



The Portal (An Alternative History Novel)

Richard Bowker

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Larry Barnes has made a spectacular discovery—an invisible portal to a parallel universe, where Burger King is Burger Queen, cell phones are huge, and his hometown doesn't look anything like the place where he lives.

When Larry returns, he tells his best friend, Kevin, who convinces him to re-enter The Portal. What could go wrong?

This time, Larry and Kevin enter a world devoid of modern technology, where "America" doesn't exist, and New England is losing the war against Canada and New Portugal. Unable to get back to The Portal, they offer their knowledge to the New England army in order to survive and gain hope of returning home.

But when the ambitious lieutenant using their services discovers just how valuable Larry and Kevin's knowledge is, he changes the plan.

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ABOUT RICHARD BOWKER:

Critically-acclaimed author Richard Bowker has published a variety of novels including science fiction, mysteries and thrillers. When he isn't writing, Richard enjoys offering thoughts on writing, reading and learning at www.richardbowker.com

The Portal (An Alternative History Novel) Details

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From Reader Review The Portal (An Alternative History Novel) for online ebook

Tomislav says

I've never been very clear on the line between a Young Adult book, and a children's book. The Portal is aimed straight at 10 to 12 year old boys, and "young adult" just doesn't sound right for that age. However, hard as it would be for some to believe, I once was a 12 year old boy, carry that 12 year old boy around inside myself, and this is almost exactly the kind of book that hooked me on SF back then. I suspect the same is true of Rich Bowker. I have previously read his Dover Beach, an adult novel written a few years ago.

So, 12 year old friends Larry and Kevin accidentally find and fall through a portal to an alternate universe. Like Bowker's other books, it is set in Boston - only the tiny United States of New England is under attack from neighboring powers Canada and New Portugal. Larry and Kevin are quickly swept away in a life and death adventure for survival, but also an adventure into their own hearts. This is heartwarming stuff, and Bowker's lessons for the reader are strong good ones. If you know any boys the right age, recommend this book to them! As for girl readers, I'm not sure - the girl characters are not internally developed.

As an adult, I reflected how in our culture, there really isn't anything important that 12 year old boys are expected to contribute or are relied upon for, other than to take care of themselves and stay out of trouble. The sense of self-worth that comes from service and being needed by others doesn't kick in until much later in life. What a shame.

Hillary says

Entertaining work by a promising author. Looking forward to reading his other work.

Kimrey Levy-mickelson says

i am not sure if this was written for young adults, but it had that feel to it. i enjoyed this read, it was interesting and well paced. i recommend it if you are looking for something relatively light but not fluffy.

John Presler says

I received a free copy of this book from eBook Discovery in exchange for an honest review.

While walking in the woods one day, young Larry Barnes stumbles across an interesting anomaly. He found a portal that took him to what appeared to be a parallel universe. Everything looked similar to home, except that Burger King was called Burger Queen and Dairy Queen was called Dairy King.

Excited about his discovery, he could not wait to tell his 12-year old friend, Kevin, about it and together they went to explore the portal. When they step through the portal this time, they find themselves in a completely

different environment. And to make things even worse, somebody is shooting at them. When a family rescues them and takes them to Boston, they discover that this world is very different from their own and that the country is at war.

As they go along, they make friends with several of the people and get involved in the war in ways they had never dreamed possible.

The challenges continue to mount. Can they survive in this new world? Will they be able to get back home? Can they even find the portal again?

Bill says

This is a time travel bildungsroman! Well done at that.

It mostly takes place in an alternate Boston, which of course is near and dear to me as a former denizen. It has a better than average way to bring you into the setup, with unique situations and (for the genre) themes since the heroes are two young men of about 12. With any alternate history novel, you find yourself wondering how plausible is the alternate world - this is quite plausible - and how detailed - and this makes sense. One gets the notion that the author thought a lot about how someone in an alternate universe - set back technologically from our far advanced world of today - would react to someone from a place like the 21st Century. On top of the "how does the person from today react" part which is de rigger. That worked really well for me when I read this.

The Portal does something else well. It cast me into the lead character's mind so that I believed that he was a young man dealing with a really wrong situation. And searching for something familiar in this eerie world. I do not recall an alternate universe story that uses someone so young as the protagonist, or presents this exact dilemma. When I read the novel - admittedly while dealing with a stomach virus - I felt like I got into the character's head, he was real, and he was caught at several points by decisions.

The ending, no spoilers, feels acceptably unsatisfying. As in, it's a good ending. It makes sense. I believe it. And it's a better sort of choice than "everybody's okay now - everything's fine and all wrapped up with a neat bow".

In a way, the novel reminded me of H. Beam Piper's *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*. Except that instead of a well armed, bright Pennsylvania state trooper with a gun and lots of practical chemistry experience, the two boys who go to the alternate world are young, inexperienced, and are not destined to become the leaders of men. They are, of course, important.

Why did I give this book four stars? It's polished writing. It's a good yarn. I enjoyed it very much. It was not one of the handful of novels that blow my mind, that compel rereading time and time again (ahem, Tolkien, China Mieville, Khalid Hosseini and Jampa Lahari), and that I insist everyone read. I do believe that if you like this genre and you like a good novel that this is an excellent choice for several hours of immersion.

Peter says

An interesting read and reasonable premise. The view point characters make the book a bit more interesting than say a couple of adults being caught up in an alternate world.

The ending though was a let down. The boys return home after spending a number of months in the alternative world and find that only a few hours have passed in our world.

Ricky Kimsey says

Alternate History

In this young adult novel a teen from our world goes through a portal that takes to an alternate world where the United States does not exist because history there went in a different direction.

Bruno Di Giandomenico says

YA novel

I thought it was not a YA, but it is still nice. Still quite good. Two almost 13th years old find a portal to another world, a parallel world where the USA do not exist. This world is about at the 18th century technology and there is a war brewing up. And the kids know so much more....

Nati says

A very interesting story. The book explores the possibility of multiple parallel universes and the chance to jump from one to another and live a parallel life. But it's a story about two boys and how they face some very difficult situations and how they react and they realize that you can't take for granted what you have, and how you must enjoy everyday with the people that love and care for you, and above all, the value of the family. I received a copy of this book from eBook Discovery in exchange for my honest review

Heather McBride says

EXCELLENT!! This book would make a great movie, too!

Becca says

A fun YA that was geared towards pre-teen and early teen boys. Also appealed to the history nerd side of me who often thinks 'what if that ended up differently'.

Kalman Reti says

Very well written Connecticut Yankee-style tale into an alternate early American past, where the various European powers had different spheres of influence over the continent. Billed as young adult, but enjoyable at any age in my view.

Allen says

When I first started reading this book, I almost abandoned it when I saw the protagonists were two kids around 10 years old. I then got fascinated by the plot and the author's handling of it. An alternate history of America, with the country still attached to England, Portugal and Canada, our boys struggle through a country at war, with small pox still a deadly disease and weapons still consisting of muskets, smooth bore cannon and swords. The author's dealing with a parallel universe was very well done, staying with an alternate history retarded from ours. I also did not find any errors, a rare event for me.
