

Who Can See Magic?

By Adam Shaughnessy

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*All authors whose stories are tinged with magic face a similar decision --- how do you decide which characters can see the magic and which can't, and why? When writing his debut novel *The Trickster's Tangle*, Adam Shaughnessy was no exception; he had to figure out which characters could see the Mythics --- characters from myths that can occasionally visit our world --- and make it logical, meaningful and interesting. Find out his process --- and his final decision --- in his blog post below!*

In THE ENTIRELY TRUE STORY OF THE UNBELIEVABLE FIB, magic is real. Mythology is true. The characters we know from myths exist. They're called Mythics and they live in magical realms that are connected to our world by avenues of possibility. And every once in a while --- not often, but every once in a while --- Mythics travel to this world. The catch? Not everyone can see them.

One of the most important decisions I made while writing my book was the decision about who would be able to see Mythics --- and why. Many authors who write fantasy set in a variation of our world face the same dilemma. If magic is real, why can't everyone see it?

Different authors have adopted or invented many wonderful answers to that question. In his *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, Rick Riordan uses the Mist, a veil that twists the perceptions of mortals so they can't see the mythical elements of the world in which they live. J.K. Rowling invented a Ministry of Magic to, in part, maintain a separation between the Muggle world and the wizarding world of the *Harry Potter* series.

Another solution we tend to see a lot in stories (especially stories for young people) is that you have to believe in magic to see it (or hear it, in the case of Chris Van Allsburg's beautiful book THE POLAR EXPRESS). It's a lovely idea, and some of my favorite stories embrace this approach.

But my book is about something called "The Unbelievable FIB", so it occurred to me that it might be interesting to play with this popular idea about belief. What if, in my book, the people who could experience magic were the people who hadn't yet made up their minds about what they believed?

The more I thought about the idea, the more I liked it. After all, belief can be a positive and a powerful thing. But it can also be a dangerous thing. If we believe in something completely, if we're sure of it, we run the risk of closing our minds to other ideas and other ways of thinking. In other words, we risk blinding ourselves to other possibilities. And I've always felt that magic and possibility go hand in hand. Doesn't the existence of magic, even in our imaginations, depend on the possibility of something more, something beyond the rules of our everyday experience? I think so.