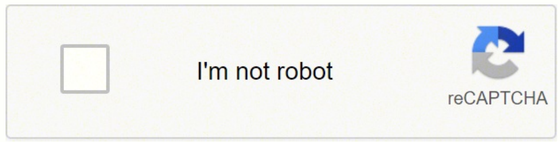

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The neverending story book review

The Neverending Story by Michael Ende The Neverending Story is probably best known to the general public through Wolfgang Peterson’s movie, whereas the original novel by Michael Ende is less well known. Despite the horrid sequels and the even worse television series that Michael Ende desperately tried to prevent in the last years of his life, Wolfgang Peterson’s first attempt at bringing the book to the big screen was successful and popular. However, fans of the book will know that it only records the first part of the story — though Peterson compensates by telling us in the final segment of the film “Bastian had many more adventures before finally returning to the ordinary world. But that’s another story…” Since it’s likely that you’ve seen the movie but not read the book, I highly recommend that you track down the original story — the movie stands on its own, but the book takes Bastian on a deeper and more dangerous journey into Fantastica and the inner regions of the soul, both adding detail into the movie’s progression, and continuing into a larger and more fascinating adventure. Usually I always suggest reading books before watching any movies that they are based on, but in the case of The Neverending Story I make an exception — it is much better to scratch the surface of Ende’s imagination in Peterson’s very good interpretation of the book’s first half, and then immerse yourself in the deeper book-within-a-book that Ende wrote, filled with adventure, intrigue, possibilities, mystery, thought-provoking ideas, beloved characters and probing into the depths of the human psyche. Bastian Balthazar Bux is a rather tubby, unpopular victim of bullying at the school, with a deceased mother and a grieving father. His one consolation in life is books, his absolute passion. This love of stories and the magic they bring is the reason why he runs off with “The Neverending Story”, the large volume he finds in Mr Coreander’s old book store. Hiding himself in the attic of his school, he is soon intoxicated by the story that unfolds: a young warrior named Atreyu is chosen to seek out a cure for the deathly ill Child-like Empress, the ruler of the realm of Fantastica. In a quest filled with danger, and joined by the joyful luck-dragon Falkor, Atreyu must also avoid the growing threat of the mysterious “Nothing” — a force that is slowly eating up his world. What the Nothing truly is, what the elusive cure for the Empress is, as well as the nature of Fantastica and Bastian’s role to play in its fate are mysteries gradually unfolded as he finds himself drawn deeper and deeper into the story. As it progresses, he finds himself wondering — could this particular story be real? The Neverending Story is a work of true children’s literature, and anyone who loves books for their own sakes and appreciates the importance of imagination is sure to find this a favourite. It is filled to the brim with memorable characters — Falkor, Atreyu, Engywook, Grograman, Yikka, and my personal favourite, the sinister, elusive Gmork, and touches on some of the most primitive questions of the human mind: life and death, hope and despair, existence and oblivion, the corruption of power, the basic needs of humanity… I could go on. In terms of sheer imagination and stark visual beauty, Ende rides to the top of the list along with Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Philip Pullman and other authors of this calibre. If there is one issue that brings fault, it is that the original manuscript was written in German — therefore the rhyming verses that are prevalent in the text feel rather disjointed, with the translator struggling to convey the content of the German version (which would have been more fluid and rhythmic) whilst forcing rhyme into the English. But this is irrelevant in the bigger picture, for this is a must read, just as Peterson’s film is a must-watch. It is nothing less than a tragedy that money-hungry producers were allowed to exploit Ende’s book into the appallingly bad sequels and series, and I do my best to pretend that they don’t exist. But here, fans of Peterson’s movie, or those that have never heard of The Neverending Story before, will be well rewarded if they read Ende’s book — the width and length that your imagination will expand after reading makes it well worth the effort. The Neverending Story — (1979) Ages 9-12. Publisher: Shy, awkward Bastian is amazed to discover that he has become a character in the mysterious book he is reading and that he has an important mission to fulfill. SHARE: FOLLOW: If you plan to buy this book, you can support FanLit by clicking on the book cover above and buying it (and anything else) at Amazon. It costs you nothing extra, but Amazon pays us a small referral fee. Click any book cover or this link. We use this income to keep the site running. It pays for website hosting, postage for giveaways, and bookmarks and t-shirts. Thank you! The Neverending StoryBy Michael EndeA Review by Eric Allen."ONLY TWO STARS," you cry, "Eric, have you no soul!?!?!" You're obviously going by the movie, which is AWESOME, and have never actually read the book it was based on, which is not so much. When I was six or seven, the Neverending Story came out, and it was one of the most awesome movies I had ever seen in my life. It was a movie that wasn't afraid to scare the everliving shit out of children, and I loved it for that. Even today, many, ma The Neverending StoryBy Michael EndeA Review by Eric Allen."ONLY TWO STARS," you cry, "Eric, have you no soul!?!?!" You're obviously going by the movie, which is AWESOME, and have never actually read the book it was based on, which is not so much. When I was six or seven, the Neverending Story came out, and it was one of the most awesome movies I had ever seen in my life. It was a movie that wasn't afraid to scare the everliving shit out of children, and I loved it for that. Even today, many, many years later, it is still an old favorite that I remember fondly and hope, one day, to scare the everliving shit out of my own children with. The book, on the other hand, is something of a mess. First of all, many people were not aware that it even existed. Fewer people still realize that the extremely terrible Neverending Story II movie was actually part of the book. That's right, the same author that gave you The Neverending Story, ALSO gave you The Neverending Story II. Think on that for a minute and tell me your childhood isn't curled up in a little ball in the closet crying.The book was originally written in German, brought to you on the screen by a German director and crew, and only after the movie was so popular did the book get translated into a few more languages.The plot of The Neverending Story needs no summarizing for most people. It's a very basic telling of the hero's journey story archetype. What makes it so awesome and memorable, of course, is the world in which it takes place, and the fact that the villain was something more abstract than an actual, tangible foe that can be fought and defeated. The second half of the book focuses on the child Bastion, who is pulled into the book after giving the Childlike Empress her new name, which, by the way, people have been asking for years, because that kid is completely unintelligible in the movie. Her name is Moon Child. However, I believe that, for whatever reason, the name was translated literally, rather than left in the original German. Bastion must make his way back to the real world by making wishes, but for each wish he makes, he loses precious memories from his life. And it is only through the help of his friends Atreiyu and Falkor that he is able to return at all.The Good? The first half of the book is excellent. I absolutely love it. The movie stays extremely faithful to the source material. The world is imaginative, the hero is a bit of a blank slate, but likeable all the same, and a lot of the things that he goes through on his quest serve a dual purpose, to both be entertaining, and thought provoking. The use of an abstract concept, the Nothing, as the villain is where I think this part of the book really shines. It's very hard to give a concept weight as a character, but the author did an extraordinary job of bringing it, and all of the horror surrounding it, to life.The Bad? Where this book really falls apart is in the second half. You remember how excited you were to see Neverending Story II when it came out? I know I was. And boy was I disappointed. Well, the second half of the book is pretty much the same. They changed the story drastically to make it easier to make a movie out of it, because there really isn't much in the way of purpose or direction in it. There isn't a real goal, or reason for anything to be happening. Bastion just wanders around, makes wishes, and pretty much accidentally finds his way home again.This boring stretch of nothing happening is compounded by two things. The first is that the first half of the book is so clever, and awesome, and enjoyable, and when you get to the second half it's like running headlong into a brick wall. All of the awesome world, the awesome supporting characters, and even the hero of the story are simply gone, and you're left with only Bastion. And that leads in to the second thing. Bastion is an extraordinarily unlikeable character. It's hard to describe all of the things that make him unlikeable, because pretty much EVERYTHING about his character is annoying or offensive in some way. And after Atreiyu, who is not exactly the most interesting character, true, but a hell of a lot more likeable than Bastion, you feel the contrast all the more. When you actively dislike the person that a story is all about, the story itself is not enjoyable. What creates such things as tension, and drama, are emotional attachments to the characters. If you don't like the character, and don't care whether he succeeds or not, any story woven around him is, inevitably going to be terrible as well. And that is exactly what is wrong with the second half of the book. Bastion is so unlikeable as a character, that I just couldn't have cared less what he was doing, or why, and I certainly didn't care if he was going to succeed or not. You go from a relatively enjoyable protagonist in the first half, to someone who literally has not one single redeeming quality in him as the protagonist in the second half. The fact that there is no readily defined plot for him to participate in makes it even worse, because when there is no real storyline, all of the entertainment value in a story rests wholly upon the characters. The second half of this book is about a terrible, unlikeable character, doing basically nothing but wandering around the world and showing how terrible and unlikeable a character he is.Additionally, this book is not very well written. I'm going to give the author the benefit of the doubt and say that it's probably the translator being unable to convey the original German wording properly into English, and all of the little nuances of prose that make a well written book were lost in translation. But there is probably one thing that was definitely in the original German. The author keeps bringing up what sounds like a really awesome tangent to the story, and then saying, "But that's a different story and will not be spoken of here." Ok… WHY EVEN BRING IT UP IN THE FIRST PLACE!!! Oh my GOD is this annoying. He literally does it like forty times over the course of the book. It was cute once or twice, but it just gets more and more annoying with every time it happens.In conclusion, though The Neverending Story movie will always have a special place in my heart, the book it was based on is better left forgotten. I believe that a lot was lost in translation, when this book was adapted to English, but that can only account for so much. The first half of the book is very enjoyable, with a few odd quirks of writing that I found to be annoying, most of which probably resulted from English not being the original language that the book was written in. The second half of the book is terrible, following a thoroughly unlikeable character as he does absolutely nothing but display what an arrogant douchebag that he is for all the world to see. I do not recommend picking this book up, unfortunately. And if you do, I highly recommend that you only read the first half. The bad more than outweighs the good. Stick to the movie, and remember all the great times you had with it as a child. It's one of the few rare cases of the movie actually being better than the book. The movie, at least, knew exactly when to shut up, come to a conclusion, and wrap things up with a tidy little bow. I wish I could say the same for the book, but I can't. It gets two stars, which is probably one more than it deserves, but hey, nostalgia is a powerful thing. Check out my other reviews. …more

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