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Upside-down magic (Sep 2015)

Review: EBSCONovelist

Author: Mlynowski, Sarah

Ages 9-12 Fiction

Series: [Upside-down magic, 1](#)

Description: With their **magic** being unpredictable, Nory, Elliott, Andres, and Bax are sent to the **upside-down magic** room at Dunwiddle **Magic** School.

Genre: Fantasy fiction

Themes: Academies of **magic**

Character: Likeable; Sympathetic

Writing Style: Attention-grabbing; Well-crafted dialogue

Min/Max Grade level: 4 - 6

Lexile: 500 Accelerated Reader: IL: MG, BL: 3.7, AR Pts: 4

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School Library Journal:

Gr 4 – 6 — Nory's father is the headmaster of an elite magic academy, but if Nory wants to enter fifth grade there in the fall, she'll have to get her "wonky" magic under control. She's a Fluxer, which means she can turn into an animal—but not an ordinary animal like a kitten. Unfortunately, Nory always turns herself into odd animal combos like a kitten and a beaver or a kitten and a dragon, and she has a hard time controlling herself in her animal form. When Nory fails Sage Academy's Big Test, she's sent to live with her aunt and attend a public school that has just started an Upside -Down Magic Class. Even though Aunt Margo is kind and her teacher, Ms. Starr, is supportive, Nory's magic mishaps alienate her classmates. When she is given the opportunity to train herself to keep her magic in "The Box of Normal," she must decide once and for all where she belongs. Readers will enjoy the details of Nory's magical world and empathize with her struggle. VERDICT The story is engaging enough to appeal to reluctant readers, and Nory's equally entertaining classmates make it likely that sequels will ensue. Count on plenty of publicity and the multiple (and well-known) authors to drive interest in this title.—Laurie Slagenwhite Walters, Brighton District Library, Brighton, MI --Laurie Slagenwhite Walters (Reviewed September 1, 2015) (School Library Journal, vol 61, issue 9, p142)

Publishers Weekly:

The writers behind *How to Be Bad* (2008) aim for a younger audience in this entertaining story about magical powers gone humorously awry. Ten-year-old Nory is mortified when she bungles her interview at the posh magical academy where her father is

headmaster; attempting to morph into a kitten, she instead turns into a sequence of outrageous hybrid animals, including a "dritten" (dragon-kitten). She is shipped off to live with her wonderfully kooky Aunt Margo (who works as a flying taxi, zipping passengers around on her back) and enrolls in an "Upside -Down Magic " program. Nory's fear that her classmates will be "the worst of the wonky" is delightfully realized. Magical shenanigans abound as the story celebrates individuality, self-acceptance, and tolerance, encapsulated in Aunt Margo's advice: "Just be who you are, not who you think you should be." Featuring short chapters and lively, funny dialogue, this novel should please kids who don't naturally find reading to be magical, as well as those who do. Ages 8–12. Agent: (for Mlynowski) Laura Dail, Laura Dail Literary Agency; (for Myracle) Barry Goldblatt, Barry Goldblatt Literary; (for Jenkins) Elizabeth Kaplan, Elizabeth Kaplan Agency. (Sept.) --Staff (Reviewed June 15, 2015) (Publishers Weekly, vol 262, issue 24, p)

Kirkus:

In a society where everyone has a neatly defined magical talent, Nory is a misfit. There are Flares, Fuzzies, Flickers, and Flyers, each having particular skills. Nory is a Fluxer, able to transform herself into an animal. But her magic is wonky. Her kitten mixes with a beaver or a dragon, and she has no control over it. When she fails the entrance exam for her father's school, Nory feels that she is a complete failure. Her father sends her to live with her aunt to attend a school that has an experimental class for students whose magic doesn't fit the prescribed methods. Her aunt is welcoming, accepting, and loving. With the guidance of her very wise teacher, Nory makes friends with other children who are dealing with all sorts of uncontrolled magic . After many false starts and a brave adventure, she learns to embrace her out-of-the-norm gifts. The authors nicely balance interesting and original magic elements with family and middle school dynamics. Likable Nory is prickly, needy, and determined as she rebounds from every disappointment, but her relationship with her father is a constant source of pain that is never resolved. The narrative voice is not omniscient, never reaching beyond 10-year-old Nory's emotional understanding. Readers will

recognize much that is familiar and appealing in this alternate universe. (Fantasy. 8-12) (Kirkus Reviews, July 15, 2015)

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Genre

Fantasy fiction

Writing Style

Attention-grabbing

Well-crafted dialogue

Theme

Academies of magic

Subject

Child misfits

Girls

Horace, Nory (Fictitious character)

Individuality

Magic

Multiracial children

Schools

Shapeshifting

Ten-year-old girls

Character

Likeable

Sympathetic

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