



The Magic City by Edith Nesbit, Fiction, Fantasy & Magic

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Day after day Philip goes on with his building, putting into it almost everything you can think of. He makes steps of the dominoes, and a terrace of the domino-box. He gets bits of wood from the garden to stick into cotton-reels, which make lovely pots -- and the results look like ornamental trees in tubs. Brass finger-bowls serve for domes -- and the lids of brass kettles and coffee-pots make minarets of dazzling splendour! It is a city -- a fabulous, exotic, miniature city! Just to look upon it seemed magical enough -- but even Philip had no clue just how magical it might turn out to be.

The Magic City by Edith Nesbit, Fiction, Fantasy & Magic Details

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From Reader Review *The Magic City* by Edith Nesbit, Fiction, Fantasy & Magic for online ebook

Jim Sibigtroth says

A well-written children's fantasy novel that holds up well even though it was written over a hundred years ago. There are a few terms that are no longer in use, but these do not cause any difficulties for the reader. I actually read the free ebook from www.gutenberg.org

The main character, Phillip, has grown up with a much older sister who is more of a mother to him than a sister. Eventually his sister grows into an adult and marries a childhood friend after the friend's wife has died. He has a daughter, Lucy, who is slightly younger than Phillip. Not surprisingly, Phillip secretly hates Lucy and her father because he feels they are stealing his beloved sister.

Phillip is sent to live at the estate of his new father with Lucy and the nurse and servants while the newlyweds honeymoon in Europe. Phillip is so disagreeable that Lucy is taken away for a brief vacation while Phillip is left with the nurse. Then the nurse is unexpectedly called away to meet her lost brother and Phillip is left alone with the servants.

Phillip builds an elaborate play city and begins to make friends with the servants. The nurse returns and is angry about the play city, sends Phillip to bed, and plans to tear down the city in the morning. Phillip sneaks down to the city to take a last look at it in the moonlight and becomes trapped in a magic world. He must complete a series of difficult tasks to escape back to the real world.

Jessica says

Adorable. We need to read everything else she wrote immediately.

Metaphorosis says

I read a fair amount of Edith Nesbit as a child, but hadn't run across this one. About a boy who magically enters a city he had built of odds and ends, this book is reliable, if unexciting Nesbit.

The story, and the substory about the boy making friends with his new step-sister, doesn't bring much that's new. But the magic of Nesbit's writing is in the light, good-natured feel of her writing, and that's present here in full force.

All in all, a nice, light-hearted story, and a fun, safe read for young children.

Julie Davis says

Featuring this now on the Forgotten Classics podcast.

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I've known for some time that C.S. Lewis loved E. Nesbit's children's stories. Recently I have come across a lot of varied authors upon whom Nesbit was an influence. And then I read Gore Vidal's essay about Nesbit as the best of English fabulists who wrote about children, but not *for* children (an important distinction, with his own endorsements).

As it is, the absence of imagination is cruelly noticeable at every level of the American society, and though a reading of E. Nesbit is hardly going to change the pattern of a nation, there is some evidence that the child who reads her will never be quite the same again, and that is probably a good thing.

I capitulated. I turned to LibriVox, because who doesn't love having children's stories read to them ... and found the golden-voiced Ruth Golding narrating *The Magic City*.

Early on, before the magic begins, one can see what attracted not only children but adults. In her clear-eyed unsentimentality about a child's point of view, coupled with humor, irony, and far-flung imagination, Nesbit captivates anyone who loves stories.

This one captured me from several real-life angles (the nurse's hard heart, Philip's anguish over his sister's marriage) and from the fantasy angle. Who doesn't like the idea that a fantastic city one has built can become real and one can have adventures there? The adventures are gripping. The real problems are those we can relate to. And it is an absolutely ripping yarn.

Mark Dewey says

This was a cool book. I liked the ideas in it, and the story was cool.

With the exception of *The Book of Dragons*, and her other short fiction, I think I prefer E. Nesbit's fantasy that has a grounding in the real world most. There's a reason for this, though. When she writes in pure fantasy mode, she tends to go faster and introduce more characters more quickly. The adult characters in her pure fantasy stories totally cater to the fantasy settings, as well, and often seem like a part of the child's imagination. The fantasy worlds seem this way, as well—and I guess from what happened, this makes complete sense. This isn't a bad thing necessarily, but it makes it harder for me to follow, and for some reason it doesn't hold my interest quite as much in some parts. I don't think it would be quite the same for a kid, though. Anyway, that aside, I can say I really liked the book. Don't let this dissuade you, though—I did really like the book (I just thought it was a little arduous of a listen).

Don't confuse this with *The Magic World*, by E. Nesbit—that book is a collection of short stories; this one is not. Speaking of short stories, E. Nesbit wrote a short story that is very similar to this novel. I forgot which one it was, but it doesn't quite surprise me. She does seem to revisit her ideas once in a while (i.e. compare *The Railroad Children* with *The Treasure Seekers*). At first, I wasn't so sure that I liked this tendency, but I think I appreciate it a lot more, now.

Violinknitter says

I couldn't wait! Had to find the book on Librivox & finish it. Nesbitt is always surprising & delightful.

Jennifer says

Such a fun book! I have loved it for years, & it has worked well as read-aloud for all 3 of my children at various ages. Can completely see the influence on C.S. Lewis.

May says

What a fantastic story! I was drawn in by relatable, real characters and enticed by the imaginative story line. Like the very best children's books, E. Nesbit helps us see within a fantasy what we are blind to seeing in every day life. Her descriptions are vivid and she masterfully embeds truth. Reminiscent of Narnia, there was nothing but enjoyment in being carried off to another world where we enact versions of ourselves that we wish we could be. Can't wait to read it to my own kids or nieces/nephews one day!

Ania says

E. Nesbit with a model of 'The Magic City'

This book was a true delight to read, and probably her best one so far in comparison to *The Enchanted Castle* and *The Railway Children*. I think if you are the sort of person who ever built a blanket fort and pretended it was real (even if it was a million years ago and you were only 5 then), you will definitely enjoy this story. If you aren't this type of person, I have a message for you: you are really boring :). Build one now and save your soul!!! hehehe

Sure there were some problematic ideas in the story. For one it was painfully obvious who the villain was (despite Nesbit's attempts to physically hide her face and hair). Sometimes things got silly too for no good reason, and I wish the deeds of valour performed by the hero of this story actually went up in level of difficulty, as they sort of varied and you didn't get the feeling that the stakes were getting higher, but rather, more random.

I also noticed that there are some reviewers who somehow couldn't understand Philip's pain and fixation on his elder sister (who's really his adopted mother). I found it puzzling. I mean it is quite obvious that the dear old Pip, as they call him, was extremely fixated on his 28 year old sister. But he was only 8. He lost his parents and only had her in all the world. I mean, they build an island only for the 2 of them. That tells you how they feel: it was always the 2 of them against the world. Then the sister goes off and gets married and runs off to Europe on a honeymoon. And no it's not like a honeymoon now. It was over 100 years ago. If one went to Europe, one really did GO.. for a long long time! And poor Pip got parked, alone into a strange house where everyone just shoved him from one place to another, not to mention the strange girl he got for a step-sister. We know from reading the book that little Lucy didn't even meet her new stepmother Helen till after they get back from Europe!!!! (bizarre! but it how it was then). Little Phillip never chose to have a new family, and was left all alone without his only family that he knew; so yes, he was missing his sister badly.

Anywho, I'm finishing the review of this *Magical City* (I can see how it inspired Narnia!) with a full photo of

the model, which although is in black-and-white, still looks really awesome!!!

Mangrii says

Este clásico infantil y su autora, Edith Nesbit, me resultaban totalmente desconocidos hasta el momento, pero de la que ya me declaro seguidor, y tengo ganas de leer alguna obra más.

Me ha parecido una historia llena de magia y fantasía, que tiene por protagonistas a dos niños; Philip y Lucy, que hacen que la historia tenga tintes de ternura, con los que yo he conectado sacando mi niño aventurero interior. La historia, orientada claramente a un público más infantil, es narrada en tercera persona, con un narrador omnisciente que a veces interactúa con nosotros, lo cual adoro.

La lectura se hace ágil y rápida, ya pues aunque solo cuenta con 12 capítulos, no paran de suceder cosas ni un instante. Además tendremos millones de criaturas y seres conocidos; desde Noé y su arca, pasando por un hipogrifo, un loro parlanchín y personajes históricos como Cesar. No faltara en el libro un trasfondo de crítica a la sociedad de la época, realizando guiños a la revolución industrial y sus consecuencias.

Una historia infantil preciosa de la que no entiendo como no podía haber escuchado hablar antes de ella, porque recuerda mucho a Lewis Carroll o a Las crónicas de Narnia de C.S. Lewis. Además la edición es una gozada con todas las aclaraciones a pie de página que nos hace para comprender algunos términos y sobre todo por las ilustraciones que van acompañando cada página.

Manny says

The first real book I ever read on my own; "real" in the sense of having a couple of hundred pages, not very many pictures, a plot, and some character development. I remember being puzzled by the switches between the everyday world and the fantasy world, and not understanding what was going on until about a third of the way through.

Then a clue came up which was too obvious to miss. He's in the magic city fighting the dragon... it's a *clockwork* dragon... he has a clockwork dragon in the everyday world... aha! The fantasy world is his toys, and he ends up in it each night when he goes to sleep! It was terribly satisfying to have figured it out. OK, it wasn't exactly a killer insight, but I was only six; if I'd been a member of GoodReads at the time, I would have posted immediately. Since the Internet hadn't been invented yet, I've had to wait 44 years before getting around to it. Well, better late than never.

This reading thing was clearly a good idea. I decided I would check out some more books from the library, and see if they were equally interesting. Within a few months, I'd turned into an E. Nesbit completist. I still think she's pretty good.

Bish Denham says

I savored this, taking my time reading it. So delightful. It reminded me L. Frank Baum's Oz and certainly Nesbit could have made a series out the idea. I wanted it to go on and on. I liked Philip and Lucy's relationship, how it evolves and I liked how Nesbit gives her female characters some spunk, smarts and bravery. All around charming!

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

Thanks to Gutenberg for this excellent read.

Phillip has an idyllic existence with his much older half-sister. The first page reminded me of the tale of the "teeny-tiny woman", in their little house with the little garden and the little maid...but it gets better. When everything seems absolutely perfect and changeless and wonderful, Phillip's sister reconnects with a childhood friend and--horrors!--agrees to marry him! Not only does Phil now have serious male competition for her time, attention and affection, but he comes with a child attached--and that child is a girl! Phillip finds himself dumped at his new BIL's (rather stately, luxurious) home while the happy couple is off honeymooning, and he makes himself so disagreeable to his new step that the servants decide to take her on a trip to her aunt's, leaving Phil to stew in his own juice. He turns to his own particular hobby, building cities out of anything that comes to hand: books, dominoes, vases etc. (Much easier to do in a home well provided with luxury materials, of course.) Suddenly he finds himself *in* the city he built on a tabletop, and the adventures begin!

Phillip has a great deal to learn, not only about bravery and not sneaking, but also that girls are not second-class creatures of limited intelligence and interests. Such ideas must have been revolutionary for many boys of his class and time (1910)! It is true that the Oracle only tells Lucy to be "brave and good"--but that leaves her a great deal of freedom in the interpretation!

This is one of my favourite Nesbit books; she doesn't talk down to her readers or wink over their heads at an adult audience. It's the best sort of fantasy, in which the magic that makes it all possible is incidental to the action, not overshadowing it. Somehow I found it more "believable" than *The Railway Children*, perhaps because the happy ending wasn't quite so sentimental.

Valerie Kyriosity says

I enjoyed this quite a bit. Three stars for the book plus an extra star for the...well...*stellar* performance by reader Ruth Golding. One of the best LibriVox offerings I've discovered so far. If you're looking for good titles for kids, put this one on your list. And if you like children's stories for yourself, put this one on your list. And if you don't...well...I shall just have to feel sorry for you.

Steve says

This was an enjoyable read, but somewhat dated. It reminded me an awful lot of *The Phantom Toolbooth*, but given the publication date was around 1910, clearly it was the blueprint. Parts were predictable, the

climax was over too quickly, and the resolution was rushed.
