

I Believe in Magic

SJI Library



When I read, I read for fun, escape, whimsy, inspiration, thrills, excitement, humor, suspense and adventure. And I'm extra happy when I find an author who throws in a little bit of magic.

The latest magical book I read was *Life After Life: A Novel* by Kate Atkinson, about a girl born in England on February 11, 1910, who dies before drawing her first breath. She's born again and again on the same day to the same family and grows up, but keeps on dying, in a different way each time.

Sometimes she gets a feeling that she shouldn't do something (which had led to her death in a previous incarnation), so she does something else instead. Sometimes it's another character who changes the course of their lives. Sometimes her death seems tragic, and sometimes it's a blessing.

Her life takes place during two world wars, and the different paths she takes lead to fascinating parallel lives, even influencing history. This is magic, this chance to see what could be if different roads are taken. Why does it happen? Will it ever end? Does it happen only to her? I read this book eight months ago, but still think about it over and over. This book's magic is still working upon me.

Another book infused with magic is *The Peach Keeper* by Sarah Addison Allen. This charming, slightly sinister story takes place in a small southern town where superstition exists with good reason, because magic is real whether one believes it or not. Silent Willa, goody-two-shoes Paxton, oddball Sebastian and stiff Colin all went to high school together, and are back now in their early 30s.

Life hasn't turned out how any of them had envisioned. When a body is found buried beneath the peach tree, and strange things start to happen around town, old secrets threaten to come to light about a strange man with dark charms who came to town a generation earlier. With a light mixture of mystery, romance and mysticism, this is a charming book filled with hope and forgiveness.

One of the most magical young adult novels I've read recently is *Scorpio Races* by Maggie Stiefvater. Inspired by Irish and Scottish legends of beautiful but deadly water horses, Stiefvater builds a suspenseful, terrifying fantasy around these dangerous, mythical creatures that rise from the ocean every fall, and are caught and raced by the brave and reckless men on the isle of Thisby. They are deadly to men and other beasts, and only marginally controlled by a form of old magic.

Puck Connolly, the first girl to ever enter the races, doesn't have any choice after life goes wrong. This is a tense, atmospheric, lyrical adventure of almost unbearable suspense, darkness and beauty. Only the strongest will survive. And that goes for the reader, too.

For fun, try Jennifer Crusie's humorous romance in which Andie Miller gets talked into helping out her ex-husband with his two new young wards orphaned by a distant cousin, who are living in a strange old house with a Mrs. Danvers-like housekeeper, and have run off three nannies already.

Much to Andie's perturbation (she's much too practical to believe in ghosts), it turns out there are more than a few hanging around the house, and they seem to have a destructive hold over the children. Throw in a former brother-in-law with poor taste in women, a duplicitous journalist who thinks the children are victims of criminal neglect, a self-doubting parapsychologist who wants to believe in ghosts but just can't, an annoyed medium, a mother who believes in all things mystical, a jealous fiancé, and an avenging ex-mother-in-law, and you're ready for some enjoyable chills and laughter.

So when you're ready for a bit of magic in your life, try these and other recommended reading from your San Juan Island Library, where magic still exists.