



The Broken King

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

When their parents go out for the evening, Simon is left in charge of his little sister, Anna. But Anna is in the mood to annoy. His patience exhausted, resentful at being left as baby sitter, Simon tries to scare Anna by invoking the Broken King, a bogey man from a fairy tale collection. And Anna disappears. So begins Simon's quest to rescue her. However, first he must reach the Broken Lands themselves - and this will not be easy. Simon finds himself facing danger, mystery and magic. Can he overcome the barriers and open the gate?

Set in the real world of today, into which magic breaks through, this is an intriguing fantasy for young readers KS2/3. Womack takes the traditional quest as the narrative framework, one that will be both recognisable and satisfying to his audience. However he looks to fairy tales and legends that may be less familiar to shape his story. The first is referenced in the two quotations with which the author opens which include the final lines from Browning's **Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came**. The second is flagged up in the title, which brings to mind the Grail Legend and the Fisher King presiding over a broken and wounded land. It is this that adds an intriguing depth for adult readers. While young readers may not pick up these references, they will be drawn into an exciting story in which sibling tensions provide a credible trigger to events. Familiar with the conventions of Fantasy Games, they will recognise the avatars and the importance of collecting various objects to further the quest. In Simon and Flora they will find believable protagonists while the ambiguity of the Knight of the Swan creates a real edge. Reminiscent of Garner, this is a richly imagined adventure that ends on a cliff hanger. Readers will be impatient to know what happens next

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