The Last Dragonslayer by J. Fforde

Amy Paterson

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Abstract


Almost-16-year-old Jennifer Strange is caught in a unique situation. As an orphan and an indentured servant of Kazam Mystical Arts, an employment agency for the magically gifted, Jennifer suddenly finds herself running the agency due to the mysterious disappearance of her boss, Mr. Zambini. Even worse, magical power has been dwindling everywhere and rumors are swirling about the forthcoming death of the last dragon.

Accompanied by her faithful Quarkbeast, Jennifer sets out to investigate these strange events, find Mr. Zambini, and stop the disappearance of magic from her world. Along the way, she becomes the central figure in a firestorm of media intrigue and faces the combined threats of fame, prophecies, jail, assassination attempts, and 16 marriage proposals.

Known primarily for his adult novels, The Last Dragonslayer is Jasper Fforde’s first foray into fiction for teens; however, his trademark quirky humour, original thinking, and dry wit are present in abundance. Furthermore, Fforde’s characters are complex, well-drawn, and extremely relatable; in particular, Jennifer’s cool-headed intelligence and wry observations will appeal to teen girls and boys alike. Parents who (rightfully) lament the dearth of teen girl role models in YA fiction will enjoy handing this book to their daughters.

There is no denying that Dragonslayer is complicated; Fforde never condescends to his young audience, and he pulls no punches when introducing and playing with complex ideas. However, Jennifer’s first-person narration ably guides readers through the wackiness of her world, making a convoluted, diverse, suspenseful plot ultimately, and satisfyingly, character-driven. This could be the best book your teen reads all year.

Highly recommended: 4 out of 4 stars

Reviewer: Amy Paterson

Amy Paterson is a Public Services Librarian at the University of Alberta’s H. T. Coutts Education Library. She was previously the Editor of the Dalhousie Journal of Interdisciplinary Management and is very happy to be involved in the Deakin Review and the delightful world of children’s literature.

Author Biography

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