



# Hollow Earth

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[Rebecca Butler](#) [3]

Not a Choice:

off

BfK Rating:

4

Emily and Matthew Calder are twelve-year-old twins. They live with their mother Sandie in a flat in London, though as the reader soon becomes aware, their London exists in a universe parallel to yours and mine. Sandie works at the National Gallery on an art project that her children know little about. But they are both very gifted at drawing and can make their drawings come to life and transport themselves into the pictures. In their world, people are classified as animaires (creators) or guardians, whose job is to look after the creators. The children's parents broke a rule. Their mother is a creator and their absent father is a guardian ? they were not supposed to breed. The twins have the abilities of both animaires and guardians, a unique phenomenon.

Another group of people have created an infernal zone named Hollow Earth, where reside all the mythical monsters of humanity's past myths. The plan of the Hollow Earth is to unleash these monsters on the planet and take control. Though Emily and Matthew know little about their absent father, the reader learns that he had sympathy for the Hollow Earth movement.

It is tempting to regard this book as an allegory, depicting a real-world struggle between forces of good and evil. John Barrowman's status as an actor in **Doctor Who** and **Torchwood** might lend plausibility to such an interpretation but it would be mistaken. Rather we should see the book as a *bildungsroman* taking its travellers across fantastic terrain, encouraging the reader to examine her own capabilities and choices at crucial points of decision.

The narrative sets and maintains a lively pace. Unsurprisingly in view of John Barrowman's career experience, it seems designed to be made at some stage into a movie. It was also a pleasure, among others, to encounter a disabled character (Zach, profoundly deaf) who is presented in a realistic and balanced manner.

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