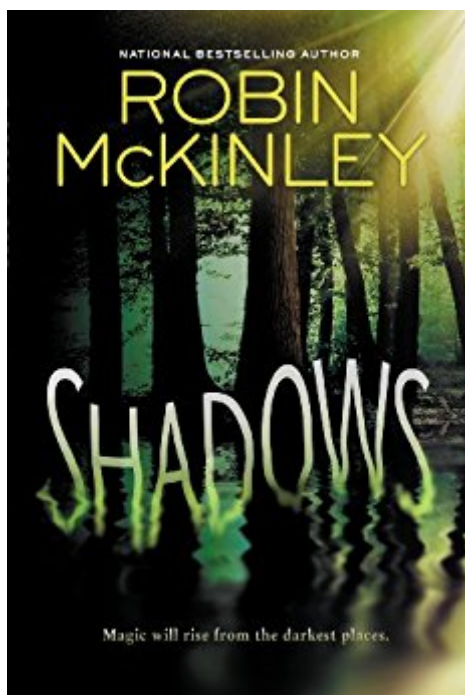


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# Shadows



## Synopsis

A compelling and inventive novel set in a world where science and magic are at odds, by Robin McKinley, the Newbery-winning author of *The Hero and the Crown* and *The Blue Sword*, as well as the classic fantasy titles *Beauty*, *Chalice*, *Spindle*, *End*, *Pegasus* and *Sunshine*. Maggie knows something off about Val, her mom's new husband. Val is from Oldworld, where they still use magic, and he won't have any tech in his office-shed behind the house. But more importantly what are the huge, horrible, jagged, jumpy shadows following him around? Magic is illegal in Newworld, which is all about science. The magic-carrying gene was disabled two generations ago, back when Maggie's great-grandmother was a notable magician. But that was a long time ago. Then Maggie meets Casimir, the most beautiful boy she has ever seen. He's from Oldworld too and he's heard of Maggie's stepfather, and has a guess about Val's shadows. Maggie doesn't want to know . . . until earth-shattering events force her to depend on Val and his shadows. And perhaps on her own heritage. In this dangerously unstable world, neither science nor magic has the necessary answers, but a truce between them is impossible. And although the two are supposed to be incompatible, Maggie's discovering the world will need both to survive. "A delightful read." Publishers Weekly "Bound to appeal." Kirkus Reviews

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I enjoyed SHADOWS very much. It is narrated by Maggie who is a new high school senior. Her mother has just married a man named Val who comes from Oldworld where they still practice magic. In Maggie's Newworld magic is so illegal that a couple of generations earlier a medical procedure was developed to remove the magic gene from anyone who had one. Of course, that didn't work quite as expected. Maggie dislikes Val not just because he is short and hairy and has no fashion sense, but because he is surrounded by scary shadows that only she can see. She stays away from him by spending more time at the Orchard Animal Shelter where she got her own Border Collie Mongo. Maggie seems to have unique understanding with animals. One day she meets a gorgeous new boy named Casimir who is also from the Oldworld and who has come to study worlds philosophy at the local college. The two of them happen to be together when there is a magical occurrence that which Maggie is able to contain by using origami figures she makes from her Enhanced Algebra textbook. No one is more surprised and confused that this works than Maggie herself. The military is called in to figure out what happened which raises suspicions about Maggie and Val. When Val is arrested, Maggie and her friends are determined to rescue him. Along the way, Maggie learns a lot about magic and herself. The story was action-packed. I liked Maggie's relationship with her dog Mongo. I also liked her relationship with her friends Jill and Takahiro who are both closet magic users themselves. The world that the author created was well realized and well rounded. Fans of fantasy who want an intrepid female main character will enjoy this one.

More than any fantasy book I've read, Shadows painted vivid pictures of mysterious experiences while the heroine and the reader remain unclear what is actually happening. Most fantasies create an alternate reality with rules that define what can and cannot take place. This book describes in detail sensations and images none of us have experienced but leaves you unsure what exactly is happening. Beyond a vague description of some split in reality, the wholesale (but not completely successful) removal of the gene for magic in one part of the country, and the existence of other "universes" (?) there are no other explanations. What are the gruuuaa? Why does origami affect the world? Is there some reason the dogs and cat in this tale are so intelligent? Was there some outside

force that nudged the girls to use Japanese terms in their speech so many years ago that had such an impact when Casimir overheard one word in particular when they were 17? No attempt is made to explain, but great effort is expended on helping the reader visualize and imagine what is happening to the characters. This made the story more immersive than expository. I read it a second time partly because it was so fascinating and partly to see if I had missed some explanations the first time around. I didn't get anymore explanations but enjoyed the second time just as much as the first.

Shadows is unabashedly YA: Maggie, its protagonist, is an adolescent with adolescent concerns who discovers the hard way that there's much more to her world and herself than she had ever suspected. Many readers will be reminded of McKinley's *Sunshine*, but the resemblance is largely generic. Both books are set in modern worlds whose quotidian mundane elements are very familiar, but Maggie's world is as different from *Sunshine* as both are from our own. *Sunshine* is as much a first-contact story as it is anything; *Shadows* is much more a coming of age story, albeit an incomplete one. In keeping with the dedication to Diana Wynne Jones, McKinley expects the reader to make sense of the world without a lot of hand-holding; this suits me just fine, but some may find it confusing. The author may have intended this effect: we see everything through Maggie's eyes, and she's initially confronted with things that don't make sense to her. It's a lesser book than *Sunshine* but still well worth reading. And it has some very remarkable origami.

Just finished this book and it was wonderfully fast-paced and I was always interested in what was happening next. I'm a fan of Robin McKinley's books and even then I can still admit that in some of her books the descriptions can tend to ramble on to the point of spacing out. But there was none of that in this book! The relationships between the characters all seemed very realistic and believable while not being mundane. The story was gripping and I'm sad there's not a sequel because I want more of these characters! The only negative thing I really have to say about it is that the climax of the book happened and was over very quickly. It was kind of odd in that it didn't feel like there was a whole lot of build up to it. And the story itself really feels like there should be more to it with how much McKinley put into the lore and background. We got to know a lot about certain things about the world and how it's ruled and there is so much hinting and so much revealed and discovered yet nothing is really done with that afterwards. However overall I still really loved this book.

Wow. I couldn't stop reading this until it ran out. Wonderful. A totally unique new fantasy world. I'm seriously hoping this is the start of a series. That means I'd have to retract my vow never to start an unfinished series again--learned my lesson from George RR Martin. But for Robin McKinley, I'd happily do it. It seems a little like YA fiction, but without the stupid. Or the sappy. Or the suck writing. It's a fabulous new universe. And the tone reminds me mightily of another favorite of mine by her, Sunshine. Read this book!

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