



Children of the Red King #1: Midnight for Charlie Bone

By Jenny Nimmo

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A magical fantasy that is fast-paced and easy-to-read. Charlie Bone has a special gift- he can hear people in photographs talking.

The fabulous powers of the Red King were passed down through his descendants, after turning up quite unexpectedly, in someone who had no idea where they came from. This is what happened to Charlie Bone, and to some of the children he met behind the grim, gray walls of Bloor's Academy.

Charlie Bone has discovered an unusual gift-he can hear people in photographs talking! His scheming aunts decide to send him to Bloor Academy, a school for genius's where he uses his gifts to discover the truth despite all the dangers that lie ahead.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 4-6-When he is 10 years old, Charlie discovers that he is able to look at photographs and hear conversations and even thoughts that were taking place at the time the photo was taken, a legacy of his ancestor the Red King, whose descendants all have different magical abilities. Charlie hears one conversation that sets him on a search for a girl who has been missing for years, and when he begins attending Bloor's Academy, an elite boarding school for the rich and the endowed (as the Red King's descendants are called), his life becomes full of intrigue and danger. Charlie, his friend Benjamin, and other allies try to unlock the secrets of a mysterious case that could get the girl back, while the sinister Bloors and Charlie's ghastly relatives who are endowed try to thwart them. While the parallels with Harry Potter are obvious, this fantasy has its own charms, chief among them being the endowed's often-odd magical abilities. The writing is deft, most of the characters are intriguing, and Charlie Bone is an appealing boy. The story is marred by some predictability, and the role of the endowed in this otherwise contemporary, unmagical society is not clear. Many aspects of the book are not fully thought out, making it less compelling than it might be. However, this is the first of a projected series, so it will be interesting to see if some of these vague points are resolved. A flawed but worthwhile offering for avid fantasy fans.

Eva Mitnick, Los Angeles Public Library

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 4-6. These days stories about schools for budding magicians are inevitably compared to the Harry Potter books. Indeed, British author Nimmo's creation, Bloor's Academy "for gifted children," bears some resemblance to Hogwarts School, but the story itself is quite different. Seemingly ordinary Charlie Bone suddenly discovers that he can hear the thoughts of people in photographs, a talent that dour Grandma Bone and her three baleful sisters work to bend to their own ends by sending him to Bloor's and to its sinister headmaster. It's not an easy year for Charlie despite the friends he makes. Too many people have it in for him as he's swept into an age-old battle being waged by descendants of a powerful king of long ago. A mysterious box, a missing girl, a strange man who flits in and out in the company of three brightly colored cats, and various villains all figure into Charlie's exciting, fast-paced adventure tale, which happily is the first book in planned quintet called Children of the Red King. Harry Potter's myriad fans will be well pleased.

Sally Estes

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Review

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Readers may come away from this hefty series opener, about a seemingly ordinary British lad who is sent to a special boarding school after discovering that he has magical powers, with a distinct sense of *deja vu*. It seems that England had a magical Red King seven centuries ago, who disappeared after his wife died and five of his ten children went bad. All ten children are still around in various guises, and, along with occasional descendants, can wield parts of the Red King's magic--so once ten-year-old Charlie reveals that he can hear the people in photographs talking, the nasty camp swoops down to hustle him off to Bloor's Academy. Within Bloor's gloomy stone walls he meets friends and enemies, some of whom are also "Endowed," as he struggles to learn the school's routines, helps rescue a kidnapped schoolmate whose mind has been clouded by the baddies, discovers that his father may not be dead as he's been led to believe, and is stalked by a werewolf. The climactic battle, however, occurs offstage, and though several characters turn out not to be who or what they seem, the revelations are thoroughly telegraphed. The author leaves a few threads dangling, but underestimates her audience if she thinks she's left any major surprises for future episodes. Charlie's adventure adds up to a formulaic, thinly disguised placeholder for the next Harry Potter; a far cry from N

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sherry Stevens:

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