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Eyes Like Stars: Theatre Illuminata, Act I



Synopsis

All her world's a stage. Bertie Shakespeare Smith is not an actress, yet she lives in a theater. She's not an orphan, but she has no parents. She knows every part, but she has no lines of her own. That is, until now. Enter Stage Right NATE. Dashing pirate. Will do anything to protect Bertie. COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARD SEED, and PEASEBLOSSOM. Four tiny and incredibly annoying fairies. BERTIE'S sidekicks. ARIEL. Seductive air spirit and Bertie's weakness. The symbol of impending doom. BERTIE. Our heroine. Welcome to the Theatre Illuminata, where the actors of every play ever written can be found behind the curtain. They were born to play their parts, and are bound to the Theatre by The Book--an ancient and magical tome of scripts. Bertie is not one of them, but they are her family--and she is about to lose them all and the only home she has ever known. Lisa Mantchev has written a debut novel that is dramatic, romantic, and witty, with an irresistible and irreverent cast of characters who are sure to enchant the audience. Open Curtain

Book Information

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Series: Theatre Illuminata (Book 1)

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (129 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #688,911 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #67 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Performing Arts > Theater](#) #549 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Orphans & Foster Homes](#) #1650 in [Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Performing Arts](#)

Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

The Theatre Illuminata is the only home Bertie has ever known. It's a magical place where The Book, which contains every script written, resides along with countless players who are not

born, but written into their parts. Bertie is an outsider, a human orphan, left at the mercy of the Theater Manager and raised by the players. But when her endless tricks and tomfoolery drive some at the Theatre Illuminata to the end of their ropes, Bertie is given an ultimatum: become uniquely useful, or get out. But there is much more at stake than Bertie ever realized...One word comes to mind when it comes to *Eyes Like Stars*, and that is scintillating. Lisa Mantchev's debut novel positively sparkles. It is overflowing with all the elements that make up great reads: fabulous humor, a spunky, clever, and lovable heroine, four mischievous and amusing fairies, a dashing pirate, a pernicious villain, and a deep secret that could change everything. Mantchev structures the novel in an interesting and enjoyable fashion, using prose and drama styles to create a "play within a play" effect that keeps things interesting. Because the novel starts out briskly and doesn't really slow down, some readers may feel a bit confused at the very beginning of the novel, but its not long before things click into place perfectly. And even though *Eyes Like Stars* alludes heavily to Shakespeare's work, knowledge of Shakespeare and his works aren't required in order to enjoy this extremely clever, lively, and glittering read. As each page goes by, readers learn something new and delightful about the Theatre Illuminata, until at the very end it is impossible to let go of Bertie and her cast. This hilarious and quirky debut demands an encore!

Cover Comments:

Stunning. This cover captures the eye! The fairies and are a really great touch, and the colors just perfect. I also really like the font both the title and the author's name and tagline are in. This cover is quirky, dramatic, and exciting, just like the book!

I wasn't looking forward to writing this review, because it would be hard to tamp down my enthusiasm. This was exactly the book I wanted to read. The word that kept coming back to me as I read it was effortless. The humor works perfectly, and the dialogue rivals *Gilmore Girls*--only it's a lot more genuine. The cast--and it is a large cast, since, you know, every character from every play lives in the Theater--was handled deftly, and even the minor characters shine. I was worried when I started, afraid that worldbuilding could have weighted the manuscript down. That's the problem with coming up with something so unique, so fresh--most writers don't know how to make it work. I'm always terribly interested in the workings of the world in which characters I like live, but oftentimes it gets in the way of plot. Again, the word effortless pops up. Mantchev tells the reader just what they need to know to make the story viable--no more--and leaves the rest up to the imagination...or perhaps the next books in the series. And the voice? Oh wow, the voice rocks my socks. Glib but tinted with mystery, new but old, curious and straightforward, the contradictions only add depth and flavor to an already solid plot. As for the characters, I fear saying much because their stories are so

tightly woven that I might give spoilers. Trust me, you don't want spoilers. You just want to experience the magic that is this book. And I think that's what's been missing from a lot of fantasy stories: real magic. But *Eyes Like Stars* has magic and so much more. Can't wait for the next installment to get here!

Let's start with THE mother of all disclaimers: I am actually related to the author. Nepotism is an interesting thing; it's most likely what got me cast in two of my sister's plays growing up (considering I can't act my way out of a hat box) but it's not what's led me to review her debut novel: "*Eyes Like Stars*." Reading "*Eyes Like Stars*" is a bit like seeing my sister's head explode on the page...only with caffeine and sugar infused fairies. I've had the benefit of reading several incarnations of "*Eyes Like Stars*" and the inevitable wailing began with me lamenting: "you cut the bit I liked!" That said the end result is one of the most imaginative, thoughtful and well, just plain amazing books that I've read in a really long time. I explain to my friends and colleagues that the book is about Bertie, an orphan growing up in a theatre surrounded by the most famous and notorious characters in every play ever written. When Bertie is told she must leave the theatre she is set on a path of proving her worth, not only to the Management, but herself and through the process learns the secrets of her past and the person she is going to become. Far more than a simple story though, Lisa creates a world that is visually acute. When I read the book I feel like I'm watching a play or movie; that I am Bertie in the thick of things, surrounded by miscreant fairies and caught between two very charismatic men. The story's vibrancy practically leaps from the page and using a device such as formatting flashbacks like a stage play is brilliant, not to mention completely original. "*Eyes Like Stars*" is a smart read and is everything I enjoyed reading growing up (and to be perfectly honest, is still what I enjoy reading): vibrant characters, witty banter with a generous splash of sarcasm, a dash of romance and lots of sugar. The perfect recipe for a great read. If you enjoy reading books by Neil Gaiman, Frank Beddor, Tamora Pierce, and Diana Wynne Jones and love plays and acting, it's a good bet that you'll love this book! Bring on the next book, Sis!

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