



Midnight for Charlie Bone

Jenny Nimmo

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A magical fantasy that is fast-paced and easy-to-read. Charlie Bone has a special gift- he can hear people in photographs talking!

The fabulous powers of the Red King were passed down through his descendants, after turning up quite unexpectedly, in someone who had no idea where they came from. This is what happened to Charlie Bone, and to some of the children he met behind the grim, gray walls of Bloor's Academy.

His scheming aunts decide to send him to Bloor Academy, a school for geniuses where he uses his gifts to discover the truth despite all the dangers that lie ahead.

Midnight for Charlie Bone Details

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From Reader Review **Midnight for Charlie Bone** for online ebook

Sam Whitehouse says

The comparisons to Harry Potter are inevitable, and sometimes Nimmo steps dangerously close to plagiarism. A young boy discovers he has powers and ends up in a old school that teaches him to develop these powers. Sound familiar yet? If not there is an evil teacher, a nefarious plot and a dark forest. Harry Potter may be all over this book, but it has to be said that Charlie Bone does have some originality. His powers aren't necessarily magic - he can listen to what the subjects in photographs are saying, and the school is definitely not Hogwarts.

This is a middle grade book, and its clear in the writing. The style is relatively simplistic, but that doesn't stop this from being an enjoyable read. The brisk writing style makes for an equally brisk pace and there is plenty of adventure and action along the way to stop this from being a boring re-tread of Potter. The characters aren't all that interesting, though Charlie Bones ties to the school and his past offer intriguing set up for future books.

It's lack of originality stops this from getting any higher than three stars, but i did enjoy it and it's great for middle grade readers who enjoyed Potter and are looking for another world to explore.

Recommended, but not a must-read.

Debbie says

Well, I don't have the latest one, but I just finished books 1-5. Lots of similarities with Harry Potter, but this series is targeted toward readers who are a bit younger. Charlie Bone is a young boy who discovers that he can hear pictures talking. Once his aunts discover his talent, they send him to Bloor's Academy, a creepy private school where he will study with kids who are rich and/or gifted in music, art, or drama and/or endowed with magical talents. Each book tends to focus on someone who has been held hostage by the evil members of the Bloor or Yewbeam families. Charlie and the good endowed children rescue various victims from the bad endowed children.

The Books:

Midnight for Charlie Bone

Charlie Bone and the Time Twister

Charlie Bone and the Invisible Boy

Charlie Bone and the Castle of Mirrors

Charlie Bone and the Hidden King

Charlie Bone and the Beast

There are some good moments. Charlie is an interesting character and I absolutely love the flame cats. There are some truly funny moments in the animal cafe. On the whole, this is a better series for younger readers than Harry Potter--not as scary. Recommended for younger readers or readers who are looking for something

like Harry Potter, but lighter.

Madeleine Montuna says

Once again I return to you with another comparison to Harry Potter. I recently read the book *Midnight for Charlie Bone* by Jenny Nimmo. Before I read this book most people told me it was just like Harry Potter, but I hate to disappoint once again this is nothing like Harry Potter. There might be some similar things, but let's clear the table this is a different story and just as good. *Midnight For Charlie Bone* is a very compelling story that keeps you longing for more. The book starts out with a Prologue that gives you a brief history of The Red King, it then starts with Charlie's dilemma over getting the wrong photograph and hearing what people are saying in pictures. This picture leads to a chain of events which include three cats called Sagittarius, Leo, and Aries, who belonged to The Red King about 950 years ago. Charlie was just a normal boy but from an endowed family basically families that have powers. Charlie Bone is one of the descendants of the Red King. Charlie has inherited one of the king's powers where he can hear voices in photos. He is sent to a school that endowed children with powers have to go to or students that are just geniuses in the area of art or music. Bloor's is not an ordinary school. Many strange things happen there and Charlie Bone is trying to figure out what they are. Not only are there strange things going on these things are very evil. All around Charlie there is evil but in his hero journey he has found very reliable friends to help him.

Charlie a bit like Harry feels that it is his duty to help solve all the bad things that are happening at the Bloor's academy. The picture he found was a picture of a baby that was stolen by the Bliers. They hypnotized the girl and her family to not remember her past. The girl's biological aunt had been searching for the baby girl for years. When Charlie and his friends find out that the girl is someone at the academy, the search is on! But the girl has no idea of her past, so the small team must figure out which student it is, how to bring back her memory, and help her escape her cruel guardians who want to use her powers for evil. As Charlie goes on his quest he has to dodge his evil great aunts and his evil grandmother. While solving the mystery of the missing girl he has stumbled on very interesting facts based on the supposed death of his father.

I really loved this book. Number one reason why I love this book was because of my little cousin who is eight. He loves Harry Potter as do I. I let him read the first 3 Harry Potters but once Harry started getting older and the plot became darker, I felt like it was not age appropriate, yet. I had a really hard time getting my little cousin into another book series until I stumbled on this series. As great as Harry Potter is the older books might not be age appropriate for younger children. Not only age appropriate but those books get pretty big and it might be a hard read for little kids. So I loved this book because it was a great read plus younger kids like my little cousin could enjoy it. It is about the size of the first Harry Potter so we read it together. The main character of the Charlie is a very loveable character. He sort of reminds you of a young Harry Potter. He is very courageous but more relate-able than Harry Potter. When I read about Harry even though he is scared, you as the reader would get the feeling that he can accomplish anything. I mean from the beginning you got the feeling that Harry is destined for greatness and he always jump into trouble without looking back kind of like superman. You know like he is not afraid because he had a suit of armor of some sort. That alone from the beginning always made me feel that Harry was older than his real age. This book Charlie is ten and thought he is more courageous than I was at ten years old he still acts like a ten year old. For instance when it was midnight he ask his uncle to accompany him outdoors. That's something a ten year old would do, but you know if it was Harry he would just head out, maybe bring Ron. What can Ron do. Basically the thing is Charlie has a lot of courage for a ten year old but it is not as exaggerated as Harry's courage. He says things like I'm scared. Which just makes you scared for him. Charlie is a cute hero, that you want to hug and keep from danger.

I couldn't help but compare this book to the Harry Potter series, as it has many of the same elements like children with supernatural abilities going to a special private school. You can see the beginnings of the children (as well as others) taking sides, good vs. evil style. This is the comparison ends. Do not be fooled by the legion of people crying that it's copying Harry Potter, much more it is simply a book about a boy going to a magic school. Using prose similar to Lemony Snicket and Diana Wynne Jones, this is a cunning, twitchy tale, full of breathtaking characters and unusual settings. Another thing that I liked was that all "endowed" children have powers, but they aren't taught spells they just have to discover what their powers are and nurture it. After that they learned normal things that kids would learn in a really tough boarding school. The vast array of already presented characters and their very different powers sets this book apart from the Potter series.. Though I might say the author of the book is not quite at J.K. Rowling's level(J.K. is a geniuuussss!) the book was very good. If you can learn to accept the book and love it for what it is you will love this book. Some people might get annoyed by some of the Harry Potter similarities but understand she is not copying Harry Potter, some things that are mentioned in both books are normal in England J.K. Rowling did not invent those things. For instance someone told me there were prefects in this book so that means that she copied Harry Potter, but Prefects are just a normal thing in boarding schools in England. Harry Potter is just a great book probably the highest of its genre. So people are going to compare lots of books in the same genre to it but most of those books are different.

I would recommend this book to anyone. *Midnight for Charlie Bone* stands out on its own, and is a very worthy read. Sometimes I think readers forget that though we are all critics, but it is still okay to enjoy what you are reading, even if it is a kids' book. I don't think there is an age limit for good literature, and what makes a book good is the desire for a reader to want to finish what is being read because the book presents elements of intrigue that keep that book in your hands up until completion. This book actually pulls you right in the story and you get a very clear picture in your mind. It creates lots of suspense. It has a range of adjectives, nouns, connectives, openers, and vocabulary. I found Charlie to be a wonderful role model and a sweet boy who trusts people, counts on his friends, is kind, thoughtful, and respectful. That being said, he is still independent, brave, makes good choices, and stands up for what is right. The plot lines do not have a lot of twists, which I find helpful for young readers. I loved this book a lot. I'm always trying to find books to occupy my time since I love to read. I can see myself reading the other 7 books in 2 weeks, that's how good I think they will be. My only criticism is that the ending feels a bit rushed and things fall in to place a little too neatly. I still loved the book.

Karen Field says

First off, I have to admit that I bought these books because I thought (maybe I saw this on the internet somewhere, I'm not sure) that the story was similar to the Harry Potter books.

Yes, there is an 11 year old boy who has a magical "ability". Yes, there is a special school for children with these abilities. Apart from that, the story is quite different. I had to push the Harry Potter thought out of my head and start thinking Charlie Bone, because wherever I got that idea...I was wrong...and it was wrong of me to continue reading with that thought in my head.

This was a slightly longer children's book than normal, but it drew me in and captivated me from the beginning. I loved the characters and the setting. Although I never worked out when the story took place, it didn't matter. It felt "up-to-date" and that was enough for me.

Reading this book showed the writer in me that whilst characters need to learn and grow throughout a story, their problems don't have to be resolved completely.

As I mentioned before, *Midnight for Charlie Bone* is the first book in a series. Although the immediate problem in the story was solved and the author gave the impression that everything was fine for the characters, it was quite obvious that it wasn't and the very last line of the story confirmed this. However, I didn't feel cheated and I don't feel as if I have to read the next book (although I will, because I've already got it).

Recommendation: A definite "yes". Read this book.

Jay Kennedy says

Now first let me get this out of the way. A lot of people think Charlie Bone is a downright rip-off of Harry Potter. I'm here to tell you that No, it is not. In fact it is very different. YES it does have a character who finds out he has a magical ability, and YES he gets sent to a school/academy where other children have these magical powers (although the majority of the children at the school don't have powers, and the powers don't involve wands and brooms). That's about all that is similar to Harry Potter in this series, and I find it sad how people won't give this series a try because of that. A "magical school" shouldn't be left only for Harry Potter, I believe it can be used in many different ways so that the idea never feels the same. And this is coming from a Harry Potter fan.

Anyway... on with the review shall we?

Charlie Bone is a story about a young boy who discovers he is "endowed", meaning, has a magical power, and can hear people in photographs. He is then forced by his grandma to go to Bloor's Academy, a school for endowed children, as well as children who are just very smart. The children at the academy are split into three groups with their own color, judging by their endowed power or prodigy; blue for the musical, purple for the drama group, and green for the art group. All the children must wear a cape with the color of their group. Charlie Bone is set into the music group, although his power doesn't have to do with music but he has no other talent, so screw it, he's put in the music group. This academy does not seem similar to Hogwarts at all to me, as all the classes are basically normal such as English, math, music etc. The academy is run by the evil Bloor's family, and it's obvious they are keeping something secret from everyone. And of course, it is Charlie's job (as well as his friends and a family member) to reveal what the Bloor family is hiding.

That's the basic storyline, without getting into spoilers, so now let's talk about if this book is good or not. It is obvious this book is for a young age, It even seems less dark and more basic than Harry Potter, So I would say it is a great book to start younger kids on. However, I believe this book can be enjoyed by any age, as I am 18 years old and I still thoroughly enjoyed my time reading Charlie Bone. Although I do feel that I would have liked it A LOT more if I was younger. When I started reading this book I knew what to expect, and I was in a 'mood' to read a easy and quick adventure fantasy novel. This book gave me exactly what I wanted, a cute, fast read, that took me on an adventure.

I don't have all praise for this book, there is still a lot of things that could have been improved on. Let's start with the characters. The personalities for the characters were pretty basic and I found that I didn't really enjoy them that much and at times they seemed to lack emotion. Besides Charlie's uncle Paton. Uncle Paton is the best. I was already sort of expecting basic character design though, because this is a book that's leaned towards a young audience, but I still think it could have been better. The writing style was pretty good, although at times it switched character in the next paragraph and I feel it would have been better to make a pause in between switching characters by adding a line/sub-chapter type of thing. I'm not sure what it was about this book (maybe because it was a very easy read) but I found that I could picture every scene perfectly in my mind while I read, so I mean, that's good. The overall plot was good, but at times it seemed to be lacking, and I wish there was more fast paced adventure in between.

With its flaws I still thoroughly enjoyed *Midnight For Charlie Bone*, and I will be continuing the series. I

totally recommend Charlie Bone to any parent who would like to introduce their child to a new book, or just to anyone of any age who wants to read a quick, light-hearted (yet still somewhat dark) story. This book is not at all as good as Harry Potter, but it's still a great adventure

Madysen says

“Almost as good as Harry Potter!” This was the line I was repeatedly hearing on the internet about the so-called amazing Charlie Bone. Being a Harry Potter fan (actually, I rather hate the writing style but love the story) I quickly drove to my poorly stocked library and picked up the first book of the series. Never in my life since the Inheritance Trilogy have I been so disappointed by a book that may have had potential.

I have only a few things to comment on, the first being Jenny Nimmo’s writing style. Yes, I understand that this is a fantasy written for children younger than I am (I’m sixteen, by the way). But honestly, this gives her no excuse to write in the way that she does. What is it, exactly, that I am referring to? Simple—and believe me when I say that “simple” is the right word to use in this situation. Nimmo never gives her characters a chance to express themselves, instead speaking in their place and telling the readers about their actions. Never does Charlie “clench his fists and stare ahead through narrowed eyes”. He is merely described as angry. There is no indication of what he does when he’s angry, how he reacts, or even what he is thinking (more often than not). It isn’t only Charlie, however; every character you come into contact with is practically a cardboard cut out with a narrator following him/her around to explain how they feel. Even young children like to experience the characters’ emotions along with them, and Nimmo seems to think that young equals stupid.

Along with this, the sentences she uses are awfully short and rather choppy as well. Yes, children are used to reading such things, but taking the content of the Charlie Bone books into account, the kids reading them are at least able to understand what sentence variety is. Meaning, of course, that they should be able to handle it. In my opinion, this book would have been much better had the author allowed her characters to speak for themselves, and if she’d varied her sentences to include compounds.

Now, I have two other things I would like to mention that—so far—I haven’t seen mentioned in other reviews. One would be the “hero” of the story, Charlie. Why is he the hero? If you take a closer look at the book, you will find that Charlie doesn’t actually do much of anything that would label him as such. Examples? Benjamin is the one keeping a look out for the Tolly Twelve Bells; Feldacio or whatever his name is, is the one who looked after it as well; Gabriel Silk is the one who helped unveil the fact that Charlie’s dad was alive; and Tancred and Lysander are the ones who rescued him from the ruins. Yet in the book’s end, Emma thanks Charlie above everyone else despite all of this. (Oh, there is more that his friends do, but I can’t quite remember what.) It seems to me that Nimmo was sort of desperate to create a hero for her story and give him credit whether he did anything or not. I don’t think it’s fair to praise a character that hasn’t done anything other than get lost in the ruins. And I still don’t see how this makes him special.

Lastly, I must complain about the school, Boor’s Academy, because there’s something I don’t get. What exactly is this school doing to further the endowed children’s usage of their abilities? I mean, the only thing they do that is set apart from the normal arts students is do their homework in a different room. That’s it. They never undergo any training, they never study about the Red King, they never do much of anything that actually concerns their endowments! So what’s the point of sending them to Bloor’s in the first place? They could have gone to any other school and been subjected to the same treatment. I’m sorry to say this, but it

truly looks as if the author just wanted to create a “special boarding school” like Hogwarts for the sake of making her story more interesting. We never really learn too much about Bloor’s, anyway, so I believe there is really no point in having the school there at all (except as a means of meeting new people, of course).

Well, that’s all I really have to say for now. I’ve only gotten to the third book, but only because I skipped the second. I can’t stand the writing enough to make it through. Sad, though, because this story definitely had the potential to be great.

Nicole says

This is a really fun book. It does have some similarities to Harry Potter with the magical aspects and it being set in, I believe, England. However, there are more non-magical people in these books and the school is run by bad people, so it’s not necessarily a good place to be. My 9-year-old daughter started reading this at school, so I thought I’d read them too to see what they’re about. I read this first book in about 3 days, very fast read. It’s an enjoyable story, though I figured a few things out from the clues in the story. I think those would be easier for an adult to pick out than a younger kid. I think these books will be a good starter point and stepping stone before my daughter starts the Harry Potter books.

Lucy Banks says

Here's a review from my seven year old son - as he's the one who read it!

"I liked Midnight For Charlie Bone because it was exciting and there were loads of secrets. At the end, it's nice when you find out what the secrets are. I liked the characters because they are very different. Olivia Vertigo was my favourite because she was weird! I didn't like that it didn't tell you what was in the ruin, because I wanted to know.

Jill Williamson says

Review by Jill Williamson

Charlie bone had a special picture blown up for his best friend’s birthday present. His mom picks it up from Kwik Foto, but when Charlie opens up the package, it’s not his order. He stares at the photo of a man holding a baby, mesmerized. Then a conversation floods his mind. He can hear a woman and a man talking about the baby. Charlie convinces himself that he imagined it, but Grandma Bone has her own theory.

His grandma enrolls him at Bloor’s Academy, a school for gifted children. She thinks that Charlie is endowed with special abilities. Charlie doesn’t want to go to any special school. But since Grandma Bone supports him and his mother, he doesn’t have a choice. Life at Bloor’s is different, and soon Charlie discovers that there are other students in his class who have equally mysterious powers.

The people in the photo and a mysterious gift set Charlie hot on the trail to solve a mystery of a missing girl. Can Charlie find her at his school? And what other secrets might the Bloor's hiding? Could any of them have to do with Charlie's past?

This series has some parallels to Harry Potter. A British author. A magically gifted boy away at boarding school. Some kids are good, some are bad. Charlie has wicked relatives. But these students aren't studying magic. They are born with their endowments which are anything and everything including: shape shifting, mind reading, controlling the weather, speaking to animals, and flying. I found the book fun. It was a little predictable, but entertaining. The characters are amusing and real, sometimes choosing to do what's right, sometimes not. There is no strong element of faith, but the story is clean and the plot centers on righting a wrong. I recommend this for younger readers who love fantasy.

Furrawn says

I read the first three books in this series years ago. There are quite a few more now so I'm rereading the books I have already read first.

The Red King. Yewbeams. Three evil sisters. Children with magical powers including hypnotism, hearing conversations in photographs, and flying. Three magical fiery cats. One yellow. One orange. One red.

A school. Part evil. Part good.

Onward to book two...

Kathie H says

This book was exponentially better than any of the J. K. Rowling Harry Potter books. It's obvious that Jenny Nimmo based her plot outline on the first Harry Potter book, but who cares? J. K. Rowling summarily lifted the plot & most of the goings-on in "Sorcerer's Stone" from the book "Mary Poppins" by P. L. Travers, & Rowling has never even received a slap on the wrist in any court of law for her outright plagiarism. I think there are probably many new things under the sun, but no one in the 21st century has the guts to put it out there because they're too busy falling back on the tried-and-true million-copy-selling ideas.

Ms. Nimmo's first book in the Charlie Bone series is much more appropriate for young people than any of the Rowling books that are put out there as "for children" (which they most certainly are not). It was entertaining, not too heavy & dark, & charmed me with the character of Runner Bean, the little loyal doggie. Guardian-angelic cats named after the Zodiac are another endearing device the author used.

Susan says

The trouble with Charlie Bone is he's much more like Charlie Bucket than Harry Potter and let's be honest-- Jenny Nimmo is enthusiastically trying to channel some of Rowling's magic, so this is a bit of a problem. As I've said before, the heroes of these series tend to fall into two camps: the Horatio Alger throwback

(orphan/survivor with grit who eventually is rewarded for his selfless acts) and the preternaturally mature and intelligent youngster who makes the adults around him look like bumbling morons. Even though he is not an orphan, Charlie Bone falls unmistakably in the former category. His father is gone. His family is dysfunctional. It's likely he's getting lunch money stolen from him at lunch on a fairly regular basis. He discovers a magical predisposition and ends up getting packed off to a school for similarly gifted kids. Sound familiar?

Unfortunately, Charlie never feels as fully fleshed-out as the boy he was undoubtedly modeled after. The characters feel gimmicky and not particularly relatable. Charlie's primary magical talent is somewhat interesting, but he doesn't get to use it to much purpose in the course of the book. Of the many Harry Potter wannabes out there, there are some that are at least entertaining if not particularly original. This series unfortunately, just feels like a watered down replica.

Ursula says

If I was rating this book as though adults were the audience, it'd likely warrant 3 stars. But this book isn't written for adults.

I would recommend this book to 10 -13 year olds. Keeping in mind that age range, it isn't a bad read.

There are flaws. Characters are either good guys or bad guys. Overall, the book is VERY derivative of Harry Potter in a manner that is almost laughable.

But ignoring that and keeping in mind the intended age-group, it is a fun and exciting adventure.

Amanda says

So, some might argue with the shelves I chose for this book, particularly the POC-main-character shelf. Here's the thing: Charlie is, in the context of this story, a descendent of the Red King. The Red King came from Africa. Yes, the Red King could have come from a section of Africa that was colonized by a European nation. But he could also have come from a number of other areas in Africa. Nimmo also chooses to focus on Charlie's hair a number of times- she often mentions that it has a coarse texture. The cover is a bit ambiguous, since the illustration is clearly set at night. (However, if the cover depicted a White boy, it wouldn't be the first time a Black character was white-washed on the cover of a novel). So that's the reasoning behind my decisions to put this on the POC-main-character shelf. Maybe the sequel can shed some light on his ethnicity for me.

Now, for the plot: Maybe it is the ELA teacher in me, but as I read I couldn't help myself from mapping out the plot as I read. The exposition was obviously easy to pick out. As I read, I found myself prediction what part would be the climax of the story, and what the resolution would be. I was pleasantly surprised. (view spoiler)

I love that Charlie has Benjamin as a friend, and I love how loyal Charlie is toward Benjamin and his dog, Runner Bean. Also: a dog named Runner Bean- what a fantastic little detail to include in a story! I think that having poor, lonely Benjamin in the story really opens up the audience- many readers can relate to either having a friend such as Benjamin, whose parents are frequently away working, or they can relate directly to

Benjamin.

As I read, I made many connections to the Harry Potter series, as well as Dianna Wynne Jones' *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*. We have a young boy who discovers a strange power. He is whisked away to a strange school, where he is expected to hone his skills. However, the rules of this school are foreign and make life very difficult, as do the plethora of strange and interesting students. However, in all cases, our main character makes it through their first year.

...I am still waiting for a YA magical series that passes the Bechdel test though....

Jana says

Mein Favorit aus der Kindheit (neben Harry Potter natürlich?).

Dana says

I can't believe I haven't reviewed Charlie Bone yet! Growing up, I loved Charlie Bone ever so slightly more than Harry Potter. There are so many characters to fall in love with and it's such a fantastic story. I hunted down all 8 volumes and while they're all different editions, they no longer print them so it's what I have to make do with.

If you have a kid slightly too young for Harry Potter (the later books are rather dark and violent), then this is always the first series I recommend.

Quinn says

I got less than half-way through this book and had to put it down.

How this came to be a successful series I don't know. The writing is god awful, the story as unoriginal as you can get, and the characters are all *unbelievably* dense.

Carina says

Der beste re-read, den ich seit der Edelsteintrilogie hatte! Das Buch hat mich noch immer so verzaubert wie damals, mit 9. Allerdings hatte ich nahezu alle Szenen und die Welt noch sehr genau im Kopf. Werde dieses Universum auf ewig im Herzen tragen. <3

Karyn The Pirate says

Charlie Bone has grown up knowing that his family is a little, okay a lot, different than most. Little does he

know that his family are descendants of the Red King and that he has passed down his powers to them. Now Charlie Bone has discovered an unusual gift-he can hear people in photographs talking! His scheming aunts decide to send him to Bloor Academy, a school for genius's where he uses his gifts to discover the truth despite all the dangers that lie ahead.

I really liked this book. I think the lack of deadly violence was the part I liked the most. I got very tired of having people die in the Harry Potter series. In this series, they don't die - they are found. I also like the way each character has a different endowment. This makes it interesting to see how their particular endowment works for and against the other characters.

Chak says

My eight year old son is currently reading this and absolutely loving it, reading it every chance he gets and proclaiming how good it is after every session of reading. My husband and I have been reading Harry Potter to him at night, and he is very enthusiastically following that story. Charlie Bone books are very VERY similar to Harry Potter, but for a younger audience, and *Midnight for Charlie Bone* is the perfect book for him to read on his own and still get his "troubled boy discovers his magical powers" fix. I think the suggested age on this book (according to Amazon, anyway) is 4th - 6th grades.

My son talked me into reading this with him. Now that I'm done with it, I can see how he is fascinated by it. The story is good (not great, but good), the characters are semi-interesting (though a little hollow), and the struggles are just a bit too easily won. Charlie himself is a fairly passive figure, even though it seems like a lot happens to him, but he decides more than he does, if that makes any sense. I would strongly recommend this as a pre-cursor to Harry Potter, to get children used to reading longer books and the basic idea of both: a child being mildly abused by the grown-ups (and a few of the kids) around him, finding a heretofore unknown sort of magic (both in the world, and within himself), and then emerging triumphant over the vast majority of the adversity (but saving a bit of it for future volumes). For adults, it's not a very fulfilling read, but don't get me wrong - I'm thrilled with it because it keeps my son reading!
