The Worst Witch and the Wishing Star

Books Reviewed:
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Editors Choice:
off

BfK Rating:
4

It's the beginning of the Winter term at Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches. Accident-prone Mildred and her classmates are now in Year 4 and regarded as senior, a status that confers certain privileges like arriving at school on a broomstick but also, responsibilities. The first day of term flies by, what with the announcement of a talent competition, the greeting of form teachers and the allocation of pupil duties. To her dismay, Mildred is made Lantern Monitor - as is arch-enemy Ethel - and is responsible for part of the school's lighting system. On the eve before starting her duty, she sees a shooting star and makes a wish. Amazingly, her wish is granted - in the form of a little dog in need of a home - with extraordinary consequences, both devastating and triumphant, that impact on her lantern rounds and, even, on the outcome of the talent contest.

The seventh book in a series that began almost forty years ago, this latest title retains the original magical appeal even though boarding-school stories of witches, wizards and broomstick rides are now commonplace. Skilfully constructed and well paced, it presents an essentially happy world shot through with moments of mayhem and laughter, in which realism and fantasy are cleverly balanced. Dialogue is natural and the characters convincing. Mildred remains an irresistible character, someone we would all like to be friends with, and her ability to attract trouble once again results in some very funny predicaments. As ever, sneaky Ethel is up to her nasty tricks, headmistress Miss Cackle is gentle and jolly, in sharp contrast to the formidable Miss Hardbroom, who, surprisingly, does soften somewhat at the end of this story. Highly entertaining, the book is sure to hold spellbound a new generation of young readers.

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