



The Books of Magic

Neil Gaiman , John Bolton (Illustrator) , Scott Hampton (Illustrator) , Charles Vess (Illustrator) , Paul Johnson (Illustrator) , Roger Zelazny (Introduction)

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A quartet of fallen mystics dubbed the "TrenchCoat Brigade" is introduced in this first collection of the adventures of Timothy Hunter. John Constantine, the Phantom Stranger, Dr. Occult, and Mister E take Hunter on a tour of the magical realms. Along the way he's introduced to Vertigo's greatest practitioners of magic and must choose whether or not to join their ranks.

The Books of Magic Details

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Author : Neil Gaiman , John Bolton (Illustrator) , Scott Hampton (Illustrator) , Charles Vess (Illustrator) , Paul Johnson (Illustrator) , Roger Zelazny (Introduction)

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From Reader Review The Books of Magic for online ebook

Snezana BookWitch Gligorijevic says

I belive in magic!!!

<http://bookwitch77.blogspot.rs/2018/0...>

Gary Butler says

17th book read in 2015.

Number 213 out of 445 on my all time book list.

Follow the link below to see my video review:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uqwko...>

Bradley says

Rather a who's who of the DC comic world of magic, mixed with a bit of real magic.

What? Real magic? As in great storytelling, great art, a big portion of myth and a much more huge portion of fascination? You bet!

A kid very much like Harry Potter might have been starts a journey of discovery, with four wise(ass) men from the magical side of Detective Comics, ostensibly to see if he wants to keep upon the path of a magical destiny. Give him the principles and a feel for the cost, show him the dark side, let him hope for the light, and put him in constant peril while keeping an eye on him... or not.

All told, it's one hell of a journey less like the Inferno and more like a dive into the human psyche to revel in our imagination and our sense of wonder.

For all that, it works brilliantly.

Whatever happened to our sense of wonder, anyway? Perhaps it's just slumbering, waiting for that one good story to kiss us and shock us awake after long last?

This one feels like a genuine Gaiman even though it's filled to the brim with stock DC franchise characters. The point is the journey, after all, not the reiteration of the franchises. :)

Ea Solinas says

Long before J.K. Rowling ever wrote about Harry Potter, there was another owl-toting, bespectacled young wizard with a destiny.

And somehow it doesn't surprise me that Neil Gaiman was responsible for that wizard's creation in "The Books of Magic." This brilliant four-part graphic novel is full of shadowy art, strange happenings and wild magic -- and while it was intended to be a story highlighting the more magical DC characters, it ended up taking a life of its own.

Timothy Hunter is playing alone in the street when he's approached by four men who ask him a simple question: "Do you believe in magic?" Obviously he says no, but after a brief demonstration of it, he reluctantly agrees to be taught in the ways of magic.

First, the Phantom Stranger takes him back on a first-class history tour -- the birth of the universe, the fall of Atlantis, the teenage life of the great wizard Merlin, the rise of magic in many different lands and its eventual wane. Then Tim takes a trip to America with John Constantine to get acquainted with some of the more mystical creatures there... and ends up up to his neck in trouble

After that, Dr. Occult takes Tim into the world of Faerie, where he comes across a great sleeping king, gets caught by Baba Yaga, and shown Gemworld, Skartaris, Pytharia, a tiny glimpse of Hell, and a brief trip into the Dreamworld. He also counters Queen Titania, who seems to have a connection to him. And finally, Mr. E takes Tim into the future and shows him great wars, the return of magic, and the possible death of the world - as well as his own future fate...

"The Books of Magic" isn't a comic book as you know it -- it's a journey across worlds and time, where an ordinary preteen boy discovers that he has the potential to be the greatest magician in the world. And though it was apparently meant to highlight various magical characters, Gaiman's story is more Joseph Campbell than comic book hero.

And Gaiman weaves a truly spellbinding, deceptively simple story -- he takes us into rivers of blood, goblin markets, a dying Earth, skull-faced kids, and even the childhood of a teenage Merlin. His dialogue is exquisite and rich ("Arthur sleeps in Avalon, and he sleeps here, as they all do. And perhaps he sleeps in your world too. Sometimes I suspect he sleeps inside a waking mind, waiting for the day to rise and free his ancient kingdom... Perhaps he sleeps inside thee, boy?").

I'm a little more split on the artwork -- somehow I just can't warm up to Paul Johnson's artwork, which makes Tim look very odd; and Scott Hampton's is of good quality but confusing to read. But John Bolton's artwork is absolutely exquisite (especially when he depicts the grandeur of a newborn universe, the towering angels and the ancient magics), and Charles Vess's tour of Faerie is some of the best work he has EVER done.

"The Books of Magic" is far more than it was intended to be -- a brilliant hero's journey through the worlds of magic. A deserving classic.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

Tim Hunter is destined to become a great magician... isn't he? Four magical beings take him on realms other than his own, to educate and warn Tim about the path he is about to embark upon.

It is up to Tim to choose his destiny. Great power comes at great cost and it may be more than he is willing to pay.

"Child, magic exists. There are powers, and forces, and realms beyond the fields you know."

The worlds Neil Gaiman has created in *The Books of Magic* are haunting and layered and will stick with you after you've finished the story and closed the book.

So... typical Gaiman then.

"The true Atlantis is inside you, just as it's inside all of us. The sunken land is lost beneath the dark sea, lost beneath the waves of wet, black stories and myths that break upon the shores of our minds."

Beyond the story, the artwork is beautiful in each volume, but different from artist to artist. Not in a jarring way, just noticeably different.

"It's like there's a whole other world, that I never knew existed, side by side with the old one."

Recommended for adults or mature teenagers. There are some scares and thrills on this fantasy journey through other worlds.

Reyel2107 says

this book is a real magic !!!

Jenny Baker says

Hmmm....I'm not sure about this one. There were moments when I had no idea what he was talking about. There were some really cool sections that got me thinking. Sometimes the font changed to a style that was difficult to read. Oddly, G and S looked alike. I own this, so I may have to try this one again at another time.

Derek says

This book is magic, simple as that. A bit of a lengthy read, but you don't get the feeling of running around in circles or anything like that. It just flows effortlessly, despite being highbrow in some places, especially the last chapter, Road to Nowhere. (Reminds me to reread it) other than that, this is an amazing feat of textual magic.

Amber says

12 year old Timothy Hunter has been chosen by the Trenchcoat Brigade to discover the lands of magic. Will Timothy be able to choose if he wants to be a magician or not and can he handle the price of doing so? Read on and find out for yourself.

This was a pretty good graphic novel by Neil Gaiman. The artwork is great too. It is done by John Bolton who did his book *Harlequin Valentine* and more. If you love whimsical stories by Neil Gaiman then be sure to check this book out at your local library and wherever books are sold.

Keith says

I could not avoid this book any longer if I wanted to keep digging through the backlog of 90s Vertigo. It's just that I had no interest in it -- it looked at a glance like lazy writing covered by amazing art, and that Papyrus title font...!

It might have just been the font, honestly.

Anyway, *Books of Magic* isn't that great. To be clear, the art is psychotically amazing, to the point that the production value might cheat you into forgetting that this was coming out in 19-friggin-90. Point of fact, *Sandman* was getting started around this time as well, and at the beginning that series wasn't great either, but it was certainly better than this. Knowing that Gaiman was simply hired to shed a light on DC's mystical characters in order to gauge readers' general interest makes the whole endeavor a little more forgivable, but on the other hand, I don't know how this book would have made much sense to anyone except DC diehards who didn't *need* the reminder in the first place. It just seems like the whole book would be a headscratcher for anyone else.

The book (not story, since there isn't one) is simply an excuse to show off minor magical DC characters as they all work together to train not-Harry-Potter -- the young, poor, bespectacled, owl-owning Timothy Hunter. The list of characters is long and obscure, and what little impact each has on Timothy's life is totally confusing without Wikipedia, Comic Book DB, and Read Comics Online open in separate windows. But what the hell did one *do* back in 1991? Just trot off down to the comics shop for an easy-to-find copy of *Secrets of Haunted House* #31 in order to flip to the back and find "The Twice-Cursed Man," the first appearance of Mister E, a character who Gaiman has revamped, but who is still contextually reliant on his original incarnation in order to know what exactly *The Books of Magic* is attempting to subvert?

Now times that by every character in this friggin' book.

What *The Books of Magic* is, really, is a well-illustrated DC Encyclopedia without any cited research. Aside from the art (which is seriously like whoa), it sort of seems like the worst-possible version of itself, especially for being a pre-internet 2.0 publication. In his notes for *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, Alan Moore points out that in the age of the internet, writing an easter-egg-riddled comic really has no limits to the depths of obscurity for its references -- piecing the whole thing together as a sort of digital metatext is to be expected. Similarly, Moore's *Promethea* does the whole hero's-journey-magickal-infodump with a lot more diligence than what Gaiman tries for here.

BoM, on the other hand, is just sort of *there*, and aside from looking pretty and giving you stuff to look up (which isn't the worst thing, but surely we could do more), I'm not sure that it serves much purpose.

Laura says

I once read a breathless and poorly written article about how this book totally ripped off *Harry Potter*. I mean, PLEASE: bespectacled English kid who can do magic? DUH. (That was the general gist of the article;

it also pointed the plagiarism finger at Diana Wynne Jones for her Chrestomanci series. It's just a shame that online articles can't be physically ripped into tiny pieces and stomped upon.) Clearly, anything about bespectacled English kids who can do magic has to be stolen from *Harry Potter*, right? Too bad the article author -- and this was published in the online edition of a respectable newspaper, mind you -- didn't notice that *The Books of Magic* and the Chrestomanci books referenced (*Charmed Life* and *The Lives of Christopher Chant*) were all written before *Harry Potter*. And no one wears glasses in the Jones books. And the thousand other differences.

Trish says

Wow! I've already read another comic by Neil Gaiman but this is truly a piece of art!

Timothy Hunter is a normal boy, or so it appears. Four men approach him one day - John Constantine, Doctor Occult, Mr. E and Stranger.

Of all these characters I only knew Constantine. The four propose to show the boy the ways of magic and put a choice before him (to practice magic or to be "normal").

The four issues of this book are the travels he undertakes with each of these "teachers".

The first voyage leads through the past with the Stranger and we get to see Atlantis, Ancient Egypt, mythological creatures from ancient Greece and more.

The second voyage is with John Constantine through the present, during which Tim encounters several contemporary practitioners as well as magical creatures like werewolves.

The third voyage is with Doctor Occult, who takes the boy to the worlds parallel to ours (Fairyland chiefly amongst them) and we get to encounter a baba yaga as well as the queen herself, Titania.

The fourth and final voyage is with Mr. E, who takes Tim into several possible futures until they reach the end of time itself.

I must say, I'm used to top-notch writing from Gaiman but the story he conjured up here as well as certain revelations throughout the four issues defy description! They touch so many themes and not just on the surface, but delve deep into these realms in such an eloquent and intelligent way. We also get a few cameos, namely (view spoiler) which made this loads of fun.

Now, I know by now that there was a lawsuit again J.K. Rowling once upon a time. She was accused of plagiarism for using a lot of elements from this story for her *Harry Potter* books. I have no idea if Neil Gaiman started that (according to an old journal entry on his blog he didn't), but I do know that the accusations are rubbish and that it was therefore correct that the court dismissed the charges. Yes, the boy (especially once he has yo-yo) looks like what illustrators made Harry look like and it is about a young boy (twelve) who comes into contact with magic. But that is where the similarities end (no school, no ultimate enemy to fight, no prophecies, no friends and coming-of-age stuff, ...).

This book is so rich in wit and original ideas about what being human means, what imagination is and what it's for, guilt and absolution, faiths (both ancient and contemporary), magic in all its forms, abstract concepts such as time, death and love and how one small choice can influence not just your own life but that of many others. Everything has a price, there is always a consequence. And it is all done in a slightly scary and dark way (especially the last issue).

And we get LOTS of puns and literal meanings of phrases which is typical for Gaiman.

Moreover, the art is simply stunning. Sometimes blurry or chaotic but then again, chaos is one of the abstract concepts explored here. At other times the images are extremely detailed and the colours always gorgeous. I'm not exaggerating when I say that this is beyond a doubt the best comic I've ever read, possibly even the best story I've ever read (granted, I haven't read *Sandman*, but if that is "only" as good as this one, it'll be mindblowing)!

No idea why this book isn't more well-known throughout the world but I'm telling every person liking great art and an intelligent and meaningful story: READ THIS BOOK!

David - proud Gleeman in Branwen's adventuring party says

"Magic...as delicate as a razor, as dangerous as a dream..."

mark monday says

the artwork in The Books of Magic is splendid, a real treat. John Bolton, Scott Hampton, and Paul Johnson create shadowy, smearily impressionistic, layered, slowly shifting, ambiguously dream-like imagery that throws everything into question, including the narrative itself. classic fairy tale illustrator Charles Vess brings his own unique and enchanting style to his piece; the results are quite different (reminiscent of the stylized, now-retro illustrations in old children's books like *The Wizard of Oz*), but are also superb - Vess is a perfect artist for the third book's journey into Faerie.

sadly enough, the art was the most arresting thing about this first volume (initially a 4-part miniseries) of The Books of Magic. the series is all about young Tim Hunter's introduction to and adventures in The Dread World of Magick. Tim himself is a surprisingly unappealing protagonist - not only drawn as a homely, weaselly lad, but given dialogue that is often wearily ignorant or snarky. Tim Hunter is not really the big issue i have with this collection (although he is a small part of it - he's just not an *enjoyable* traveling companion)... it is the narrative itself. the writing is fine, Gaiman is a masterful writer and so, page by page, it is as polished as one would expect. but the story pretty much amounts to a guidebook to DC's magical realms and wide range of magically-powered folks. for a comic book nerd like myself, reading what is essentially a beautifully illustrated List of People & Things is a fun time. it certainly had me combing my memory and wikipedia to figure out the backstories and eventual fates of all the characters. but coming from the mind of the guy who wrote *Sandman* (an all-time favorite and the one long-running comic book series that i would recommend to anyone), i can't help but feel really disappointed. The Books of Magic is lacking in both resonance and imagination. fun but forgettable.

along the way, Tim meets Baba Yaga and Titania and members of Gaiman's own pantheon, The Endless. he sees glimpses of the Beginning of Time, Faerie Land, Skartaris, Gemworld (an odd choice), the 30th century future of the Legion of Super-heroes and Sorceror's World, the various Ends of Time. he is guided by The Phantom Stranger, Doctor Occult (and his other half, Rose Psychic), John Constantine, Mister E, and Zatanna (who makes the extremely dippy blunder of taking Tim to a Halloween gathering of Magic Super Villains - oh, Zatanna, how typical), and he encounters Zatanna's father Zatarra and Sargon the Sorcerer (both killed off by Alan Moore during Crisis on Infinite Earths), Jim Corrigan/ The Spectre, Jason Blood/ The Demon, Boston Brand/ Deadman, Kent Nelson/ Doctor Fate (who we find has a rather appalling fate in store for himself at the end of time), Madame Xanadu, Baron Winter, Tala, The Wizard, Tannarak, Felix Faust, and the ever-annoying Doctor 13 (happily killed off by Grant Morrison during Seven Soldiers of Victory).

best of all - for me at least - was a glimpse into the possible far-future and a tiny little bit in the corner of one panel there, showing Klarion the Witchboy kicking The Spectre's ass in a magic battle. i always knew Klarion could take down Spectre if he put his mind to it!

A Voracious Reader (a.k.a. Carol) says

*Book source ~ Library

From Goodreads:

A quartet of fallen mystics dubbed the "TrenchCoat Brigade" is introduced in this first collection of the adventures of Timothy Hunter. John Constantine, the Phantom Stranger, Dr. Occult, and Mister E take Hunter on a tour of the magical realms. Along the way he's introduced to Vertigo's greatest practitioners of magic and must choose whether or not to join their ranks.

The artwork is decent and the story is pretty good. Though I'm not sure I understood parts of it. Anyway, ever since I read about Constantine in *The Sandman*, he's been a favorite character of mine. I'd love to read more about him. The other three guys are freaky weird. I'm not sure Timothy got what they were trying to tell him. He may be blinded by the new shiny...magic. I know he's only 12, but I hope he uses his head. If I can find the rest of the graphic novels at the library then I'll continue on. If not, oh well.
