



## Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb

*Ally Malinenko*

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**Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb** Ally Malinenko

MEET LIZZY SPEARE...

...a normal twelve year old girl with a talent for writing, who has a very not normal family secret. And when Lizzy's father vanishes, that secret will change her life in ways unimagined. (Spoiler Alert! It turns out that Lizzy, or Elizabeth S. Speare, is the last living descendant of William Shakespeare. Shhh! Don't tell anybody!)

Then Lizzy and her best friend Sammy are kidnapped, awakening in the faraway land of Manhattan. Their host is Jonathan Muse, whose job is to protect Lizzy from becoming the latest victim in a family feud nearly five hundred years old. Could that be why the mysterious, eye patch-wearing Dmitri Marlowe is after her? (Spoiler Alert 2—he's the last living descendant of Christopher Marlowe, a friend and rival of Shakespeare's. But keep it to yourself!) Is Marlowe after Lizzy's family fortune rumored to be kept in Shakespeare's tomb? Does he seek artistic immortality? Or Revenge (with a capital R) for a death long, long ago?

In a dangerous game of cat-and-mouse, Lizzy and Sammy are thrust into the realm of the mythical and fantastic—from satyrs and Cyclopes to Middle Eastern cab drivers and Brooklyn hipsters—in what is truly “an improbable fiction” as the Bard himself once wrote.

## Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb Details

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# From Reader Review **Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb** for online ebook

## **Enna says**

First and foremost, I would like to thank the author for letting me read her book in exchange for a honest review.

This book is absolutely amazing! I was glad that I had a chance to read this book and I was glad that my sister was able to read this book as well! She thoroughly enjoyed it too :)

Me and my sister both enjoyed the concept of incorporating Shakespeare's world with our modern one. Honestly, this book made it more enjoyable to learn about Shakespeare and his works! The characters were beautifully orchestrated as well; Ally definitely put thought into his characters and made sure their details were spot on.

Lizzy, the main heroine, finds out that she is the sole descendent of William Shakespeare (no wonder why she loves to write and read!) and must save her father when he is kidnapped. Jonathon is a muse, he provides inspiration to those who need it and protects Lizzy and informs her about her heritage (with some kept secrets) . Sammy is Lizzy's best friend and goes on the amazing journey with Lizzy. The villain Dmitri Marlowe is a greatly developed character! You can probably, maybe trust him one moment, but then he could stab you in the back when you aren't looking! He was great to read about! And I loved all the little minor characters as well! Like satyrs, (other) muses, fairies, and other mythical creatures!

There was also mystery, an engaging plot, suspense, and all these aspects made this book a great read! I encourage teachers, librarians, and kids to read it! My sister, who is nine, thought this book had a great story and loved every page of it. There was a cliffhanger, so there is a possibility for a sequel, and I can't wait for it!

Thank you Ally Malinenko for giving me a chance to read this book and I was very happy to give you a review in exchange for it.

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## **Aeicha says**

### **4.5/5 Stars**

I'm no Shakespeare scholar or fanatic, but I do enjoy his work, and author Ally Malinenko has done something quite extraordinary with her book *Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb*...she's made Shakespeare fun! Fantastically fun, in fact! This adventure filled middle-grade surpassed my expectations and turned out to be an excellent read.

Twelve year old Lizzy Speare is not a normal girl; she's the last living descendant of William Shakespeare. Which, she finds out on her twelfth birthday; the day she and her BFF, Sammy are kidnapped by a Muse for their own safety. Jonathan Muse reveals to Lizzy that as the last Shakespeare descendant she is the sole heir of a great fortune. But Dmitri Marlowe, the last descendant of Shakespeare's good friend and fellow writer Christopher Marlowe, is after Lizzy, the fortune, and maybe even Revenge! Jonathan introduces Lizzy and

Sammy to a whole world of mythical beings and creatures, and Lizzy must confront her destiny to save everyone and everything she loves.

Malinenko has crafted such an original and imaginative story with Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb. A fun, exciting middle-grade tale about the infamous Shakespeare and Marlowe relationship, and their imagined descendants is an ingenious idea. An idea that Malinenko pulls off excellently with flair and talent that Mr. Shakespeare would be proud of.

This is a longer middle-grade book, but it has a great fast-pace full of suspense and thrills. I didn't find myself bored once while reading it and eagerly turned pages. Malinenko creates a world that is rich in history, mystery, and all things fantastical. A world that feels both modern and old-world, hip and enchanting, dark and whimsical. The work of Shakespeare is not always easy to understand or get into, but in Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb the world and work of Shakespeare is presented in a way that is both appropriate and highly entertaining for younger readers. Plus, Lizzy's journey and adventures are just so addicting and fun that younger readers won't even realize that they're also learning a great deal.

The fantasy and mythical elements are awesome! Satyrs, Cyclopes, gorgons, fairies, selkies, Muses, magical quills, talking Ravens, doors that change, and more, Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb as it all. Lizzy's journey is full of compelling mystery, fascinating history, and breathless peril. But, this book also has a lot of heart and is surprisingly touching.

Lizzy is a great heroine: smart, brave, capable, and compassionate, but stubborn and sarcastic in an endearing way. Sammy is completely adorable and charming and I want him as a BFF too. Jonathan Muse and Dmitri Marlowe are wonderfully layered and complex characters. I love that I trusted and doubted both fellows at the same time and that they constantly surprised me.

My only complaint is that the ending (only like the last two pages) felt a bit abrupt and jarring, but it did leave me excited for a sequel.

**MY FINAL THOUGHTS:** Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb is a terrific middle-grade book with a wildly entertaining and refreshing premise, compelling characters, and fantastic storytelling. Lovers of Shakespeare, the fantastical, or just fun adventure, will certainly enjoy this tale.

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## **Christy says**

Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb is a wonderful book for not just middle-grade kids but for "kids" of all ages. It is full of adventure and excitement. I found myself so engaged in the story. Lizzy and her best friend Sammy are the perfect pair. Their characters really made the story. They are typical twelve year old children who get caught up in a tremendous adventure.

When Lizzy's 12th birthday occurs, something unbelievable happens, and she and Sammy are transported to New York City. While there, they learn of a legacy Lizzy never knew she had. She is the last living descendant of William Shakespeare! No wonder she is such a fan!

When my daughter was 16, she went through a Shakespeare phase and had to read him everyday. I can't say that I was that into the plays when I was her age, but I do enjoy Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Author Ally Malinenko uses Shakespeare throughout the book to introduce chapters and give the reader clues. I found that very enjoyable.

Though everyone tells her she has a gift for writing, Lizzy is very unsure of her talents. I found that to be so believable. I remember how I was at that age. Twelve is that in between age, when you aren't a little kid anymore, but you aren't a cool teenager yet either :) Lizzy feels like a real twelve year old. Her best friend Sammy may not have a knack for literature, but he is great at science and remembering things that are relevant to him. Now THAT is totally believable when it comes to twelve year old boys. My son is fifteen now, but he's always been able to remember things that are important to him. (Unfortunately, science isn't one of them.) Ms. Malinenko really has the knack for writing realistic characters.

The settings in Lizzy Speare are very descriptive and make the story come alive. The secondary characters are well thought out and not just there for fluff. I really liked the character of Gossamer. She reminds me of one of the fairies in Sleeping Beauty (the Disney version, of course). I loved that she made Lizzy hot chocolate. Very grandmotherly. Cleo is a great addition to the story as well. The scene in which we first meet him is great! It really made me laugh. I love the cat guard (you'll see!) and all of the passwords. It reminded me of Harry Potter at that point.

All in all, I'd give this book 4.5 stars because it is truly imaginative and enjoyable. It is a longer story, so this might be one you'd like to read with your child. I read all of the Harry Potter books with my daughter and she was a teenager when the series ended. I love those memories. Create your own with your kids and Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb. Can't wait for book 2 :)

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## **Unorthodox Mama says**

Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb, where do I even start?

The book description had me hook, line and sinker. It was so unique that it just grabbed me. I knew it was a must read.

After a long few days and in need of a pick me up this book jumped up my to be read pile.  
A good move on my part.

Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb was a great read. Better than even I expected and I had expected it to be pretty great.

There were a few things that really stood out to me reading Lizzy Speare.

It addressed family. What is it really? Lizzy seemed to have it in her head that family was two parents. Family was what Sammy had. Two parents and siblings. What Lizzy wanted.

As a single parent, I appreciate books geared at children that show family as more than just the standard cookie cutter idea. Mother, father, brother, sister.

Lizzy struggled with her definition of family and you slowly saw it began to change.

I also liked Lizzy's smarts. She questioned things, like trust. She knew trust was earned not given. She was afraid yet brave. Sometimes possibly even too brave. She also knew when she needed help and she asked for it.

There was only one small thing in Lizzy's character I would change. When she makes a mistake she thinks "Stupid Lizzy" Something I think too many kids think as is, the last thing they need is to be seeing characters they look up to thinking that way.

Characters are well written and varied in Lizzy Speare's new world. Each with their own tale to tell, leaving you with things to ponder while keeping the story moving.

Time travel (Bending), Vegetable throwing (at actors), running from Medusa, magic and leaky eye balls..there's a little of everything.

There was even a moment I found myself thinking "Wow, even J.K. Rowling never thought of that"

As much as I enjoyed Lizzy Speare it was difficult to choose a favourite character. I found myself loving all of them.

Jonathan was a great Muse. I loved that he also had another form other than his human appearance as well as his own rich back story.

I also found myself wishing I could wander into the kitchen after a rough patch and have hot chocolate with a fairy. Just seems like it would be so much more chocolatey goodness. ;)

The ending leaves you with something of a happy ish ending and also leaves you asking questions that hopefully are answered in book 2.

Lizzy Speare really impressed me, written for a younger reader but also enjoyable for the older reader. It's a book with a special kind of magic too it. I can not wait for book 2.

Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb is a well written book you won't want to miss. My suggestion, don't read it next to a sleeping baby. I woke mine up laughing on more than one occasion. (Oops!)

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## **Lizzy Lessard says**

LIZZIE SPEARE AND THE CURSED TOMB is an excellent introduction for MG students to Shakespeare, while still being mystical enough to appeal to fans of Harry Potter and Percy Jackson. The story begins with the kidnapping of Rupert, Lizzie's father. With the help of her best friend Sammy, she must find a way to find him. I like how the quest is a person, not an object. The riddles for the quest are taken directly out of Shakespeare's work, which will help kids to understand and appreciate the Elizabethan style of writing. The solution requires real-world problem solving skills instead of a magical potion or item.

The story gives a personality to the historical mastermind, William Shakespeare, and makes him relateable to kids and young teens. The adults in the story (Marlowe, Jonathan, and Rupert) all make human mistakes and have very defined motives for their actions and beliefs. It's hard to figure out who to trust and Lizzie doesn't trust blindly. Lizzie is a good problem solver, though she does make rash decisions when her emotions are triggered.

The essence of New York City is captured perfectly. New York is laid out with the precision of a local. Both landmarks features and cultural centers influence how Lizzie solves her next piece of the quest. Although

there are similarities for way magic functions in New York in this book compared to the way London functions in Harry Potter, this book has too unique of a story and characters to be considered a fan fiction.

At first I was confused as to how Sammy was able to go alone on the adventures with Lizzie without his parents caring about his absence, but when I realized the relations between his parents and the other adults in the story, it made sense. Also, there is no romance in the book, so LIZZIE SPEARE definitely is directed towards the younger audience.

There are only two parts of the book that I don't like. The prologue is revisited almost word per word in a later chapter, so I do recommend skipping the prologue completely. The second thing is that I really don't like the title. This book has both classroom and entertainment value for MG readers. Fans of YA and Adult novels, this book might be too young for you.

(I received a copy of this book from the author for my honest review. I also enjoyed this book so much that I purchased it for my mother's school kids with my own money.)

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## **Cathy says**

It took me a while to read this book only because this is not my typical type of read, which I'm okay with because it was definitely interesting none the less, because it was about Shakespeare and I love Shakespeare. Many have remade his plays and even made them into movies throughout time, but I don't think anyone has ever done Shakespeare in this way and that alone intrigued me.

We meet Lizzy and her best friend Sammy as they are introduced in the beginning of the book as regular kids, but in come a mysterious character on her birthday. Turns out Lizzy Speare is a direct descendent of William Shakespeare and her kidnapper - Jonathan, was his muse. But they weren't really kidnapped just taken to safety. The person who is really missing now is her father. This is the adventure where Lizzy learns more about herself, the world around her and about her past.

There are all kinds of mythical creatures throughout this book and it just makes you wonder if they really do exist out there and we just don't think about it. It's possible; anything is possible if you think about it. There are muses, selkies, Cyclops and just all fun mystical creatures that you could imagine them all hanging out at a bar. This would be something very visually appealing in move format. There are a lot of great scenes where the imagery is very imaginable on the screen and that definitely bodes well for the author.

There is a bit of rivalry that starts off in the time of Shakespeare himself, where another playwright believes he would be very famous, but something happens and he comes to a tragic end. So now the descendants are battling it out, centuries old grudges and Lizzy just wants to find her father. Marlowe the decedent of the other play write from Shakespeare's time believes that much is owed to him and his family for what could have been so he has taken Rupert and is ready to hold him hostage for what is rightfully his. He sends Lizzy and her crew to random places all while following clues written in verse that must be figured out. It's like a treasure map of clues and the prize is Lizzy's dad, or at least she hopes that's what it will be.

It was a very fun adventurous story to follow and I'm glad I finally got a chance to read through it. Lizzy Speare although young did show me what loyalty is, by sticking to her dad even though he was keeping secrets from him. She also seemed to have her own mind which is always good in a lead. I enjoyed reading about the different characters and the mythical creatures. That Cleo hehe I can completely imagine him with his mind tricks. Great book if you like reading things along the lines of Percy Jackson, Harry Potter, etc, very

fun read.

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## Nickie says

I really wish GoodReads let people do half stars. I felt like this one was a bit better than 3 stars, but not quite a four star read for me.

A few weeks ago, author Ally Malinenko contacted me to read and review her MG/ lower YA story, 'Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb'. It's a mix of fantasy, adventure, and some classic Shakespeare.

Lizzy Speare leads a quite life with her father. On her twelfth birthday, right as she blows out the candles, a stranger knocks on the door and begins arguing with her father.

Her father orders her and her best friend, Sammy, to hide upstairs. But when Lizzy reaches the comfort and safety of her room, she realizes another stranger has entered the house. Jonathan Muse kidnaps Lizzy and Sammy, whisking them away to a castle hidden in New York city.

At first, Lizzy is frightened, but Jonathan explains that Lizzy is actually the last living descendent of Shakespeare (yes, THE Shakespeare), and that the stranger is after her vast fortune and family legacy. Can Lizzy navigate this new world of mystery and intrigue long enough to reunite with her father and bring down the bad guys?

What I liked about this book:

I thought this was a really fun way to introduce younger kids to Shakespeare. It's kind of like sneaking broccoli into mac and cheese. Snippets of Shakespeare's sonnets and plays pop up throughout the book as clues to Lizzy's past and the evil Dmitri's whereabouts.

Lizzy and Sammy are engaging main characters who are never afraid to step into the unknown. Their adventures kept the plot moving quickly.

I liked the integration of mythology/fantasy into the story. Jonathan Muse (\*\*\*\*small spoiler\*\*\*\*) is actually a muse of the Greek mythology variety, and was Shakespeare's muse. Malinenko does a good job expanding on those old myths with ideas of how a muse might function in today's world.

What I liked best about the book, though, was the element of suspense. Malinenko does a good job of keeping the reading guessing as to whether Jonathan can actually be trusted.

What I didn't like about this book:

Ok, big spoiler, so you might want to skip this section:

\*\*\*\*\*SPOILER ALERT\*\*\*\*\*

Toward the end of the book, someone lets it slip that Lizzy actually has a brother. If I remember correctly, she thinks about it one more time, and the point is dropped. WHAT??? If I was Lizzy and I found out I had a secret brother, I think I'd be more persistent in finding out who it was. I assume this is a plot point that will be resolved in a sequel? It felt like it was thrown in the story and then forgotten.

\*\*\*\*\*END SPOILER\*\*\*\*\*



I also thought that Lizzy would express more curiosity about her family history/origins, especially since there's another big plot twist in the story suggesting she might not know that much about her family after all.

Final verdict:

3 1/2 stars. This is a good pick for tweens who enjoyed Harry Potter.

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## **Robert Kent says**

Good morrow, Esteemed Reader! As per usual, today's review will be a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. And yet you come back every week:)

Ahh, Shakespeare. Nothing in literature makes me clench up faster than the bard. Quoting Shakespeare anywhere in a modern story can have this effect on some readers. And the Ninja has a quality liberal arts education and has acted in (not well) and directed Shakespeare's plays. Even so, somehow a writer invoking Shakespeare gives me the distinct feeling of being under-dressed. I've shown up to dinner in shorts and polo because I thought we were having a causal story, but the author's wearing a tuxedo because this is to be leeeeeeterature.

If I offer no other praise in this review, let me first say this: Ally Malinenko invokes Shakespeare in a manner that is fun and accessible. When the Shakespeare comes out in *Lizzy Speare* and the *Cursed Tomb*, and it does (often), it never once made me clench up or feel like the book snobs (the sort who feel no one's written a good action story since Homer died) had descended to pretentiously lecture rather than entertain.

Of course, *Lizzy Speare* and the *Cursed Tomb* isn't really about Shakespeare. It's about Lizzy Speare, a 12-year old girl with a love of reading and writing (I'm thinking Ally Malinenko an untold number of years ago) who happens to be an expert on all things Shakespeare:

“Well, a reader is one thing but honestly, I have never seen a child so in tune with language. You know, Mr. Levinson said she was the only person in class that doesn't need the Cliff Notes for the Shakespeare he assigns.”

“You don't say.” Rupert cleared his throat awkwardly. “I've never believed that Shakespeare should be taught as literature—it needs to be performed. But that's just my opinion. C'mon, let's go guys,” Rupert said, pushing his daughter towards the open car door.

“It's uncanny. He said he's never seen a student at this age so advanced.”

“Well, Shakespeare is my favorite,” Lizzy butted in.

“We all know that, dear, now come on, get in the car. We have to get going,” Rupert said.

“Well it was a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Speare. And I do hope that you will let Elizabeth join my theater group this summer.”

“Theater group?” Rupert said, stopping. “Yeah, well, I think we might have plans. Family obligations and whatnot.”

So what's up with Rupert there? And why is it so crucial that Lizzy Speare be so awesome at Shakespeare? Actually, Lizzy is pretty much awesome at everything, which is part of the fun of a fantasy tale (James Bond, anyone?). But it's particularly good she's awesome at Shakespeare because it turns out, minor spoiler, she and the bard are related. Zounds!

When Lizzy's father is kidnapped, Lizzy and her sidekick Sammy set off an adventure steeped in

Shakespeare and mythology. As the story gets cooking, the real world slowly rescinds, making way for fantasy:

When Gossamer Willowfly headed back into the kitchen, Lizzy swore she saw thin green shimmering wings, like those of a cicada, fluttering on Gossamer's back. Gossamer turned her head and winked at Lizzy and then was gone. When she came back in, Lizzy nudged Sammy but he just mouthed "What?" with a mouthful of eggs. This time Lizzy couldn't see any wings.

And yet, amidst all the excitement and allusions, Malinenko is never too busy to slow down for a bit of advice to us writers:

"It's good you shop at a place like this. Never skimp on a journal. When it comes to your writing, your precious thoughts, your deepest dreams, Elizabeth, you can never compromise. Especially not with the tools of your craft. They may in fact, change everything."

Lizzy Sphere and the Cursed Tomb is a fun adventure for book nerds everywhere and throughout Ally Malinenko is unapologetic-ally geeking out with her love of literature. Even the chapter titles are quotations from Shakespeare such as "Something Wicked this Way Comes," "Something is Rotten in the State of Denmark," and my personal favorite chapter title, "This Way Madness Lies." Thematic Spoiler: the last chapter is "To Thine Own Self Be True:)"

Fans of Lizzy Sphere will no doubt clamor for a sequel and Ally Malinenko is no doubt laboring to produce it for them. This first tale is a good start and the perfect read for the lover of literature. As always, I'll leave you with some of my favorite passages from Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb:

One of the witches limped forward and you could see the spider web of scars running across her face. Where her eyes should have been were two empty sockets, blackened and charred. In one hand she held the soft flax of yarn that was being fed into the spinning wheel and in the other she clutched an eyeball, her black nails digging into the meaty tissue.

Since her death her father rarely mentioned her mother. Jillian's death was still painful for him, even eight years later. Lizzy remembered very little about her, just snatches, like photographs flipped by too quickly.

The sound of her father's frantic voice would be the last thing Lizzy would remember before she was abducted.

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## **Heather says**

(This review can also be found on my blog [The \(Mis\)Adventures of a Twenty-Something Year Old Girl](#)).

Doesn't that blurb making Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb sound like a really fun read!?! Well, it is most definitely a fun read that I really enjoyed!

Lizzy Speare loves writing! In fact, she's very talented at it. On the night of her 12th birthday, she and her friend Sammy are kidnapped and taken to a castle in the middle of Brooklyn. Once there, Lizzy learns she is the last true descendant of the great playwright William Shakespeare and the heir to the vast Shakespeare

fortune. However, the descendant of Kit Marlowe (another playwright and also William Shakespeare's friend and rival), Dmitri Marlowe seems to be after Lizzy for some reason. When Lizzy's father is kidnapped, it's a race against time to save him and find out what creepy Dmitri Marlowe is after.

The title is a little misleading I felt. Yes, this book is about Lizzy Speare, but there is no cursed tomb. There is a tomb, but just not a cursed one.

I think the cover is super cool! I love the cartoony look which I think will really appeal to the audience this book is aimed at. I even love that it's got Shakespeare in the background!

The world building is mostly great!! The way it is written, it feels as if a world like Lizzy Speare's is certainly possible. My only concern is that there are numerous secret ways to get into the castle which I would've thought someone, after all those years, would've found it. Perhaps that's just the cynical adult in me though. Also, I found it hard to believe that a parent would let his/her child spend the night with the opposite sex in the same room with no adult supervision at 12 years old no matter how long they'd been friends. Also, William Shakespeare spoke a bit too modern as well, but it is a middle grade book, so again, I think I may just be looking at this with too much adultishness (my made up word).

The pacing in *Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb* is almost perfect. There are a few parts where sometimes the pacing slows down a bit too much for me, but it isn't long before it picks right back up again.

The characters were all mostly believable and brilliant! Sammy and Lizzy sometimes act a little bit older than 12, but perhaps they're just mature for their age. I loved the friendship between Sammy and Lizzy. They were both really sweet kids. I also loved their bravery! Jonathon, Lizzy's muse, had me cracking up a lot of the time. I could feel how much he wanted to help Lizzy. Rupert seems like a good father although, being kidnapped, we don't really get to see too much of him. Dmitri was a great baddy! I liked how he could be nice one minute and completely show his true colors the next. Although not really a main character, I did love the satyr, Cleo. I loved how Lizzy would become fixated on him.

The dialogue pretty much fits a middle grade reading level. There are a few words that some kids might struggle with, but for the most part, it's a fairly easy read. My most favorite piece of dialogue always happened when Cleo was around Lizzy. You'll see what I mean once you read it.

*Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb* is a fun and intriguing read that will delight all of its readers. The characters are great as is the plot.

I'd recommend this book to those aged 11+ who want some adventure in their lives.

*Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb* (Lizzy Speare #1) by Ally Malinenko gets a 4.25 out of 5 from me.

(I received a free ebook from the author in exchange for a fair and honest review).

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## **Rae Ryans says**

We received a paperback copy, which the author graciously signed for Mr J. (Her 10 year old son) in exchange for his honest opinion. As always, Rae will paraphrase his words for the review. He was asked to read, report, and review *Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb* as apart of his homeschool curriculum. As a

parent, I found the mystery and fantasy based synopsis to fit my son's favorite genre (fantasy).

On to the review ...

This took me a little longer to read than most stories, but it was a larger book and mom gave me weekends off from reading for the summer. There were also a few words that I had to look up in my dictionary, but now my vocabulary has expanded to include some nifty scientific words that I can confuse my little brother with. He's learning to read still, so it will be awhile before he can read Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb all by himself. Of course, mom said I should read it to him.

I really enjoyed learning about Shakespeare and it's really cool that Lizzy is related to him too. That makes it pretty awesome, and what kid wouldn't want to find out they're related to someone famous?

Setting:

The story takes place in New York, and I'd love to visit someday. Too bad mom and dad moved us away from NJ before I got to go. Thankfully there are books that can transport us to different places until then.

Characters:

There were all kinds of fantasy creatures in this story. Cyclops, a satyr, and witches enticed me to read further . I'd never read about one-eyed monsters before, but I wasn't scared at all. They were good, but the witches kept showing up in Lizzy's dreams.

Dmitri Marlowe is the real bad guy. He even wears an eye patch. He's so diabolical that in order for Lizzy to get back her father, which he's kidnapped, she must put on a play for him. But she's tough cookie, and won't let anyone or anything stand in the way of rescuing her father.

Plot:

This an epic feud, lasting five hundred years. It began with Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. When Dmitri plots against the Speare family, it's up to Johnathon Muse, the twelve year old Lizzy and her friend Sammy to come to the rescue.

When they come together the action filled fighting and magic really begin. This was my favorite part, but that's expected for boys, and why I enjoy books that I can loose myself in. I'd recommend this for kids my age and up, and mom adds, anyone who enjoys fantasy with a historical twist. I'm also eagerly awaiting the next book in the series.

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## **Cassandra says**

My Thoughts - 4 out of 5 unicorns - I really liked it!

Kept me engaged through the entire story, I loved how Shakespeare was nicely entwined into this story. The creativity in this book is awesome because it is has everything. It is like Shakespeare meets mythology in today's world. I love mythology, and I have always liked Shakespeare, but this took it to a whole other level.

There is mystery, lies, intrigue, revenge, plays, love, and so much more I can't wait to see where Lizzy's adventure leads her next.

My only concern is will it keep a child engaged who is 12 like my son. I plan on re-reading this with my son to see what he thinks. I definitely see high school kids and adults loving this book, but I'm not sure about middle grades yet. I will let you know :) If my son loves it, I will whole heartedly give it 5 unicorns!! :)  
\*\*Gifted to me by the author for an honest review\*\*

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## **Renee says**

Lizzy Speare and *The Cursed Tomb* is part mystery, part mythology, part history, and a whole lot of non-stop action! Within the pages of this book, there is a story which features a strong female main character and her loyal friend Sammy; a unique collection of supporting characters based on Greek (and other) mythology and legend; elements of Shakespearean history; and an underlying mystery which grips the reader from the get-go with an intriguing prologue and brief glimpses into what the ever-seeing Fates/Witches observe.

This book features an eclectic mix of characters including the strong female title character, the mysterious muse Jonathan, her nemesis, Dmitri Marlowe, and the diversity of mythological and legendary creatures such as cyclopes, satyrs, and other surprise creatures. I think Lizzy is a character that most tween girls could relate to. Interestingly, my daughter is also very interested in becoming an author, so I'm sure she would relate to Lizzy. I also really enjoyed the fact that I always felt uncertain about who was the bad guy until it became evident later on in the book. Jonathan and Dmitri were both very well-written characters.

I felt that the story was very original in bringing together the ancestries of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe and re-fueling the rivalry generations later with the notion that Christopher Marlowe's genius was cut short with his early death and that Shakespeare went on, undeservedly, to achieve fame and success. Among the many elements included in the plot is the mystery surrounding Lizzy's mother's death, the disappearance of her father, the uncertainty of Jonathan's motivations, and the revelation that somewhere hidden is a fortune which is solely Lizzy's to inherit. While I certainly enjoyed all of these unique elements and was captivated by the suspense-filled plot, I did sometimes feel that the author was trying to do too much by merging Shakespearean history, mysticism, and mythology.

I found it fascinating to read about the history of the role of muses in this fictional world. When Dmitri is explaining to Lizzy how he felt about muses, I couldn't help but think that the author was making a statement about her own views as an author navigating the publishing world or about writing or the demands put on authors; but, perhaps I'm totally off here! Regardless here is what Dmitri says to Lizzy about the topic (p. 144):

“They don't care about when you pour your heart and soul into it. They only care about what they are going to get out of it. Can it be published? Can they get the credit? Will it count in the eternal score they are all keeping? That is all that matters to them. There is no art left in writing.”

There are a couple of issues that I do feel I need to bring up. First, Lizzy is referred to as “stupid girl” by

Dmitri on two separate occasions in the story. “Stupid” is on our “do not say” list in our home, so it did make me squirm somewhat to read that. Also, on two separate occasions Lizzy is struck by Dmitri (once in the face). Honestly, I don’t want a visual of a person striking a 12 year-old girl. It did make me very uncomfortable and I don’t think it was necessary in this book.

### **My Bottom Line:**

Lizzy Speare and The Cursed Tomb features a strong cast of well-developed characters and an intriguing plot merging history, mythology, and legend that kept me guessing until the very end. This was a solid and enjoyable read and I would definitely read more from this author! I would classify this book as upper middle grade (10+) because of the mild language and violence. I think tweens and teens who enjoy a good mystery with mysticism and mythology thrown in would enjoy this book.

*\* I was given this book free-of-charge by the author in exchange for my honest opinion. All opinions expressed are my own. \**

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### **Lee (Rally the Readers) says**

*Also posted on Rally the Readers.*

*\* A copy was provided by the author for review.*

I love reading anything to do with Shakespeare, so I was immediately intrigued by this book’s synopsis. I love mythology, too, and was thrilled to discover that *Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb* also incorporates a lot of mythical figures into this exciting tale of a girl with an extraordinary lineage. What I wouldn’t give to one day find out that I was descended from William Shakespeare! You’re one very lucky young lady, Miss Speare.

Lizzy is a plucky little heroine who is easy to identify with. If I had read this as kid, she absolutely would have been my fictional best friend because of her love of reading and writing. Lizzy has a lot on her plate, what with the bombshell news of her famous ancestor and her missing dad and all. It’s not easy to absorb all of this at once, but Lizzy toughs it out and becomes increasingly self-assured over the course of the novel. She is also incredibly brave; there’s nothing that she won’t do to get her father back, even negotiating with an untrustworthy snake like Dmitri Marlowe. I just loved Lizzy’s friendship with Sammy; those two make an awesome team and epitomize what it means to be best friends.

Loving Shakespeare as much as I do, I was in heaven with all of the references to him and his writings. The chapter titles all cleverly quote his works; I had a lot of fun trying to match each title with its source. Even better, the Bard actually makes an appearance in the novel, as does another famous author from the Elizabethan period, Christopher Marlowe. I really liked how Marlowe was incorporated into the story; I’ve never read *Doctor Faustus* , but I kind of want to now.

The world of *Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb* features some familiar characters from mythology, like satyrs, nymphs, and the Fates. Jonathan really is a Muse, as in the kind that inspires writers and artists. This book had a whimsical feel that meshed well with its mostly urban, New York City setting. If a castle with doors that allow you to travel to other time periods is going to exist anywhere in the world, of course it’s going to be in Manhattan. As a former New Yorker, I’m always happy to see the place that I’ll always think

of as home turn up in a book. I fully admit to nearly hyperventilating when Lizzy and Sammy had to venture into the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn because it's right next to the neighborhood that I grew up in. The descriptions of Williamsburg and Coney Island, another Brooklyn locale that I have very fond memories of, were spot-on; they were just as I remember them.

My only real quibble is that I wish there had been a few more details about Lizzy's family history. There's a lot more to Dmitri Marlowe's motives than meets the eye, but we only get snippets of the big picture. I'm especially curious about what Lizzy's father, Rupert, did in the past that was so terrible. Ah, but that's what sequels are for, and I can't wait to read the next installment of Lizzy's story.

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## **Diana (Offbeat Vagabond) says**

Original review here:

<http://offbeatvagabond.blogspot.com/2013/08/book-review-lizzy-speare-and-cursed.html>

Lizzy Speare and the Cursed Tomb is a story about a smart girl named Lizzy. Lizzy is celebrating her birthday with her dad. Things are going very well until there is a knock at the door. That one knock will change Lizzy forever. Lizzy father has now disappeared and it is up to her and some out-of-this-world characters to rescue him. Lizzy Is a brilliant writer and even she couldn't have come up with something this big.

What a wonderful read this was. I don't usually read a lot of Childrens'/Middle grade books, but I am happy at jumped at the opportunity to read this. The story was so full of adventure and thrills. I loved the amount of imagination Malinenko put into this story. It was brilliant. Our protagonist, Elizabeth Speare is your average twelve year old. But for a 12 year old, she was quite wise beyond her years and very strong. When her father goes missing, she doesn't care what she has to do to find him even if that means she has to travel to a different realm to find him. Her and her best friend Sammy are also kidnapped and together they find out some crazy things. Biggest one being that she is the last descendant of William Shakespeare.

Now that may sound like amazing news being related to one of the world's greatest literary minds. But, sadly, Lizzy's lineage comes with a 400 year grudge. She is being stalked by a man named Dmitri Marlowe, last descendant of Christopher Marlowe, old friend-turned-enemy of Shakespeare's. Lizzy finds out through her muse, Jonathan, about Marlowe and what he wants. He believes that Shakespeare's fame and glory belongs to him and his family and he going to rectify that problem.

I loved Lizzy and Sammy. They were quite the duo. Sammy always has Lizzy's back even when she is as stubborn as a mule. I loved all the characters in this book. They all such vast personalities and were a bit nutty, but it made me love them more. I especially loved Jonathan, Lizzy's muse. He could be a bit much and there were times I wanted to hit him, but I loved how eccentric he was. There are times you do question whether he is a good guy or not though. I even enjoyed Marlowe. He was quite unpredictable. I won't lie, I did understand his frustration, well a little bit. There is definitely more we don't know yet. It must be really big because 400 years is a long time to hold onto a grudge. The man was just full of hate and pure old jealousy. But I can't wait to uncover what it is.

This is a great story for kids and adults alike. It takes all the great literary icons we love and gives them such a whimsical twist. I think this would be a great way for kids to learn about who they were. This book was fun and suspenseful. It kept me on my toes for sure. I loved the creativity in this book. Malinenko not only added

a lot of mystery and backstory for Lizzy, but for Shakespeare and Marlowe as well. I can't wait to see where Malinenko takes this story especially given the ending. Definitely check this out.

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## **Deneé says**

What an exceptional idea for a book! I knew I'd like this book from the moment I read the synopsis. I was given this book to review and I'm glad I've read it, it's so unique and adventurous. I would have absolutely loved this book when I was younger, as it mixes elements of Shakespeare and Marlowe with mythology. I found this book to be enlightening and educational as we hopped down the rabbit-hole, so to speak, with Lizzy and went on a mad dash to try to save her father. The villain, Dmitri Marlowe, fits great with the story line with his constant need for revenge to uphold his family name. As Lizzy learns about her past and her heritage we are taken into an ancient-old world of fates, muses and magic to find the truth and meaning behind Lizzy and the Shakespeare fortune.

The book has a great opening, as it creates a mysterious atmosphere and urges the readers on throughout the book. The world that Malinenko creates for her readers is like a maze full of doors, each opening to something mystic and new, yet leaves space for the unexplored. I did, however, feel that there might have been too much information to wrap my head around in this one book, and probably could have been saved for the future books. This book is quite exciting and would be very comprehensible for just about all ages; Lizzy brings her cunning innocence, curiosity and devotion towards her family to make the readers root for her through the end. Lizzy Speare also leaves ample unanswered questions and mystery for her story to continue throughout other books as well. In all, this story was told wonderfully and it actually refreshed my Shakespearian interest, making me want to go out and re-read some of my favorite plays and sonnets.

**First Line:** "Her feet didn't seem to touch the steps." (5)

**Last Line:** "Lizzy took a deep breath, blew Sammy a silent kiss, took Jonathan's hand and stepped into the fire." (344)

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**Quotes:**

"This is it. This is where everything starts. Are you ready? In my home, some doors lead to other rooms. Some doors lead nowhere at all. Some doors lead back in time. Some doors can be made to go wherever you want them to go, whenever you want. This door,' he tapped a finger on the red painted wood, 'leads to your past. Yours and yours alone.'" (40)

"People are creative, but they lack drive, ambition. They stray and wander. And they give up so easily, falling prey to outside distractions. A Muse is there to keep them going.'" (55)

"Elizabeth Shakespeare, this is your story, now. And only you can write the ending.'" (344)

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