

FAMILY MEDIA/BOOKS

Beyond Harry Potter: 8 Inclusive Fantasy Series To Read Instead

Middle-grade titles with magic like Harry Potter, but inclusive

BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER) |

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Like “The Lord of the Rings (<https://www.amazon.com/Hobbit-Lord-Rings-Fellowship-Towers/dp/0345538374?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” did for high fantasy, the “Harry Potter” series (<https://www.amazon.com/Harry-Potter-Paperback-Box-Books/dp/0545162076?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>) created a template for kids’ fantasy books. The Boy Who Lived is an indelible part of our culture, one that won’t go away any time soon. With its emphasis on respect for difference and smattering of real-world diversity among the students, the series was relatively progressive for its time – the first book was published in 1997. But standards for diversity have changed, and efforts to reverse-engineer the stories to be more inclusive have not been very successful. Now, [recent transphobic comments made by series author J.K. Rowling](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-53002557) (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-53002557>) have many families looking for authors they can support with a clearer conscience. We’ve rounded up some more inclusive (mostly middle-grade) fantasy books that capture some of the same magic as Harry Potter.

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<https://www.amazon.com/Deep-Dark-Blue-Niki-Smith/dp/0316486019?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20> ‘The Deep & Dark Blue <https://www.amazon.com/Deep-Dark-Blue-Niki-Smith/dp/0316486019?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>’ by Niki Smith



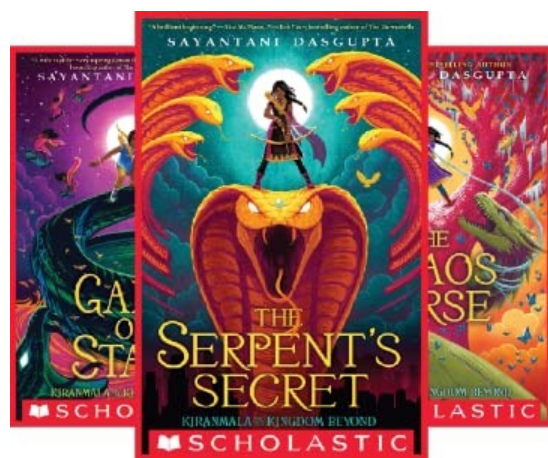
In this middle-grade graphic novel, Lambda Literary Award-nominated author Niki Smith presents magical schooling with positive trans representation. Royal twins fleeing a coup take refuge with an order of magical women called the Communion.

As the twins learn more about the Communion, and themselves, they must decide whether to fight to regain their royal status or stay in the magical world they have discovered.

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0841XWXN3?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20> ‘The Underland Chronicles <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0841XWXN3?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>’ by Suzanne Collins

Author Suzanne Collins (of “Hunger Games” fame) says she wrote the middle-grade

“Underland Chronicles” as a modern, urban update of “Alice in Wonderland.” But like a certain wizard, 11-year-old Gregor has an entire series devoted to his adventures in a secret world that exists right next to (or technically, under) our own. In the normal world he’s just a kid living in a low-rent apartment, but in Underland, he is the chosen one of a dangerous prophecy. Real-world categories of diversity are unaddressed, but in Underland, Gregor overcomes prejudice again and again as he finds allies in the very creatures he’s been taught to revile. Be prepared to shed tears over the death of a cockroach.



<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07G8RCTPF?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>) **‘Kiranmala and the Kingdom Beyond**
<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07G8RCTPF?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)’ by Sayantani DasGupta

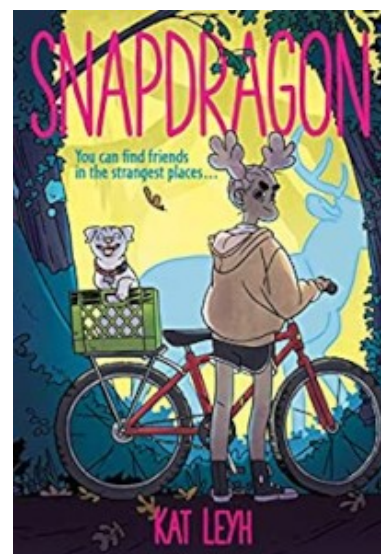
In this middle-grade series, Kiranmala thought she was an ordinary sixth-grader from New Jersey until the morning of her 12th birthday. No owls were involved, but on that day, she discovered she was actually a magical Indian princess fated to save the world – and her parents – from demons. In book three, Kiranmala is introduced to her new best friend, who is nonbinary.

‘Little Witch Academia (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07JN4MRCF?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)’ by Yoh Yoshinari

Queer representation in this manga is ambiguous at best, but the magical school in this Japanese series is every bit as delightful as Hogwarts. In a fun twist, the protagonist is not fated to be the best and strongest witch, but in fact lacks any magical ability at all. This three-book series is great for younger kids, and there’s an anime adaptation. (“Sailor Moon (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07TND584P?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)” is a different anime genre, but offers more gender diversity in a magical universe.)

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(<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B083RSQ4FX?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>) 'Snapdragon (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B083RSQ4FX?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)' by Kat Leyh



Better known for the supernatural summer camp series “Lumberjanes (C:\Users\Patty\Desktop\PM\Digital\Lumberjanes)” (also a contender for this list), Kat Leyh’s “Snapdragon” is a tween-friendly magical realist graphic novel. There is no magical boarding school, but the protagonist Snap does receive a magical education from the local witch in their small, gender-diverse town.

(<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07VRSM61Z?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)' by Ash Van Otterloo

The competition between witching families in “Cattywampus” is much more serious than Hogwarts houses dueling for the House Cup. But when two young witches from Appalachia accidentally resurrect an entire graveyard of their feuding ancestors, they have to pair up to find the counter-curse while dealing with tough life issues — including sexual identity.



(<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B085L4FCBQ?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>) 'Akata Witch (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B085L4FCBQ?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)' by Nnedi Okorafor

Often called the Nigerian Harry Potter, the “Akata” series is ongoing, with two books released

so far. Like Harry Potter, 12-year-old albino Sunny is a misfit who discovers she has magical powers and is whisked off to a magic school where she and her classmates must catch a killer. However, in this series, the murderer targets children, and the violence is more graphic than anything that happens at Hogwarts. Despite the young age of the protagonist, readers should be a bit older before starting this one.

'Legacy of Orisha (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07C64VJ43?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>)' by Tomi Adeyemi

Taking place in a fantasy world inspired by West Africa, the two books in Adeyemi's "Orisha" series depict a world in which Maji used to live side by side with the powerless. Now, the Maji have been all but wiped out, and only a few magical youths survive, training in secret until the day when they must inevitably fight the war to regain their freedom. This is a YA series, but no weightier (literally and figuratively) than the later Potter books.

Looking for more?

We created this list in consultation with Seattle Public Library's children's librarians, who have provided more great [middle-grade \(https://seattle.bibliocommons.com/list/share/75983122_gemmadee/1750528419_middle_grade_rowling_read-betters\)](https://seattle.bibliocommons.com/list/share/75983122_gemmadee/1750528419_middle_grade_rowling_read-betters) and [YA \(https://seattle.bibliocommons.com/list/share/75983122_gemmadee/1750532000_ya_rowling_read-betters\)](https://seattle.bibliocommons.com/list/share/75983122_gemmadee/1750532000_ya_rowling_read-betters) options than we can fit in one article. Hennepin County Library in Minnesota has also created this great list of [Magic School Readalikes \(https://hclib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/667859951/1730462919\)](https://hclib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/667859951/1730462919).

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Rick Riordan, whose Camp Half-Blood has always given Hogwarts a run for its money, has made an obvious effort since the "Percy Jackson" series (<https://www.amazon.com/Percy-Jackson-Olympians-5-Book/dp/B00TUCJLTU?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20>) to make his books more inclusive, with representation of different races, religions and gender identities. Even more meaningfully, Riordan has used his platform to establish the [Rick Riordan Presents publishing imprint \(https://rickriordan.com/rick-riordan-presents/\)](https://rickriordan.com/rick-riordan-presents/) that releases #OwnVoices stories of magic and mythology for middle-grade readers.

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Cyberbullying 101:

**BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER)**

Seattle-based freelance writer Gemma Alexander focuses on the intersection of parenting and the arts. When she's not writing for "ParentMap," she blogs at gemmadeealexander.com (<https://gemmadeealexander.com/>) and tweets at [@gemmadeetweet](https://twitter.com/gemmadeetweet).

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