



Any Which Wall

Laurel Snyder

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Four kids, a mysterious wall, and a good helping of common magic!

If you had a magic wall that could take you to *any* place and *any* time, where would you go? Would you want to visit castles and desert islands? Would you want to meet famous wizards, terrible pirates, beautiful queens, and dastardly outlaws? If so, then you are just like Henry and Emma, and Roy and Susanâ€™”and you will probably like this story a lot. In fact, you might even wish something similar would happen to you!

In *Any Which Wall*, author Laurel Snyder proves that you donâ€™™t have to be an orphan, know a dragon, or even be a child to get a taste of magic. You just have to keep your mind open and willing to let it happen. And when you do find magic (like Henry, Emma, Roy, and Susan), you might be surprised that along with all the fun, you also find out new things about your friends, your family, and maybe even a little bit about who you *really* want to be.

Any Which Wall Details

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Author : Laurel Snyder

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Vania says

Though Any Which Wall by Laurel Snyder is not in my young adult realm it is still a fantasy book and on that I greatly enjoyed. Despite its appeal to younger kids this book is filled with magical and adventurous schemes. The story goes like this: Susan (the oldest) Roy, Emma (the youngest) and Henry find a massive wall beyond their houses in a field. Accidentally they find out that they can be transported anywhere. But before they figure the secret of the wall they have to figure out the rules of the wall. The curiosity and the bright nature of the kids is a true gem in this book and we easily follow the kids on their hot summer fun through milkshakes to pirates to dogs and outlaws all via a big magical wall that grants you and wish... the only rule is though..... well you should read it to find out.

This book is a treasure for young readers. Laurel takes us along with the four kids on a ride; truly a book all kids young or old can immerse themselves in and go on an adventure where anything is possible. Look at the four kids: they went to see Merlin and Queen Guinevere; they went back in American history and even got to see pirates. But despite it all Any Which Wall is a witty and clever book that takes the reader into the magical world that is simple and fun and filled with rules. But what we should all remember, though cliché is Be Careful What You Wish For.

The summer foursome learned just that. But MOST importantly....you are never too old for magic.

Dustin George-Miller says

A delightful book for the early-to-middle grades. There's magic -- that's obvious -- but it manifests itself in a way that both inspires awe and logical deduction. Snyder really knows how to write for her audience, as she presents dilemmas that are age-appropriate, conundrums that are interesting but not predictable, and includes really wonderfully written treatises on the nature of magic and its relation to "every-day life." The idea of a magical wall in the middle of a cornfield evoked both awe and wonder in me and my daughter -- a bit of the magical mixed in with the mundane. It had echoes of both Field of Dreams and Shawshank Redemption, but didn't copy either of them. Snyder's prose is a delight to read, and my seven-year old and I both found ourselves well-immersed in the "every day magic" of this story. Highly recommended.

Cheri Williams says

In Laurel Snyder's second middle-grade novel, Any Which Wall, long-time friends Henry, Roy, Susan and Emma are out of school for the summer and bored, bored, bored in their sleepy little town, until, hidden in an Iowa cornfield, they discover a mysterious wall—and an even more mysterious key.

“They pedaled forward slowly, and in a few minutes, the tall dark thing became a bigger dark thing. Finally it turned into a wall made of gray and black stones, heavy rough squares, each about the size of a large suitcase. As tall as City Hall and about that wide, the wall looked precarious, tilting toward them” (page 19).

Together, the two sets of siblings realize the wall is more than mysterious—it's magical. It can take them to any place, at any time. They soon find themselves traveling far and wide, having adventures and learning

that magic just might look a little different than they thought.

Written as a tribute to Edgar Eager and E. Nesbit this Junior Library Guild Selection by master storyteller, Laurel Snyder is lyrical, nostalgic, classic and timeless. Told by a fun and spunky narrator and peppered with delightful illustrations by LeUyen Pham, *Any Which Wall* veritably begs to be read aloud.

Fun, fast-paced and fantastical with characters to love. These kids aren't singlehandedly battling evil. They don't hold the world's fate in their hands. They're regular kids who remember what friendship is about and who create a little magic of their own. They remind the reader to slow down, to enjoy life's ordinariness and to always, always, keep their eyes and imagination open. Magic still happens. A valuable lesson indeed.

From the Christian Library Journal; used by permission.

Caren says

Ms. Snyder has set out to continue the everyday magic found in the books of Edward Eager, and she has succeeded magnificently. She acknowledges her debt to him by mentioning his books within the story, and by including him in the list of people she thanks for making this book possible. As in Mr. Eager's books, the magic happens to four children who are neighbors and friends. The magic is found quite by accident, and then its rules must be uncovered and understood. I love, love, love Mr. Eager's books, and I felt as though this were another of his. I so hope Ms. Snyder has more offerings up her sleeve.

Here is a little excerpt from pgs. 171-2 to whet your appetite:

"Mom always says you can solve most problems at the library, and there's a lady there who's my friend. We could ask her about helping Bernice. She has to answer people's questions. It's her job.....She has a bun on top of her head and wears glasses," said Emma. "And she talks in a voice that sounds like a squiggly line. Like a nursery rhyme."

"Not that strange librarian" said Susan, "the one who's always gazing off over your shoulder when you ask her to help you find a book?.....The one who wears her hair with a pencil stuck through it," asked Susan, "and dresses like a parrot?"

"Oh, I guess that is who I mean," said Emma, "but she's not strange. She's nice."

Jason says

I wish that I could give half stars, because 3 seems too low a rating for such an entertaining book. Yet, overall *Any Which Wall* does not quite measure up to the books to which I've given 4 stars.

The novel kept me turning the pages with an always-advancing plot, and I was interested in the characters' growth (except for Henry, whose character lacked a clear arc). I would certainly recommend it to 10-12 year old who is into adventure.

Unfortunately, at times the novel slipped too much into metafiction for my taste. In a novel that depends on building a realistic world that contains magic, I don't want to be interrupted with asides about how fiction works. Also, the lessons learned at the end, especially by Susan were a bit too transparent. Then again, I'm sure that a 31-year-old man is not the target audience.

Kellee says

I loved these characters! And Laurel Snyder did a perfect job of writing fantastical adventures that also shape her characters. Susan's journey was my favorite, specifically as a middle school teacher.

Betsy says

One Sentence Review: Probably the most authentic tip of the hat to Edward Eager I've ever seen a middle grade novel attempt (though admittedly I never read *Magic By the Book* by Nina Bernstein).

Rachel says

Friends, magic, wishes, and old fashioned fun make this book a winner! Henry, Emma, Roy and Susan are wasting away their summer waiting for something exciting to happen when on a bike ride they discover a large dark wall, in the middle of a corn field. In a very Narnian event the children rest against it and in doing so mistakenly activate the wall which whisks them immediately into a nearby soda shop. This happens to be the exact wish of Susan as she sat down to rest and they realize the potential of the wall. If you could wish to visit anywhere at any time in history where would you go? A deserted island, a famous American city, the old west, ancient Egypt? The way the four children relate to each other is a throwback to the Pevensies on their visit to Narnia or the Penderwick girls. There is nothing brand new here but the book has a wonderful old time feel and is a purely enjoyable read.

Jennifer says

ANY WHICH WALL is an admirable volume in the "careful what you wish for" genre, perfect for fans of Edward Eager and E. Nesbit. If you like books about plucky children, and magic, and adventure, and summertime, and dogs, you will like ANY WHICH WALL.

And the illustrations by LeUyen Pham put WALL firmly into "modern classics" territory!

Colby Sharp says

If you would wish yourself to any place at any time how would you use that wish. In *Any Which Wall* by Laurel Snyder four children find a wall that turns out to grant these wishes. Watching these children figure out how the magic works was tons of fun!

One thing that I struggled with in this book was separating the characters. I had no trouble keeping track of the oldest child Susan and the youngest Emily, but the two boys Roy and Henry kept getting mixed up in my head. This didn't effect the story for me, but it did prevent me from making that connection to them as

characters. I do not think this was the fault of the author as much as it was the fault of me being a lazy reader. Hopefully, this taught me something about myself as a reader that will help me in my teaching of young readers. If I struggle to keep characters straight, then I am sure my fourth grade readers will have the same issues.

Overall, this was a wonderful read. You can't help but think of where you would wish yourself. I would wish myself to Tiger Stadium in the fall of 1984 and I would watch the Tigers win the World Series. I don't think I would want to wish myself somewhere to serious.

R.J. says

This is actually a re-read; I've been reading it aloud to my 9-year-old son, because I remembered it fondly from my first, solo reading a couple of years ago. ANY WHICH WALL is a loving tribute to the delightful books of Edward Eager (HALF MAGIC, SEVEN-DAY MAGIC and the like), who was inspired in his turn by E. Nesbit -- so I think it safe to say that anyone who enjoys either Eager or Nesbit will find Snyder's modern-day take on the "Group of Bored Kids Find Magical Wish-Granting Thing, Have Zany Adventures" subgenre as satisfying and delightful as I did.

And yet this book is more than an attempt to reproduce Eager's particular brand of magic; it has its own heart and wisdom and a uniquely modern (though not too modern) take on the story. The four child heroes, of varying ages and personalities, who participate in the adventure all have their own struggles to face and lessons to learn, and yet the narrative smartly avoids being too didactic about it. It's a shame this book isn't better known, because it ought to be.

I should also add a final note in praise of LeUyen Pham's accompanying illustrations, which are a perfect and delightful match for the whimsy and adventure of the story.

Kristine Asselin says

I won this book from a Goodreads contest last summer--it was a surprise treat to receive it in the mail (signed) from Laurel. She also included a sticker, and a bookplate for another book (BAXTER, THE PIG WHO WANTED TO BE KOSHER). Unfortunately, I wasn't able to pick up the book until the late fall.

I read the first few chapters in November. Laurel's writing reminds me of timeless middle grade adventures from my childhood, updated for today. I mean, two of the kids have cell phones, but they ride their bikes freely all over the town. Parents are concerned about their welfare, but they send along the big sister to babysit...and of course, she gets sucked into the magic along with them. I love books about magic!

My daughter and I read Laurel's "UP AND DOWN THE SCRATCHY MOUNTAIN" last summer and we loved it. Another fairytale-ish story that could have been written yesterday or forty years ago. Destined to be a classic.

I can't wait to finish ANY WHICH WALL--and give it to my daughter to read.

Update: Finished it! I had to go back and start at the beginning with my daughter. It's a wonderful story

about four kids who find a magic wall that can take them anywhere. We both loved it too. The pacing is just a tad slow, but that made it a really nice book to enjoy in the evening. I loved the relationships between the kids and the growth of one of them in particular. Recommended for kids 7+.

Katie Boehmer says

Any Which Wall is a book about four kids and their very eventful summer. In the beginning of the book, they decide to take a bike ride into the corn field down the street from their house. When they get into the corn field, Roy sees something that looks like a huge wall. As they get closer to the object, they realize that it is a wall. This is very surprising for them seeing that they go to the corn field all of the time, but have never seen the wall before. Then, Emma sees something shiny in the dirt and rides her bike over to pick it up. It was the key to the wall. All of the kids get very excited and can't wait to find out more about the wall. Then the next day when they all get to the wall, they find out that the wall is magic and can send them to any place they wish for as long as there is a wall at the place. So throughout the whole summer, Henry, Roy, Emma, and Susan take several different adventures all over the world sometimes even going back in time. This book was a fun book that I would recommend to people that enjoy reading realistic fiction and fantasy books.

Raina says

Put together a Narnia-like plot device, Neil Gaiman's quirky narrative voice, and a setting which combines the modern world with throwback innocence. Add time-travel, a couple of great secondary characters, episodic structure, and didactic magic.

This is good old fashioned storytelling fun. At first, I thought the plot might be a little cliché. Four kids (two boys, two girls - aged 6-12) discover a wall in the middle of a field which will transport them to other times and places. The narrative voice just sparkles with self-awareness and humor, making special note about dangerous choices, and inserting mini-sermons about smart living within the text. This one made me laugh and tear up within pages and I couldn't believe how fast I read it, even limiting my reading sessions to breaks at work. Unfortunately, the innocence, kid-friendly cover and ages of the characters will make this primarily a 5th-6th grade booktalk, but I hope kids of many ages will discover it.

paula says

When you develop a team of siblings whose job it will be to solve a mystery, survive an adventure, or deal with magic, you have three choices. You can establish verisimilitude by making them sniping, squabbling siblings who insult each other and barely endure each other's company, like the Grace family in Tony DiTerlizzi's Spiderwick stories; you can make them react believably to danger and uncertainty by banding tightly together, viz the Baudelaire siblings, who are as supportive and encouraging of each other as the events surrounding them are unfortunate.

Or you can take the middle path. Think Aldens. Or Cassons. Heck, think of the March girls. They don't always agree, and sometimes a fit is pitched, but as far as I'm concerned, there's your verisimilitude. No hair-pulling required.

What I'm saying is: brave, considerate, honest and smart does not equal BORING. Laurel Snyder's Any

Which Wall is a Penderwick-y book, a Nesbitty book, an avowedly Eagery book, featuring four children who discover a wall that works magic, and who must figure out how to use it and what it can do. Once they've got that sorted, the next step for each kid is to decide - what to wish for. What's YOUR heart's desire? Hard to say? Try making that decision when you're six.

But while each child makes this decision based on his or her own interests (Henry wants pirates, Roy chooses American history, little Emma wants a castle, while big girl Susan just wants to see her best friend again), their adventures give each kid the opportunity to stretch underused muscles: independence, honesty, logic, compassion.

The writing is clear and pleasant - Laurel Snyder has a particular gift for describing place, and her dialogue is natural and unaffected. LeUyen Pham I have to guess was just a gift from Laurel's editor. Nobody draws regular kids, with their quirks of gesture and occasional annoyed expression, like Ms. Pham. Between the two of them, they've created four children as real as the kids messing around on my porch at this very minute.
