,—who doesn’t like crumpets?—books that will happily adopt you, elves, kobolds, and an interesting family tree. What more could a reader ask for to convince them that even the mundane can be full of magic?

Original review posted at Bunbury in the Stacks.

Genevieve says

To me this reads rather like Diana Wynne Jones trying to write a book that would translate perfectly into a Hayao Miyazaki movie. This sets it apart from *Howl’s Moving Castle*, which was mutilated in the process of being turned into a Miyazaki film. The hyperkinetic, overstuffed and underexplained action of the latter third or so; the surreal, dreamlike beauty of certain scenes; some bizarrely cute flourishes (like Waif); the frilly Anglo touches (Afternoon Tea, crumpets); the out-of-the-blue appearances of certain characters...

There are many good bits in *House of Many Ways*, particularly the house itself and the interactions between Charmain and Peter; their travails with domestic tasks and exploration of the house are often very funny and

entertaining. But as a whole the novel suffers from too much action and not enough atmosphere or character development; and parts of the world-building feel sloppy and ill-thought-out. (Why are there elves, for instance?) Too many easy outs in the plot, an overly breakneck pace, and a lack of moral complexity (formerly a DWJ signature) make *House of Many Ways*, while enjoyable, ultimately unsatisfying.

Tijana says

Ku?a mnogih puteva nije baš tre?i deo u trilogiji, ali jeste tre?a knjiga u kojoj se (ovde kao sporedni likovi) pojavljuju Haul i Sofija. Ipak, bolje je da joj se pri?e kao samostalnom romanu - em radnja nije vezana za "Haulov pokretni zamak", em bi u pore?enju po kvalitetu izvukla deblji kraj. Jeste simpatična ova pri?a o devojci koja je razmažena jedinica, knjiški moljac i veze nema sa praktičnim životom a iznenada treba da se stara o ?arobnja?kom doma?instvu, ali nije ni blizu najboljim knjigama ove autorke ni po humoru, ni po šašavosti, ni po kompleksnosti - negativci su posebno razo?aranje.

Mark Lawrence says

I've now read the trilogy to Celyn and all three books are very good. Books 2 and 3 don't quite reach the highs of Howl's Moving Castle for me, but they're great stories to read to an 11 year old (I should note here that Celyn is severely disabled and can't read for herself).

The book was written 18 years after book 2, 22 years after book 1, and 3 years before the author's death. Despite that the feel of the thing is quite in keeping with the earlier instalments.

Once again we start with a new person and a new part of the world, with Sophie and Howl worked in tangentially about half way through the book.

Our protagonist is a young lady called Charmain who is roped into looking after her great aunt's great uncle's house while he's off being treated for some illness. The great uncle is a wizard, the house has ... many ways.

Much of the first half of the story concerns figuring out how to navigate and use the wizard's house. Charmain plunders the spell books and is joined by a boy sent to apprentice to the wizard. The plot, however, concerns the king of High Norland and his troubles, both financial and with his rather unpleasant heir. Sophie and Howl are brought in to help - their story entwines Charmain's and fun ensues.

It's a good and imaginative tale with moments of humour. I'm pleased to report that it doesn't repeat the formula of the first two books wherein a whole bunch of people/things turn out to be completely different people/things in the magical equivalent of pulling off the masks at the end of a Scooby Doo episode.

The only big surprise for me was that a baddie whose crimes seemed relatively mild is killed out of hand by our heroes toward the end. That didn't quite fit the mood music. Apart from that - a fun installment and a trilogy definitely worth buying for your 8 to 12 year olds.

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C.W. says

Much better than the second one! I really liked the characters, despite finding both Charmain and Peter annoying at times. She's a bit of a lazy brat, and he's a bit of screw up and a jerk, but it works. I quite enjoyed the story and the whimsical nature of everything as a whole. It's fun, funny, fantastical, and brings the series to a very nice close.

Katerina Kondrenko says

9.8 out of 10

????? ? ???? ?????/This review on my blog

Living A Thousand Lives (please use Chrome/Yandex browser or Android/IOS to see the page; otherwise, spoiler-tags I use to make my post compact may not work)

Short-Soundtrack:

Second Suspense – Wonders of Life

Genre: fairytale, fantasy

Stuff: magic house, royal mystery, young wizards

WOW: characters, plot, humor

POV: 3rd person, female

Love-Geometry: none

Quote-Core:

"You don't need to be nasty to make a mess."

This series is the best ageless masterpiece I've read this year! **Diana Wynne Jones** is a word-artist: she builds her worlds, characters and atmospheres with letters and syllables making them multilayered, bright and palpable. When I open her books I'm lost for the world outside and I'm full of inexplicable joy. I had the same emotions on the eve of New Year of my birthday when I was a child and thought I'd never experience them again.

House of Many Ways is a story about a girl named **Charmain** whose granddad (and a wizard) is ill and she has to take care of his house while he's away. She's delighted! No more notations of her mom and a lot of freedom for reading and maybe for attending the Royal Library (Charmain is eager to help His Majesty with cataloging). But after arriving to her grandpa's house she gets that this place is magical, there are so many passageways, rooms and halls in this seemingly small building, that if you'd take a wrong turn you may end up in a very surprising location. And that's not only problem of Charmain. The house is very dirty (the wizard has been ill for a while and couldn't take care of it), plus soon her granddad's apprentice **Peter** arrives having no idea that his master is not at home. And there is a dog: tiny, cute and unusual.

(c) anivarc

All in all, Charmain life becomes anything but normal. She and readers are up for adventures and a search for important answers. Who steals royal money? What does Elfgift mean and how it looks like? Does Charmain have magic or not? Will Peter learn where's left and where's right? xD And so on.

In *House of Many Ways* we'll also meet with **Howl, Sophie and Co.**

(c) taka0801

Plus a few characters from the book #2. I love when everything is entwined and fit together. I love when authors remember every detail or hero of their stories and know what to use, where and how. I was laughing SO hard at the twists in this part of the series. **Diana Wynne Jones** has a great sense of humor and she's a queen of hilarious situations.

Once again Russian translation didn't let me down. Once again I can't say anything not to spoil you even a bit. But be ready for some gruesome details in addition to the funny ones. The author know no mercy for insects haters xDD

I wish **Diana Wynne Jones** wrote a few more book in this world. I refuse to let go of Howl. I even started to read fanfics! Who knew that I'd fall for a children series when I'll be 27 year-old? Now you have to read all the three installments as well and join my crazy we're-old-but-who-cares club too. Come here, we have cookies and Calcifer.

Howl's Moving Castle (??????? ?????):

- Howl's Moving Castle (??????? ?????) #1/3
- Castle in the Air (????????? ?????) #2/3
- House of Many Ways (??? ? ??????????) #3/3

Nic says

First of all, I should note that Diana Wynne Jones is my favorite author. You're unlikely to find any of her books getting fewer than four stars from me.

That said, I loved this book less than a number of her others. (That, ladies and gentlemen, is the closest I come to criticizing DWJ.) To be fair, it was billed as "The sequel to *Howl's Moving Castle*," which is my favorite book in the world, so my hopes and, to an extent, my expectations, were high. And in all of the usual ways - neat and relatable characters and setting, humor, and putting into words things that make me go "oh yeah, I know just what you mean!" (see "relatable characters") - the book delivers, even before (squeal!) Howl shows up. However, I did have a few little issues, so I'll go ahead and talk about those.

Most of my issues lie with the protagonist. First of all, Charmain is kind of grumpy and useless. That sounds harsh. By "useless" I mean that her parents spoiled her and kind of didn't give her the opportunity to learn anything, so she knows how to do very little. When I say "grumpy," though, I mean exactly that. She gets mad at almost everyone, sometimes for no good reason - especially Peter. Frankly, I found Peter to be a more engaging character - more capable, nicer, and much more active. I would have liked to see some parts from

his point of view.

I think my problems with Charmain boil down to two. First, while she is obviously a "I'm going to grow and change and become a better person" character, I don't feel she really gets beyond the "admitting you have a problem" phase. She does that quite early - specifically, realize that she isn't a kind person - but when she seems to make no progress toward becoming kinder, her continued realizations of the fact seem more like a reminder that gee, yeah, our protagonist is not that nice. She's not *mean* per se, just cranky and sometimes a bit uncaring about others. There's a point later in the book when she seems to decide that she does want to be nice, even going so far as to assure herself that she will be kind to Peter when next she sees him. When she does see him, though, she fails to be nice to him (is extremely grumpy, actually), feels bad about it, and never seems to try again.

I feel like this really hinders her relationship with Peter. In *Howl's Moving Castle* (you had to know I'd compare them sooner or later), you get the sort of strange-bedfellows thing with the characters living in the castle, but they become sort of a weird, adorable family. Charmain never seems to really care much about Peter, despite the fact that he is nice and they actually have a fair amount in common. I was waiting for them to become friends - and I'm not talking about romance, just some mutual care for each other's wellbeing! - but they continue to just sort of be two people who live in one house. If anything, Charmain resents Peter for making her do her share of the household work. At the end, by which time I expected them to have gotten past their differences, Peter goes missing for over a day and Charmain doesn't seem to care. Likewise, when he turns up just in time for everyone to learn he is heir to the throne, Charmain has no reaction whatsoever. This could have been an exciting and satisfying moment, but I didn't get a chance to feel much because, while I kind of care about Peter, the story immediately passed by what happened to him because Charmain didn't seem to even notice.

I should temper this by saying that Charmain does, on the whole, tend to do the right thing. She is occasionally heroic and sometimes even a little nicer than she maybe gives herself credit for. I just expected more personal growth and improvement than she has.

The other thing is that - and I almost can't believe I would say this - Charmain is too much of a reader. I suspect DWJ is hearkening back to her own childhood habits in creating the character, but here's the thing: I was a *massive* reader as a kid, but I was more active than Charmain. Picture this: you, who have never been exposed to magic before, are put in charge of a kindly wizard's magical house while he is away and allowed to explore as you like. But you don't! Instead, you get exactly as far as the library, then spend lots of time lounging around reading and getting annoyed when Peter shows up with exciting discoveries gleaned from *his* explorations. (Wonder why I wanted to read more about him . . . ?) In addition to this, Charmain uses reading as an escape from really serious situations, such as thinking that Calcifer might be dead. "Should I tell his friends? Should I go see if I can find out whether he actually did die saving us all?" (Both of these questions are, in fact, asked.) "No! I should read a book." It's not even as if there's one really good book - she would rather read almost any book than deal with real life, even and especially when things around her start to get really interesting. I understand as well as anybody and more than many that some kids - some people - some characters, will be readers. This does not make reading a book an interesting activity to read about, nor does it make me sympathize with a character who would rather read than do awesome stuff that I, an avid reader, would love to do.

The only other thing the book does is something I don't really dislike, but am a little iffy on sometimes, and which DWJ does often: it ties a thousand plotlines and plot bits into a neat little magically-enhanced bow in the very last few pages. Many of her books that I love do this, but the ones I love most do it least. (*Deep Secret*, *Charmed Life*, *Conrad's Fate*, *Archer's Goon*, and - let me think - *Howl's Moving Castle* - all end a bit more gracefully, I think.) There's no wind-down from the magic-romping-everywhere climax. All of the plot conclusions are planned out and supported, but discoveries are mostly not strung through the book, or even the second half or last sixth or anything of the book - they all come in the last three or five or so of four

hundred pages. It's not occurrences (ex. the defeat of the lubbockins, William Norland's arrival, Peter's return) that get me so much as realizations and decisions. Waif is the Elfgift! She's going to have Elfgift puppies! Charmain is the Elfgift Guardian! She'll have to come learn magic and work in the library just like she always wanted to! Peter's mother is the King's niece! Peter is next in line for the throne! It's not that I think this stuff is too convenient, especially as it's a YA book, and I loved convenient coincidences and neat little outcomes when I was younger ~~and kind of still do~~. It's just that suddenly every other sentence is answering a question or solving a problem that had been hovering around for much of the book. Is all. As I say, this actually doesn't bother me all that much.

Hopefully this doesn't all sound too rough. Keep in mind my sky-high standards for DWJ books.

Erin says

Well, I feel a lot of guilt for giving the final chapter of the Castle series a measley 2 stars, but it is what it is.

The magic was pretty boring, consisting of water pipes heating up/cooling down, food appearing when you say "Breakfast, please!", and doorways that lead to many places depending on which direction you turn. Whoop-dee-doo.

The plot was so, so slow-moving. And predictable. Maybe if it had just been one or the other I would have been more satisfied, but slow-moving *and* predictable? Yikes. There was only one surprise at the end-- which I'd been preparing myself for since DWJ likes to save all the twists for the last chapter-- but it was barely dealt with and never hinted at prior to its reveal, which made me wonder if it was just an afterthought.

One great thing that I can always count on Diana for, though, is to draw excellent characters. They're not always likable (and in this case... not even a little bit likable), but they're always consistent and interesting. Charmain was definitely consistent; I don't know about interesting. She was too much of a lazy tool for me to really find interesting. Also, minor quibble: I thought her age was really ambiguous. It was probably mentioned at the very beginning but it was never reinforced, so I forgot how old she was. Turns out she was 13, which sounds about right. What a brat.

This series is the only thing by DWJ that I've ever read, but it makes me wonder about what she thinks a good female character is. Charmain and Sophie were surprisingly similar, although Sophie was much more likable. Both are kind of jerks, but Sophie is at least a lovable jerk. Charmain just.... ugh.

So, here's a quick attempt at summing up the plot. Charmain goes to her Great-Uncle's house while he's being restored to health for a few weeks. Oh, and he's a wizard with a **magical** house, and the health restoration thing is being taken care of by elves. It took me awhile to place the setting, because it seems very modern/our world, but it's still set in the same universe as the other two books. While Charmain is settling in, she has a run-in with an evil creature called a lubbock (who is the villian for the whole book) and is annoyed by the presence of Peter, a magically-challenged apprentice waiting for her Great-Uncle to come back. I wanted Peter to be the tween version of a love interest so I'd have SOMETHING to distract me from the obvious plot (view spoiler). There's also some stuff going on about finding a mysterious object called the "Elfgift" that will save the kingdom, and of course it was blindingly obvious what exactly the Elfgift was. Yawn, yawn, yawn.

Sadly, this one felt like a children's book in a bad way. The first two were appealing to kids while still remaining clever and accessible to my age group.

The second book in this series, *Castle in the Air*, remains my favorite. I highly recommend that one. Just thinking of Abdullah makes me feel weepy and nostalgic...

(The guilt for giving 2 stars has not gone away yet.)

Becky Schneider says

I really enjoyed reading this book. The writing was excellent, and it was certainly *almost* a sequel to Howl's *Moving Castle*, although calling it *the* sequel is perhaps unfair to *Castle in the Sky*.

Vague spoilers follow:

It did rather fail as a traditional novel for two reasons. First, there was nothing much holding it together thematically. Charmain's character development was interesting and coherent, but it had no real bearing on the endgame of the plot, beyond the fact that it allowed her to be in the right places at the right time. And all the other plot things that were going on were interesting in their own right, but their relationships to one another were questionable. Really, the story had all the randomness of real life, but this made it less of a story.

Secondly and relatedly, the plot was undermined by the fact that one of the characters was, of course, Howl, and the bad guys could not possibly be any match for him. Once certain facts were established and certain events unfolded, he simply saved the day. This is totally realistic, but again, makes the story feel less important. Califer's part in saving everyone did add some tension, but not enough. Ultimately the plot and tension would have been enough for, say, an episode of a television series, where an interesting premise need not be accompanied by really high stakes, but it didn't feel like a fully-formed standalone novel.

However, I still entirely enjoyed reading it. Sure, tightly-constructed, high-stakes novels are ultimately preferable, but if DWJ wants to publish fun little stories like this one involving everyone's favorite foppish wizard, I'm not complaining.

Lara Mi says

“I’m beginning to think I’ve led a much too sheltered life.”

Charmain Baker wants nothing more than to read her books in peace. Peace, however, is soon gone when her aunt decides she should look after Great-Uncle William’s magical house. The wizard has fallen ill and Charmain finds herself alone in the house with a stray dog, a huge mess and no means to clean up with. Things only get worse when Peter, a supposed apprentice shows up. Inexperienced with magic, both seem to inflict more damage on the house than fix it. But the real trouble begins when a horrible lubbock turns up and the king requests their help.

House of Many Ways is so much better a book than **Castle in the Sky**. While I do not think that it is quite as good as the first, **Howl’s Moving Castle**, it is a much more worthy sequel - it has the same magical

atmosphere, mystery and quirky characters.

Charmain is a great character to follow – I think anyone who enjoys fantasy would love a story about a girl who is crazy about books and ends up in a wizard's house. She has got a tongue that can lash out like Sophie's, yet she can be incredibly selfish and just downright lazy and ignorant. Peter, the apprentice, is anything but lazy – but while he means well, most things he starts end up in chaos and his magical talent is somewhat questionable. Those two often end up bickering which makes them an enjoyable pair to read about – even if not quite on par to Sophie and Howl's arguments!

It was great to have Sophie, Howl and Calcifer back. Sadly, they did not appear as much as I would have liked them too but it was a lot better than in **Castle in the Air**. I was also sad that there was no sign of Michael – I would have loved for him to show up, or at least some mention of him. Nonetheless, other former characters of both previous books were mentioned here and there which created a nice link between the stories.

The magical house Charmain is looking after is interesting and I think the book could have been expanded by a lot just for exploring the many rooms and passages (not that I am complaining, the book had a sufficient and well satisfying length!). At times it felt a little slow paced but that was actually really nice – some of the slower and more relaxing scenes were beautiful; I loved the scenes with all the soap bubbles floating out of all doors and windows (more damage than fixing!).

The book had some really good mystery build up and in a way, I thought it was the darkest of the three. Although the overall tone of the book was very light and happy, the lubbocks are just gruesome! To me, lubbocks are basically Ridley Scott's Aliens. I like the franchise **Alien** - but what on earth are they doing in this light-hearted world?! Lubbocks are insect-like creatures (purple no less – my favourite colour) that lay eggs inside of people which then hatch out of them to be some human-insect crossbreed. All the egg and parasite business was, for better or for worse, quite disturbing. On one hand, it felt really out of place. And yet it seemed as though it set the stakes higher and made it quite the exciting story to follow.

I loved how the story was resolved and it was a really great read. Too bad we will never get the fourth volume that Diana W. Jones mentioned in an interview – I have really come to enjoy the world of Sophie and Howl and more than anything I would like to see more of it *with* them in it.

Timothy Urges says

Diana Wynne Jones provides a sense of wonder that sets me on a path to a good mood.

House of Many Ways is a great end to the series. Charmain is tasked with watching her great-uncle's house while he is away. Turns out he is a wizard whose house is not what it appears to be. Whimsy and adventures abound.
