



# Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded

*Sage Blackwood*

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Chantel would much rather focus on her magic than on curtsying, which is why she often finds herself in trouble at Miss Ellicott's School for Magical Maidens. But when Miss Ellicott mysteriously disappears along with all the other sorceresses in the city, Chantel's behavior becomes the least of her problems.

Without any magic protecting the city, it is up to Chantel and her friends to save the Kingdom. On a dangerous mission, Chantel will discover a crossbow-wielding boy, a dragon, and a new, fiery magic that burns inside her—but can she find the sorceresses and transform Lightning Pass into the city it was meant to be?

## **Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded Details**

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Author : Sage Blackwood

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# From Reader Review Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded for online ebook

## Carolyn says

I was really looking forward to this, but it fell flat. There was zero world building, which made the story incredibly hard to follow. It picked up a little bit in the middle, but then the pacing and timing was weird and I never really knew what was going on. Another review called this "forgettable" and I'd have to agree. I'm disappointed.

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## Cameron Chaney says

*Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded* by Sage Blackwood (Awesome name, by the way. Super jealous.) is a middle grade fantasy standalone about a magical school in a magical city that is walled off from the rest of the world. In this city, some females are trained to be sorceresses to protect the city and strengthen the wall against the dangers outside. But as Chantel, a student at the school, soon learns, the real dangers may in fact rest inside the walls of the city she once believed to be safe.

This is a fun page-turner with plenty of action and mystery, as well as likable characters. The only thing I'd say against it is that it relies pretty heavily on politics for a story aimed at such young kids, and there were times where it bordered on pandering. Fortunately, it took a few steps back from that before it got too bad. Also, I wish the story had just a bit more whimsy to balance out its serious nature. Otherwise, I enjoyed it.

**Overall: 3.5 stars**

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## Kathy Martin says

Chantel is a thirteen-year-old orphan in the walled city of Lightning Pass. She was chosen to be a pupil at a school for Magical Maidens. Miss Ellicott is the sorceress who runs the school. Along with spells, the maidens are taught to be shamefast and biddable and to always conduct themselves with deportment. Chantel is good at the spells. In fact, she is the best at summoning and summoned a snake to be her familiar at age six. However, she is not very good at deportment, being shamefast or biddable.

When Miss Ellicott disappears and Marauders gather outside the walls in large numbers. Chantel and her friends need to find a way to locate their teacher and strengthen the wall. At least, that is what Chantel thinks they need to do.

But finding the missing sorceresses doesn't lead to the result Chantel wants and she needs to team with a young Maurader boy and her legendary dragon companion to make the city safe for all.

This was an enjoyable story with interesting world building. It reminded me a bit of Victorian times when manners were paramount and young women had very specific roles. Chantel is an intriguing character who finds her own strengths and purpose throughout this story.

Fans of fantasy will enjoy this story.

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### **Kathleen says**

To celebrate one of my grandsons' eleventh birthday, this book was bought for his school library. Girl power, boy power, the power that comes from doing the right thing even when those things are difficult, and great adventure are all part of this novel.

The first aspect of this novel that will grab a young reader's attention is how people are controlled. Misguided rules and a lack of critical thinking are in place to control people: "Regrettably, the future may not be like the glorious present. The present is a pinnacle that man has achieved by overcoming the trials of the terrible past."..."You can't walk there. That's a Monday lawn." Miss Ellicott's School for sorceresses in training, directed by Miss Ellicott and Miss Flivvers, is driven by the importance of "Deportment" to keep girls "shamefast and biddable" so they will grow up to be proper and correct. "No human ever really breaks free...What are we without the rules and walls that contain us?"... "Sooner or later the wall is in your mind. Then the stone one is just a formality."

Chantel Goldenrod, Anna Bellringer, and Bowser Stepmonger live in Lightning Pass, a city surrounded by a thick wall that patriarchs and king have told people is for their "protection." Chantel learns from Franklin, a Sunbiter, perceived as an enemy, that the patriarchs control the port and toll gates controlling the roads to the mountains, living a high life while people suffer inside the walls.

Chapters of developing plot are interspersed with conversations among some people who seem to know Chantel's story, her growing powers, her courage to face danger and to keep her thinking from being "too small."

"Honor was a thing Chantel had trouble understanding" when the two sides don't understand they could negotiate. Then she needs to decide which side she will be on. A long-dead queen, Queen Haywith becomes her mentor pointing out the flaws in her thinking, exposing her to bigger ideas, not just enough to survive. "Trust yourself."

How powerful this book is for discerning readers: leaders make decisions for the people they serve, for the greater good, not for power or their own advantage. In the end, Chantel and Franklin have assumed roles they did not wish for, "But they were where their people needed them." Their lives have changed, but new experiences await them..."And the city...would learn."

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### **Cindy says**

This book was missing something. I can't put my finger on it, but it didn't seem to have that extra oomph that I need for books.

I wasn't a huge fan of the way girls were treated in the book. I also got aggravated that the adults were so

stupid.

It wasn't a bad book just an alright book. I did love the dragon tho.

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### **Dominique Valente says**

"Miss Ellicott's school stood like a candle trembling in a dark storm, perched on a steep, twisting street in the peak-built city of Lightning Pass." And so we are introduced to a school for magical maidens, which follows a young girl named Chantel (who a bit like Tiffany Aching from the Wee Free Men series, isn't wholly sure about the name Chantel for a witch).

Chantel is fun, feisty, whip-smart and really witty. However, there were times when it seemed a bit like she was too fabulous and the others weren't given much of chance to be anything but sidekicks, but as the novel progressed I realised perhaps this was deliberate as it wouldn't have made what happened believable otherwise.

The story plays with a few tropes, such as the orphan child, the 'chosen one', and then completely, fabulously subverts them. So if you see that in the first chapter, just keep going, it's worth it and not what you think. The humour is at times laugh out loud funny (for me anyway as I appreciate a good bit of wit), and there were real shades of Terry Pratchett which is no small compliment from me.

At one point you think you know where this story is going, and towards the last quarter I felt almost like it was dragging because I had a sort preconceived idea, however it took such an unexpected turn that I'm now left marvelling at what an incredible creation this was, and how lovely and unexpected the novel became as a result.

It's a real, sit back and enjoy yourself sort of tale, about friendship, bravery, doing the right thing even when it's not considered appropriate to do so.

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### **Diana says**

The ending feels a bit tidy, but it's understandable considering it's a youth book and, well, it's the ending. But it had that open sort of feeling, that you know things are going to continue happening. Themes of gender in society and cultural perspectives of "outsiders". Fantastical and whimsical but rooted in great and important discussion questions. This is the fourth Sage Blackwood book I've read (after the Jinx trilogy) and I think it's safe to say that I really like her style. Good pacing and rich characters and setting and intriguing problems and solutions. And great dialogue and cleverness.

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### **GaiasWonderland says**

~~This is my most anticipated book for this 'year'. I really hope to get to it when I get the chance. Fingers crossed.~~ I'm afraid to say my expectations were not met in this book. More of a Review later to come.

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## **Meg says**

\*ARC provided for review by HarperCollins Publishers, thank you very much!\*

Considering that the title, summary, and beautiful cover art had me very excited to receive and review this ARC, I can say that I am unfortunately and devastatingly disappointed in this book.

It had potential; the premise of the story was something that intrigued me and made me think that it would be an enjoyable read (and hopefully a future recommendation of mine). However, I was proven wrong by not only the writing style that left for MUCH to be desired, but by the oddly timed pacing of the events in the story.

I had initially hoped to read at least 100 pages before deciding to put the book down, but by the end of Chapter 2, I was ready to call it quits. The story was moving much too fast by the time I reached the 24th page, leaving me with entirely too many questions than I would've liked during this introductory portion.

Additionally, I felt that very little background information was skipped over, with the story jumping into the conflicts and concerns of the main characters without actually setting up the plot at all.

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## **Brandy Painter says**

Originally posted here at Random Musings of a Bibliophile.

Miss Ellicott's for the Magically Minded by Sage Blackwood is one of my most anticipated 2017 releases. Blackwood's previous trilogy beginning with Jinx is one of my favorites so I wanted to read this new book as soon as I could. I was immediately pulled into the story here and delighted to find a book about sticking it to the patriarchy with magic and a dragon while fighting for what is right.

Chantel is an orphan who attends Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded. Girls who show proficiency in magic and have no other place in the world go there to learn to use their magic. They also have lessons in deportment and are taught to be "shamefast and biddable". Chantel has more trouble with that part. She is prodigiously talented in the area of magic, but when it comes to holding her tongue and deporting, she has to work extra hard. When Miss Ellicott and all the other enchantresses who do the magic (the buttoning) that holds up the city's walls and keeps it safe go missing, Chantel and her two best friends must find a way to help save their city. But first they have to figure out exactly what it is that needs saving and what is the best way to do that.

Chantel is special. She summons her familiar, a tiny green snake, to her at an incredibly early age. Yet she is not your typical "special" heroine. She is a prodigy of magic, but she has been immersed in it almost her entire life and she works hard. She has a practical no-nonsense approach to life that leads her to impatience with people and can cause her to be snappy. When her snake familiar crawls inside her head, it becomes harder for her to control this. She is also told by Miss Ellicott that she is "the chosen one". I loved how Blackwood used this trope and flipped it on its head in ways that both amuse and make a point about free will and choice. Chantel is joined by her best friend Anna. Together they make a perfect team because they

balance each other well. Anna is better at being outwardly shamefast and biddable, but, like Chantel, she knows her own mind and uses it to the optimal advantage. She is better at corralling the younger girls at the school and often talks Chantel into finding her patience when she needs it. The girls have always been friends with Bowser, who works in the kitchens and is the only boy resident of the school. He too helps balance Chantel and is a needed part of the team as the elder males who run the city don't want to deal with girls. This team is eventually joined by Franklin, a Marauder boy from outside the city who brings street smarts, knowledge of the outside world, and a mean ability with a crossbow to help out. The four work well together and tend to stick to what they do best. The story mostly belongs to Chantel though, who set off an important series of events by allowing her snake into her head.

The plot is full of mystery and adventure. The kids live in a walled city. The wall has been there for hundreds of years, but now it is in risk of collapse. Marauders (those who live on the outside) with to break the hold the city has on trade. The ruling parties of the city are engaged in an internal power struggle. In classic MG fashion, the kids are the ones who have to save the day. They see things in different ways and are better able to reassess long held prejudices and beliefs. I don't want to say too much because the book is so much fun to experience, but I was truly impressed with the blend of magic, adventure, politics, and ethics. The main theme of the book is "think bigger". Chantel is told this several times, and it is only through this that she is able to figure out a course to take that will help the most people. The existence of the walled city, which was walled to keep out threats but also kept its inhabitants enslaved to their rulers who controlled their food supply, is a timely thematic element all on its own. I really liked how this was threaded through the book, particularly the quote: "a wall becomes a wall in the mind".

Also there is an absentminded dragon with a massive library.

Fans of adventure, fantasy, and girls using all the tools at their disposal to kick butt and take names should read this book.

I read an ARC received at ALA Midwinter from the publisher, Katherine Tegen Books. Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded is on sale March 21st.

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## **Dyan says**

[I got this book through Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review](#)

This book isn't bad at all, but after 60 pages of pushing myself to read on, I have decided to DNF it. I really liked the premise of the book, but I just find myself uninterested and not really wanting to read on. Maybe this is better for you :)

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## **Travis says**

What an excellent middle grade work! The worldbuilding is top notch -- even reminiscent of Terry Pratchett, one of my favorite authors -- and has an easy buy in. The adventure is \*also\* top notch, and the message underneath (forcing girls to be "shamefast and biddable" not only pigeonholes and stifles them, but hurts society as a whole) is artfully interwoven, not preachy, and oh-so-timely. Plus: there's time travel, a really great dragon, and a lot of magic.

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## Beth says

I'm torn about this one. I liked the voice a lot initially: it's very literal and direct and funny. And then it crosses the line to overly self-aware and stops working for me.

"It seems to me," said Miss Flivvers, who had been in a sour mood, "that once you're up on a pedestal, you can't take a step in any direction without falling."

"It is better than the alternative," said Miss Ellicott. "Mark my words."

This has such promise! It hasn't yet crossed the line to overly self-aware! I want to see more of this discussion! Instead, this becomes a by-the-numbers fantasy where they're too busy running to and from things, meeting strangers and deciding whom to trust, and learning how to use their powers. Yawn. I love fantasy, but now that I've been teased with this type of discussion, differing perspectives from different women, I want *that*.

(view spoiler)

So I was the victim of my own expectations (warranted though I feel they were); also, I kept bumping up against the impression that I was reading a sort of *Floating Islands* 2.0. It made for a wistful reading experience.

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## Kateryna says

The title and beautiful cover made me very excited to read this book, and I can say that I am unfortunately disappointed in it. The premise of the story is good, but I think the author dragged things out, and there wasn't enough action to move the plot along. It took me forever to finish the book. The second half of the book was slow moving and could have picked up the pace just a little bit. The characters weren't interesting, and the snake/dragon didn't fit into the story that much. Overall, it did not work for me.

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## Online Eccentric Librarian says

*More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>*

Sage Blackwood is definitely an author at the top of her game as she gives us yet another intriguing children's fantasy, this time a stand alone. And although middle grade is likely the target audience, the themes and nuances make this a very interesting read for adults as well. With Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded, we have a modern day Alice in Wonderland poking gleeful fun at Trump America as skillfully as Lewis Carroll skewered Victorian society. Those looking for a good read need not worry about messages getting in the way -this book is a fun adventure story featuring a plucky but diffident 13 year old girl and her somewhat distracted fire breathing dragon.



Chantel lives in the walled city of Lightning Pass, learning to be a good summoner sorceress at Miss Ellicott's school. The city is protected by magical wards on the wall called the Seven Buttons. Though Chantel is a bit cheeky for her own good, she has a bright future as a skilled summoner. That is, until the city's sorceresses disappear, marauders besiege the wall, food runs short, and she is forced to seek help from both the city's powerful Patriarchs and then the King himself. But they have their own distractions and a 13 year old girl who hasn't learned proper deportment or etiquette is just a nuisance. That is, until the dragon appears....

From the cover image as well as the description, this would seem to skew to the younger side of middle grade. But really, this is an intricate and layered story that should appeal to young and old. As with Alice in Wonderland, younger readers will enjoy Chantel's adventures and older readers can ponder the many themes brought up seamlessly through the plot and character interactions. Because like Alice, our heroine Chantel will continually come up against metaphors for the silliness of modern day politics, mores, and society as she attempts to save her City (especially from itself).

The theme here is "think bigger" and that runs throughout the book. Since this is a Blackwood novel, children have a clarity that the adults, in their petty machinations, always seem to lose. Indeed, our dragon is a metaphor for that clarity rather than a deus ex machina to fix Chantel's situation (especially since one of the adults 'lost' the dragon when she became of age and gave up childish things). As with the Jinx series, our protagonist is underestimated, rebuffed, ignored, and patronized despite her willingness and ability to see to the heart of the situation and what needs to be done. Similarly, Chantel (also like Jinx) will be continually frustrated and doubt her own instincts in the face of adult self confidence.

All the characters are wonderfully eccentric and distinct; from the adults who are acting with tunnel vision narrowness to Chantel's new and old friends, who each prove to be a unique resource in some way. Not everyone has Chantel's boldness and certainly many find it easier to just do as the adults say since 'they should know best, after all.' But then again, Chantel isn't acting recklessly or blindly and does try to balance the advice given by others with that she feels instinctively. It doesn't always put her in the best situations and certainly the adults manage to frustrate her quite a bit.

Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded isn't a Lampoon of modern society but does create an interesting window that is almost prescient considering it was written pre-Trump. It is also an incredibly fun and quick read well worth the time investment by both kids and adults. Interestingly enough, I can't help but wonder if this book will become its own classic as a window on the America of 2017: walls to keep out neighbors, obsession over capitalism and taxes, and the return of conservative values and their implications for girls/women. Highly recommended. Reviewed from an advance reader copy provided by the publisher.

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