



Hyacinth and the Secrets Beneath

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Magic is real. History is a big, fat lie.

Before Hyacinth Hayward moves from Illinois to London, she reads up on the city's history. Too bad for her. Because the books are wrong. The truth is, London was built on magical rivers, and all the major events in its past have been about people trying to control the magic.

Hyacinth discovers this when her mom is kidnapped. In the chase to get her back, Hyacinth encounters a giant intelligent pig in a bathing suit, a boy with amnesia, an adorable tosher (whatever that is), a sarcastic old lady, and a very sketchy unicorn. Somehow Hyacinth has to figure out who to trust, so she can save her mom and, oh yeah, *not* cause a second Great Fire of London."

Hyacinth and the Secrets Beneath Details

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From Reader Review Hyacinth and the Secrets Beneath for online ebook

Philip says

It seems that unable to see the magic in London writers are obsessed with inventing underground magical spaces there . To be honest there is a lot of it underground . Think of this one as a modern fairy tale . Brothers Grimm meets Lewis Carroll . When your sidekicks are an amnesiac 12 year old boy and a giant pig wearing a swimming costume you get the drift . It is nevertheless a ripping yarn as they used to say even if a bit one dimensional at times . Altogether a good read and I assume from the ending that there will be more to come.

April says

I am not sure how to rate this book. It has an interesting premise. It is well written. But it is odd. In a case of alternative history, many events of the past in London and the world have been shaped/caused by who controls magical rivers. Hyacinth moves to London with her mother. After a short introductory section on that topic and the fact that Hyacinth is getting chapped hands from the hot and cold water being separated, the rest of the book takes place in about 36 hours. It is fast paced and rather nonsensical. I don't really feel bad having spent time reading the story but it isn't one I would recommend if asked for a recommendation.

Wensday says

I enjoy books with twisted history. This is a great book that those that enjoy that added tier in their stories. I did find that some of the scenes of the book did drag on a bit for juvenile fiction. The book does wrap up nicely, but still leads well into more of this series.

I received this ebook from NetGalley in exchange for my honest opinion.

Jane says

I was asked to review by Nudge

This is a really fun book for 9-12 years but equally entertaining for the adult (or child within the adult)

A girl called Hyacinth and her Mother move to London. Her Grandmother gives her a book about the sewers of London for a going away gift (a strange gift I hear you say- this is a strange story) She finds out that they are not at all right. They move to a flat that her family owns. there are plumbing issues in the bathroom, there is a problem with the tap. Then the fun begins.

It is rather mad over the next 36 hours - there are Sewers, giant pigs, talking mosquitoes in tuxedos and all

added to the mix- her mother is kidnapped and it is Hyacinth's quest to get her back.
Magic water, good and bad who do you trust?

A really funny story well written with sprinkles of magic and some mad capped characters.

I do hope I will see kids on sun beds reading this book, just watch your taps.

Strawberry says

This book is hilarious and is such a great adventure full of fantasy and even the real-life strangeness of London. Hyacinth has recently moved to London, from America, where her whole family is originally from. But living in London is hard for Hyacinth, especially as she has to get used to how strange and different British life is, including the fact that hot and cold water aren't mixed in our taps. One day Hyacinth's has enough of scolding and freezing her hands, and finds a way to mix both waters together, unleashing a magical force that causes havoc around London.

This story is brilliant, although I wasn't sure I was going to enjoy it when I began reading. The book is written in the first person making it easy to get into the action from her point of view, but I did find the way it sounded a bit difficult to get into. Hyacinth is twelve years old but sounds more like a teenager in the way she thinks. She's an interesting character and I did enjoy the book the more I read it, but it sounded different from the many other children's/middle grade books I'm used to reading.

When Hyacinth accidentally unleashes magic into London's sewers it starts off an adventure into underground London. The adventure is as madcap as you can get and completely fantasy with all sorts of weird things happening. It's a bit like Alice in Wonderland in how weird everything is but with a lot of humour making it the madcap caper it is! There are magical rivers that run along the now London sewer system, and all sorts of strange things happening and strange creatures throughout. The story is as daft as it looks on the cover with a very large pig dressed in a swimming costume involved in the action. You'll find out who this pig is and I just loved his character! The book starts off a bit strange with the slightly older tone and a few things didn't feel real like Hyacinth being able to do plumbing to fix the taps at just twelve years old, but once you move beyond that the story actually becomes brilliant and you start to understand the way everything is connected.

The hilarious tale becomes one that's completely believable the more you read on, and it's interesting because so many parts of the story you can trace back to real life London. The characters have an adventure around the city and visit lots of locations which all become connected with the story. Perhaps it's my interest in London (the fact I live here) that makes me enjoy this so much but I found it fascinating the way that the story basically explains how everything in London's history isn't true and there's a magical version of history that's kept secret from everyone. I've always enjoyed stories that try to explain the strange things that have happened or exist and this book really does that and in a brilliant way.

The story has a great ending, it's satisfying but does leave enough unanswered questions to leave you wanting to read the next book in the trilogy. There's nothing offensive in the book and I think many kids will enjoy it. The slightly older tone might put some off at first, I also didn't like Hyacinth finding a guy cute, which felt strange to read in the novel (perhaps because it's a children's book), and her mum's silliness was odd, but all of those were forgiven when the story went on and some of these things which still feel out of place might well be explained in rest of the series. There are some illustrations in the book, it's split into three parts, with each part being given a small illustration at the start of it, as well as one of a few re-occurring illustrations at the start of each chapter and an occasional extra within the text. The back of the book has authors notes and some really interesting information and pictures of some areas of London. It's

actually amazing, once you've read the story, to read about the areas of London and how strange they really are, and exactly the way they are described in the book. It makes you wonder if the whole magical fantasy adventure you've just read might have some truth to it!

I've really enjoyed this first novel and can't wait for the next in the series. I think older kids will like this as well as possibly some adults. It will definitely appeal to those who live in London, or for anyone who is interested in London or a silly adventure.

-Thanks to Walker Books for a free copy.

Debra says

Hyacinth is a young American girl who has just arrived in London. She is struggling to settle in and doesn't seem to have made any friends. Then one day she gets fed up with the tap in the bathroom which just won't mix the hot and cold. The rest is an exhausting and frankly quite mad rush through London.

I quite enjoyed this book and can quite see its appeal for a junior school aged child. It is quite frantic with plenty of action & zany creatures. There are elements of history thrown in - Bazelgette's sewers and the Monument spring immediately to mind.

As far as structure and the plot goes this book is a little shaky. I am not sure that I kept up with people switching sides, who was really who they claimed to be and exactly why everyone was chasing this drop of water. The book did jump around quite a bit with people appearing and reappearing in different guises. They are a lot of characters to get your head around and I am really not sure that I succeeded.

On the whole this is a fun book. There are many places where children will smile and laugh. I doubt most children would keep up with everything in this book but I have no doubt that readers will enjoy it and take away at least something.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

Jessica M says

The City of Secret Rivers is fun to read, with mad cap adventures and a fast-paced invitation down into the depths of London's underground rivers.

The author actually did a lot of research whilst writing this book, which he talks about in the Author's Note. The book features a lot of illustrations throughout the pages, which I think kids would love.

**“During the creepiest and most disgusting day of my entire life, I thought I had handled everything pretty calmly, all things considered. But now there were rats swarming over my body, and all I could do was shriek really intelligent things like ‘Aaaaaaaa’ or ‘GET OFF GET OFF GETOFFGETOFFGETOFF’
The rats didn’t listen.”**

The protagonist is a sassy, fast-talking young girl who embarks on the crazy journey under London to save her mother.

This book is supposed to be for children aged 9-12 but I definitely feel like it wouldn't be suitable for some kids who fall into that lower age bracket. Some of the things that happen in the book (one character tries to kill another by slitting their throat) seem a little too much for young children, and I thought those parts of the novel should've either been diluted or cut out completely. Additionally, I feel like children's novels should contain character names that are easy to pronounce. I'm an adult and I have absolutely no idea how to pronounce Hyacinth or Oaroboarus. Surely kids might struggle as well?

I think children who are avid readers will love this book, because they'll stick with it to find out what happens to Hyacinth's mother. But for children who struggle with reading, I don't think this is the book to give them.

"I had never really thought much about what kind of spiral staircase I prefer, but as we got higher and higher, I started thinking about it more and more. Some spiral staircases have walls on both sides. Those, I decided, are the right kind."

I felt like this story was too chaotic — too disjointed and fast-paced. I understand some kids might find this exciting, but so much was happening that I couldn't quite take the time to understand or appreciate the characters. Everything was moving so fast and there were so many things being thrown at the reader in each chapter, that I felt a little lost throughout the book and the characters weren't really that memorable. I got the end of the book and most of the plot was lost on me, and I didn't feel overly attached to any of the main characters.

I think Jacob Weinstein has done a good job of bringing together a unique storyline, I just wish he'd taken out some of the 'twists' and 'adventures' and filled the book with more characterisation and depth.

Thank you to the publisher for sending me a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Cara says

This was cute, and fast paced, but felt a little off in some places. I couldn't get a good feel for a couple of the characters, especially the mom. Why was she so spacey? Was there something wrong with her? That part was strange.

Overall a good, solid, fantasy for middle grade.

Hannah Belyea says

Hyacinth and her mother have moved back to London, but when she accidentally unleashes a magic drop of water that threatens the entire city, she will have to risk it all to save her new home, even if it means teaming up with some of the strangest folk on - and under - the streets. Weinstein is sure to please young readers with this creative story that mixes history with magic in an entertaining way. Time for all her plumbing skills to finally come in handy outside the home!

15TindallL says

I really liked this fiction book. The author is extremely imaginative and the world he created is out of this

world. From strange mystical creatures like evil unicorns running on a treadmill to a posh loyal pig. I recommend this book, it's a bit like a detective mystery book and so much happens in it I hope there's a sequel

Kelly says

At first you would think that a story involving the underground rivers of London, a pig in a bathing suit and police made from mud is a bit too random to be any good. You would be wrong. This 9 to 12 fiction book is a wonderful romp through the underground of London meeting interesting and rich characters along the way. Our main character, a young girl named Hyacinth, creates a problem that she needs to solve or not only her mother but all of London will be in serious trouble because of.

She finds out who she can and cannot trust along the way, while extracting herself from various dangerous situation using some good old fashioned logical thinking and tips she has inadvertently picked up from her extended family. Turns out that family are an important element when we get to the root of the story.

The writing is pretty superb and the humour is just at the right level for the intended audience but that doesn't mean other age groups won't enjoy the book also. I personally thought it was a fun adventure read that I will be recommending to customers of all ages. As a side note, I also absolutely loved the cover illustration by Euan Cook on my copy.

Jason Gallaher says

I fell in love with this book and the fantasy world Weinstein creates based on real world London. I also especially liked Lady Roslyn and her dry humor. Looking forward to the sequel!

Melissa says

Not gonna lie... I picked this based on the cover.

When our hero Hyacinth accidentally unleashes an ancient and powerful force, she discovers history is really just a cover story for enchanted rivers and magical politics. The journey to retrieve an ornery drop of magic water becomes an adventure involving monsters and underground sewer systems all while figuring out who to trust and what to believe.

This adventure is fast-paced and fun to read. Hyacinth keeps a level head while running from danger and is a refreshing character in her balance of strength and wit. The writing keeps everything light and humorous with varying levels of jokes (from potty humor to puns). Young readers will be treated to an important lesson as they learn more about Hyacinth's friends and enemies as well as the history of magic, learning that good and evil may not always be black and white. Real history seems to take a backseat to Hyacinth's story, but the author employed some research from London's past, particularly in regards to architecture, allowing readers to glean some facts from an afternoon's romp through the streets of this old city.

While entertaining, this book does not offer much in the way of memorable characters. The plot itself is wonderfully intricate but poorly executed as new ideas seem to be tossed out with every other chapter

without time to develop.

A good read for fans of Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians.

Sharon Viall says

This is the true story of the sewers of London. Hyacinth and her strange Mother are moving to London. Her Grandmother gives her a book about the sewers of London for a going away gift. She finds out that they are not at all right. They move to an apartment that her family owns. There is something wrong with the plumbing in her bathroom and they call in a plumber to fix it. That's when the Adventure begins. A drop of water gets away and a whole lot of problems and weird things start to happen. Someone kidnaps Hyacinth Mother and she is going to get her back. Hyacinth meets a lot of interesting cast of characters in this quest. Not knowing who to trust or not to trust. It's a cute story for younger Children.

Amy says

When Hyacinth moves to London with her mother, she is quickly shocked to learn that water of London is teeming with magic and her accidental use of that water results in the kidnapping of her mother. Hyacinth teams up with a helpful neighbor to complete the quest that will release her mother – jumping into the secret, magical subterranean world of the London sewer system. Nothing and no one are what they seem in this funny, fast paced kickoff to a planned trilogy. Fantasy fans should race just as fast as Hyacinth through this adventurous story.
