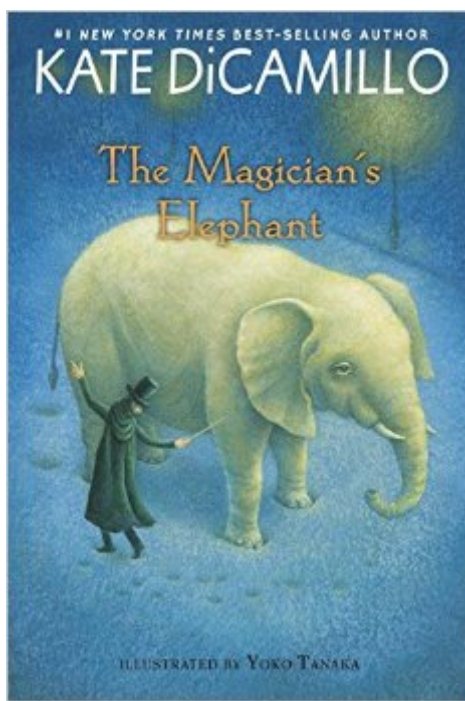


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The Magician's Elephant



Synopsis

A classic tale by Newbery Medalist Kate DiCamillo, America's beloved storyteller. When a fortuneteller's tent appears in the market square of the city of Baltese, orphan Peter Augustus Duchene knows the questions that he needs to ask: Does his sister still live? And if so, how can he find her? The fortuneteller's mysterious answer (an elephant! An elephant will lead him there!) sets off a chain of events so remarkable, so impossible, that you will hardly dare to believe it's true. With atmospheric illustrations by fine artist Yoko Tanaka, here is a dreamlike and captivating tale that could only be narrated by Newbery Medalist Kate DiCamillo. In this timeless fable, she evokes the largest of themes — hope and belonging, desire and compassion — with the lightness of a magician's touch. With dreamlike illustrations and a new cover by Yoko Tanaka.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars — See all reviews — (309 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

The Magician's Elephant is parable/allegory/fable/fairytale and modern kid lit extraordinaire. The tale is somber and atmospheric but the overall feel of the story is one of hope. The characters are quirky and magic lingers on every page. More a novella, it is a quick read of a few hours even for a young reader. I don't recommend putting it off but this is one of those books to be pulled out on a snowy night in front of the fire to be read out loud with your family. I won't detail the events as the jacket flap and other reviewers are sure to do it but I will say that if you are a fan of DiCamillo's there is no way

you should pass up this book. This will seem impossible to you (as it does to me) but her writing is getting even better and with this story I think we may be seeing the beginning of a transcendence to the creation of a storyteller easily in league with Aesop, the Brothers Grimm and Frank L. Baum. I am aware that sounds sycophantic - trust me I am not. In fact, I would really like to hate her for writing so well, as an aspiring writer myself, but there is no denying the quality of this story. There is a very visual and cinematic quality to the writing that keeps the reader engaged. It is difficult to stop thinking about Peter, Adele, the elephant, the magician, and all the others just because the book is closed. I sincerely hope adults will pick this book up as well - especially those who have already discovered the pleasures of good children's literature.

At age 60 some might say that I'm far too old to be a fan of Kate DiCamillo's *The Magician's Elephant*. Wouldn't that be a shame? I became a fan of DiCamillo's when I read *The Tale of Despereaux* and later the *Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. Whatever lessons are intended for the young are not lost on those of us that are a generation or two further along in our visit on the planet. Kate DiCamillo's stories are charming, well thought out and always provide interesting characters to carry the tale forward. Engaging is a word most applicable when discussing *The Magician's Elephant*. Is there anything more important for a storyteller? Like the *Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, *The Magician's Elephant* is an odyssey involving a string of characters each providing to the story in some small manner. Besides spinning an interesting tale, characterization is DiCamillo's best talent. In the *Magician's Elephant* the main character, Peter, has been told that his sister Adele is dead. Wanting desperately to believe Adele isn't dead Peter wanders into the tent of a fortuneteller. Given one question to ask (he actually gets two) Peter is given to believe that his sister is still alive and he is told that an elephant will lead him to her. At this point the reader is hooked. Will Peter find Adele? Read the book and see. Like so many of life's journeys it isn't the destination but the trip that matters. I have a granddaughter who is five. I'm torn about reading this story to her or waiting for her to grow and let her discover these stories on her own. I think I'll opt to read *The Magician's Elephant* to her. That will be two gifts, one for her and one for me. I can't recommend *The Magician's Elephant* more strongly. Peace always.

The Magician's Elephant is an enchanting tale about a young boy that makes a rather difficult decision: spend his money on bread or on a fortune teller that appeared within the town walls? The young lad opts for the latter and learns that an elephant will lead him to his lost sister. Seems odd? Peter realizes that the fortune offers hope that his sister is still alive somewhere. During a magic

show, an elephant makes a rather strange appearance and now Peter believes there may be something to the fortune. While the story does share similarities with stories long ago, it is Kate DiCamillo that really captures the imagination and delivers the story fluidly and with moments of tension and amazement. The story is rather straight forward and the surprises are kept to a minimum. The book is a quick read but still manages to develop the characters in a richly detailed depth that will capture the reader from the first page. I only gave it 4-stars because I just finished reading Mary Stewart's timeless masterpiece "The Crystal Cave" and while I enjoyed The Magician's Elephant it doesn't quite live up to the book I read prior.

As an adult reader, I enjoyed The Magician's Elephant, but as a piece of children's literature, I was quite disappointed in it. While this is a relatively short book, it is dense to say the least. The themes of loneliness, truth, and forgiveness are a bit heavy for a children's book. The whole atmosphere of the book is bleak, and it is populated by characters lost in their own despair. While the last chapter does offer hope, the entire rest of the book is quite dismal. On top of this, the book is wholly without action. While there may be a few children out there who may enjoy this book, I believe the majority will not. I am a big fan of DiCamillo's other books, but in this book she has drifted too far from what children want to read about for this book to truly be considered children's literature.

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