

Popularity: ★★★★★☆

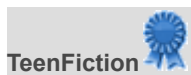
[Table of Contents](#)



## The last dragonslayer (Oct 2012)

Review: EBSCONovelist

Author: [Fforde, Jasper](#)



Series: [Chronicles of Kazam, 1](#)

**Description:** Fifteen-year-old Jennifer Strange runs Kazam, an employment agency for soothsayers and sorcerers. Trouble starts when Jennifer has a vision that predicts **the** death of **the last** dragon at **the** hands of a **dragonslayer**.

**Genre:** Fantasy fiction

**Themes:** Magic goes away; Slaying **the** dragon

**Storyline:**Plot-driven; World-building

**Tone:**Whimsical

**Writing Style:**Engaging

**Min/Max Grade level:**4 - 7

**Lexile:** 850 **Accelerated Reader:** IL: MG+, BL: 5.8, AR Pts: 9

**Persistent link to this record (Permalink):**

## Reviews

(selected)

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## Booklist:

Grades 7-10 Readers yearning for more of Terry Pratchett's brand of smart silliness need look no further than best-selling author Fforde's first book for teens. In this start to the Chronicles of Kazam series, magic has been steadily weakening for years in the Ununited Kingdom. Once sorcerers had the ear of the king, but now the best they can do is levitate a carpet just enough to deliver pizza. Fifteen-year-old foundling Jennifer Strange has run Kazam Mystic Arts Management ever since her beloved boss, the Great Zambini, disappeared. It's been tough to keep the part employment agency, part enchanter retirement home running. Then magicians start seeing visions of the death of the last dragon, and to her astonishment, Jennifer learns that she is the last dragonslayer. Her duty, though, is anything but clear. Fforde takes broad shots at corporate greed and TV news, mixing Jennifer's just-the-facts-ma'am style with the absurd, and the result is thoroughly entertaining. Quirky secondary characters are nicely drawn, and Fforde never takes himself too seriously, so readers will easily sit back and enjoy the fun. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: This first foray into YA lit from the author of the best-selling Thursday Next mysteries and the Nursery Crime series is likely to draw plenty of attention, helped along by a multipronged marketing campaign. -- Rutan, Lynn (Reviewed 08-01-2012) (Booklist, vol 108, number 22, p73)

## School Library Journal:

*/\* Starred Review \*/* Gr 4 – 7 — Orphaned Jennifer Strange, 15, is the manager of Kazam Mystical Arts Management, an organization that promotes the use of magic by its resident sorcerers, a quirky bunch at best. Within the course of one week, Jennifer becomes famous when she is named the Last Dragonslayer, and her already unusual life becomes one of danger, deceit, and dragons. She is called upon to kill the last dragon in the land and war threatens to break out as countries surrounding the Dragonlands vie for control of its vast and rich lands. Jennifer doesn't want to kill the dragon, but her duty and destiny are clear. Or are they? Mixing

modern sensibilities, magic, and mayhem, Fforde has written an entertaining story that will appeal to lovers of magic and magical beings. Humor abounds, but so does heart, as readers are introduced to a heroine who is practical, smart, and true. More wacky adventures are promised in the next book in the series. Kathy Kirchoefer, Prince Georges County Memorial Library System, New Carrollton, MD --Kathy Kirchoefer (Reviewed November 1, 2012) (School Library Journal, vol 58, issue 11, p104)

### **Publishers Weekly:**

*/\* Starred Review \*/* Adult author Fforde's foray into children's books will delight readers who like their fantasy with a dash of silliness. Since the Great Zambini disappeared six months earlier, the job of running Kazam Mystical Arts Management has fallen to Jennifer Strange, a foundling two weeks shy of 16, but sensible beyond her years. Kazam is part boardinghouse, part employment agency for wizards and magicians whose talents are on the decline—a high maintenance bunch. Jennifer has just begun her mentorship of another foundling, Horton "Tiger" Prawns, when she learns she is the Last Dragonslayer (capitalized to differentiate from merely the previous dragonslayer) and that the last dragon on Earth, Maltcassion, is prophesied to die at her hand on Sunday noon. Comedic chaos ensues—the news of Maltcassion's imminent death paves the way for a major land grab. There's a lot of setup for later books in Fforde's Chronicles of Kazam, but it's so inventive and charming that readers will happily stick with it (though the tragic death of a major character will hit some of them hard) and be impatient for the next episode. Ages 12–up. (Oct.) --Staff (Reviewed August 27, 2012) (Publishers Weekly, vol 259, issue 35, p)

### **Kirkus:**

Finally, the first in Fforde's fantasy trilogy for young readers, published in the U.K. in 2010, makes it to this side of the pond. In the Ununited Kingdoms (whose names and political inclinations presumably hold more meaning than their United counterparts), (nearly) 16-year-old foundling Jennifer Strange (think indentured servant with pluck) has taken over running Kazam, one of the last Houses of Enchantment. She shepherds once-powerful wizards through pizza delivery and rewiring homes in Hereford, a kingdom bordering the last Dragonland. When the last dragon's death is foretold, Jennifer finds herself smack in the center of political maneuvering and foundering in massive tides of greed. Jennifer never comes across as adolescent or real; instead, her knowledge of her world and her even-toned narrative (even of high-intensity scenes) seem downright authorial. Too much of the novel is comprised of comic bits strung together with first-person exposition, and laughs fall flat when they depend on British slang, as with know-it-all William of Anorak. The obvious and clearly broadcast message ("Greed is all powerful; greed conquers all," tempered by Jennifer's innate goodness) further impedes the effect of the broad, sometimes ingenious humor. The second volume may fare better as it promises to highlight the aging, odd wizards and world rather than the less-than-sparkling Jennifer. Mostly for Fforde's fans, although fantasy readers with a taste for the silly should appreciate the subverted tropes. (Fantasy. 12 & up)(Kirkus Reviews, September 15, 2012)

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Fantasy fiction

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### Writing Style

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### Theme

Magic goes away

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### Subject

Abandoned children

Dragons

Employment agencies

Fifteen-year-old girls

Magic

Teenage girls

Visions

Wizards

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