



The Secret of Platform 13

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A forgotten door on an abandoned railway platform is the entrance to a magical kingdom--an island where humans live happily with feys, mermaids, ogres, and other wonderful creatures. Carefully hidden from the world, the Island is only accessible when the door opens for nine days every nine years. A lot can go wrong in nine days. When the beastly Mrs. Trotter kidnaps the prince of the Island, it's up to a strange band of rescuers to save him. But can an ogre, a hag, a wizard, and a fey really troop around London unnoticed?

The Secret of Platform 13 Details

Date : Published June 1st 2001 by Puffin Books (first published January 1st 1994)

ISBN : 9780141311920

Author : Eva Ibbotson

Format : Paperback 231 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Childrens, Middle Grade, Fiction, Young Adult

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Cait • A Page with a View says

Oh, wow. This was published before Harry Potter... but tell me if some of these plot elements sound vaguely familiar:

There's a passage under Platform 13 at King's Cross station in London that opens for a short time every 9 years. It leads to the mist-shrouded island of Avalon where all sorts of magical creatures live. Their baby prince is taken through the passage and kidnapped by a rich, horrid woman who just wants a baby. The boy is lost until the passage opens again 9 years later.

An ogre, a faerie, a young hag, and an old wizard who used to be a professor go to retrieve the boy when he is 9 years old. They find a kind, overworked boy named Ben at the rich woman's house, but he says he's not her son (turns out the woman was able to have a kid of her own after all, so she told Ben his parents were dead and neglected him). Ben sleeps in a windowless cupboard and has a miserable home life.

The rich woman's actual son (Raymond) is super fat, incredibly spoiled, throws tantrums, has two computers, and gets an absurd amount of presents and toys. He goes to the most expensive private school while Ben goes to a local sketchy school. His father is always busy with whatever his company's latest deal is.

The group of rescuers follow Raymond and his mother to a restaurant where the spoiled kid throws a fit because his Knickerbocker Glory isn't just right. The rescuers tell Raymond he's a prince. He tells his mother, who thinks people are out to kidnap him. She takes him away where nobody will ever find him. Some more adventures ensue as everyone tries to rescue the wrong boy. At a party a magical creature gets loose and causes havoc. Ben runs into the dining room to save it and ends up getting hit and floating helplessly above everyone and out of the dining room. The rich woman then makes arrangements for Ben to go to some prison-type school.

The main goal in the story is just to get the young prince back to his people on the magical island. It's definitely a middle grade story, but was still a really cute read full of imagination! The stories did end up being way different, buuuut I still couldn't help but notice those few small similarities...

Carly Green says

This book has magic flowing throughout every word- I can't stress enough how much I love it. I still have the old copy from when I was very small, with my name shakily written on the inside cover. When we were asked at school what we thought heaven would be like, I simply read out Ibbotson's description of 'the island', an island with curving beaches, mermaids, hags and the all-important mistmakers. It manages to include everything a child would need to know about being good and kind, about how people are different (and there's no need to shout about it), and about how people and nature are worth more than gold or toys. I'm 20 now and in university, and whenever I'm missing home or feeling horrible, I reread this book and immediately feel better. I'd like to thank Eva Ibbotson for giving this important part of my childhood. Also, when this edition gets to be 19 years old, the pages go a lovely shade of yellow and it smells really,

really good.

Deshana Desai says

I was expecting loads from this book. It is one of those books recommended as a relief to those going through severe Harry Potter withdrawal. I expected magic and being left in wonder and amazement (the effect magic usually has on a reader). But it thoroughly failed to meet expectations. The magical gump, caves, mermaids, a ragtag group of individuals for the most important quest, 'stealing' a baby; all these were examples of elements that didn't work.

The world building was too cautious - it felt like the writer was trying hard to make the world believable (for example, the mist making techniques to hide the island which had separated from the mainlands) which was unnecessary I thought. Another strong example, is the fact that neither Ben or the King and Queen could do magic; they were 'humans'. It would certainly have been more fun to see them all, or atleast, the boy as powerful wielders of magic. The book is fantasy and supposed to be a separate world, trying to make it fit into the real world spoiled the effect.

The plot was absolutely predictable, the big twists were forsee-able from the very beginning and the little surprises (for example, Odge's gift) did not stun. There are some books where even though the ending has been guessed by the readers from miles afar, it is still satisfying to see it unfold. This book was not one of them.

It banked on the different creatures, charming world-building and a formulaic good-and-evil story to redeem itself. With the exception of the mistmakers, which I did find adorable, I thought it lacked charm and the power of imagination to draw you in.

I don't see this book as a forerunner for Harry Potter. It's a totally different concept and bar the fact that both books have the presence of 'magic' and the entry-points to the magical place is the King's Cross - I don't see a lot in common. In this book, the boy disappears for nine years after which he is brought back. That's the only similarity in the story arc and it's a weak one. Perhaps, the simplicity of the story arc and laid-back writing can be excused since it's a children's book but I am a huge admirer of Children's books and love reading a lot of them. Didn't enjoy this one. It's a shame since I generally like Eva Ibbotson's books and was looking forward to being whisked away to a magical land in this book.

Kristin says

Wow...I'll never look at knitting needles the same way again. Thanks a lot, Soft Parts Doreen.

Seriously, though, why isn't this book a well-known classic? It was so charming and funny and addicting. It was like Roald Dahl with a bit of Narnia and Harry Potter thrown in. I loved the writing style, the characters, the plot, everything! What is it with the British and their children's books? They write kids' classics better than anyone else.

Every time I read a new middle grade, I'm hoping that it will be just like this...a new favorite.

Nina says

Years ago I got the German audiobook for my birthday or for Christmas. And I remember listening to it almost every day. Then - a while ago - I found the CD in one of my old CD boxes and listened to it again: And I still love the story so much.

So I decided to give the book to my cousin for his 11th birthday. I think he'll like it, too, because he read the whole Harry Potter series.

So that's the point: You can look at the story line for itself and it's great. Yet you can try to find all the things that are similar to the first Harry Potter book - and there are definitely a few.

For me the book is a ???? one and I would be happy, if someone made a movie adaptation of this awesome book.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

One of my kids brought this book home from the school library several years ago and (true to form) I swiped it when they were done and read it.* I think younger Harry Potter fans would enjoy this book. As in the HP books, there's a platform at London's Kings Cross Station that leads to a different, magical world.** This magical porthole opens only once every nine years, for a nine-day period. Nine years ago, the baby prince of this magical land was kidnapped while visiting our world. And now that the porthole has finally opened again, it's time to mount a rescue expedition! (consisting of a giant, a fey, a wizard and a rather ordinary-looking hag).

This was a charming and humorous MG/YA book.

*Personally, I think I deserve major mom points for reading most of what my kids are reading. (The fact that I probably want to read most of these books anyway should not result in a deduction from my points.)

**Side note #2: This book actually was published 3 years before the first Harry Potter book, which has resulted in some raised eyebrows, but Ibbotson says she holds no grudges against Rowling.

Jori Richardson says

I was browsing through a thrift store, and when I saw this short little children's book, I decided to read it right on the spot.

I remember seeing this book everywhere when I was a younger teenager, but for some reason I never ended up reading it. It was probably during the years that I refused to read anything but historical fiction and classics (which, I must admit, still sounds loosely similar to how things are today).

But anyways.

In "The Secret of Platform 13," there is an Island somewhere (not really in our world, but kind of within it...).

it's never really said. But it's just somewhere else) in which there is a portal. This portal opens up every 9 years, and leads to a tube station in the London underground. One day, two nurses are taking the infant crown prince out for a stroll, and get tempted into the portal and into a sweets shop. They only let the baby out of their sight for a moment, but the prince has already been stolen by Mrs. Trotter, a snooty and dreadfully rich woman who decided on a whim one day that she wanted a baby.

Plans are made to go and recover the lost prince in 9 years when the portal opens up again.

A clever young hag named Odge convinces the queen to let her go along on the rescue mission, and a small troop of varied islands set out to find the lost prince and bring him home.

This book is written in a sort of detached, factual, stuffily funny sort of way that reminded me of the Lemony Snicket books.

I suppose it was alright, and I can't think of much to complain about, but I didn't ever enjoy the story, and my interest in finishing was halfhearted.

Some of the plot twists don't make much sense if you think about them. Why would the royal family not storm the Trotter's house to get the prince after their efforts to kindly get him out fail? They even have a formidable army waiting eagerly to do just that, but they keep holding off, for no apparent reason. And the rescue party that the royal family sends out is not exactly the most promising of individuals. Ibbotson supports the underdog through-out the story, which is great, but it didn't make sense to send a ragtag group of average people on the most important journey in the Island's history. And they have been planning this for nine years, remember.

I know that this is a children's book, which partially why I'm not being so hard on it stretching the imagination a bit too much. But I believe that a good, strongly written children's book should stand up to adult skepticism and practicality. What you write has to make sense, whatever the target audience.

The story was very predictable and run-of-the-mill, and never surprised me. I guessed the secret about the prince the moment that Odge stepped onto the Trotter's lawn. Yawn.

Although I couldn't say I liked this book, there were some witty, memorable moments and phrases here and there. The fluffy creatures that create mist (so that the Island can never be found) were an un-needed, but cute, touch. Instead of saying 'quick,' the author instead uses the words 'like greased lightning,' which for some reason stuck in my head.

And the one thing in the book I found genuinely funny were the prince's ex nurses, living in a dreadful cave to punish themselves. They have vowed to live as miserably as possible until the prince is found, which Odge discovers when she goes to visit them. I think this sentence, spoken from one nurse to another, explains it well enough: "The toast is not burnt enough, Lily. Go and burn it some more."

All in all though, I can't see why this book became so popular. Right after I read it, I found myself making apologies for it owing to the fact that it is a book written for children 9 - 12. But I've decided that that is no excuse - earlier this year I read "Coraline" and loved it. It's certainly possible to write strong, fascinating children's books that adult readers are able to enjoy as much as any other book. And in my opinion, this isn't one of them.

Jess Hancock says

My year 4 bookclub chose this as their second read.

To be honest when I first started reading I didn't know how on earth I was going to help them draw anything from the story. It was slow starting, a little confusing, slightly vague, but then suddenly the pace changes and it turns into a wonderful little mystical adventure story.

I did enjoy the story and liked that I could draw references to books and movies such as; Harry Potter, Prince Caspian, flushed Away and Janes Bond.

At book club, the thing that I found most fascinating was, out of the 11 children, 8 of them had not comprehended, that Ben was in fact the King and Queens son.

I'm yet to decide why they didn't know that.....

Namratha says

My foray into the crazy world of Eva Ibbotson continues!

Platform 13 at London Station has remained shut since a very long time. But any attempts to make renovations always....always get botched up. The reason being that Platform 13 hides a "gump" : an opening to a secret, utopian island. It is a blissful place, ruled by a well-loved King and Queen and plays home to all kinds of humans, animals and magical creatures. However the gump opens once in nine years for nine hours only. So anyone who wants to crossover needs to be super-quick and get the journey done in the limited time period.

Tragedy strikes when the new born prince of the island is kidnapped by a rich, nasty lady called Mrs.Trottle, on a trip into London city . And since this happens just when the gump is about to close, the devastated baby-sitters have no option but to return empty-handed to the island. The grief-stricken islanders have to wait for another nine years before they can launch a rescue operation.

Finally the long wait is over and a search party comprising of the ancient wizard Cornelius, a sweet-tempered fey Gurkintrude, a yodeling gentle giant Hans and a small but willful hag Odge Gribble heads off to recover the lost prince.

Reaching the prince's (who now goes by the name of Raymond Trottle) new home, the search party is delighted to meet a perfectly charming, well-behaved boy. But to their disappointment, he turns out to be just a servant-boy. The real "prince" infact has grown into a spoilt, over-weight, arrogant child. Rescuing the podgy, shrieking brat proves to be a Herculean task and the story proceeds with a lot of drama, mayhem and a multitude of intriguing characters.

Predictable though the story maybe and not as spontaneously funny as "Which Witch","The Secret of Platform 13" is nevertheless entertaining and happily caters to all fantasy-world lovers.

Arielle Walker says

I haven't read this since I was very, very small, and an adult re-read didn't disappoint. I can definitely see moments referenced in Harry Potter - the bratty, spoiled child in a delicious incident with a Knickerbocker Glory, to say the least - but as the Ibbotson herself has said she would "like to shake [J.K Rowling] by the hand. I think we all borrow from each other as writers." I can hardly take umbrage. Both books are fantastic,

both authors equally so.

Morgan says

a sweet story.

It reminded me of Rowling (of course), and Roald Dahl rolled into one. Wish I would've read this when I was younger.

Ferdy says

A really fun, simple and magical read. It reminded me a lot of Harry Potter, what with platform 13 being like platform 9 and 3/4's, and Raymond/Ben were just like Dudley/Harry, and Mrs Trotter was sort of like Mrs Dursley.

Cassandra says

Vom Bahnsteig 13, des bekannten Bahnhofs Kings Cross, führt alle neun Jahre ein Weg zu der Insel Gügel. Es ist ein wundervolles Land angefüllt mit Nixen, Hexen, Riesen und anderen Wesen, die uns sonst nur in Märchen und Fantasybüchern begegnen. Regiert wird die Insel von einem liebenswerten Königspaar, dass nach Jahren ein kleiner Prinz geboren wird. Leider währt die Freude nicht lange, da der Prinz in London entführt wird und der Zugang zum Gügel sich erst in neun Jahren wieder öffnet...

Diese Geschichte soll J.K. Rowling zu Harry Potter inspiriert haben und es gibt da schon einige Parallelen. Ich möchte die Charaktere sehr gerne, besonders der Nebeling hat es mir angetan. Mir hat es so gut gefallen, dass ich es unbedingt auch als Print im Regal stehen haben möchte. (Ilona)

Ida says

This story is full of humor and heart. It is written in a whimsical tone not unlike that of *Howl's Moving Castle*, but this book is written for a younger group of readers. The characters are somewhat archetypal, but they are still very intriguing, and I adored Odge and Ben. I wish the island was explored more in the story, because I would love to travel there through the gump, experience its mythological wonders, and befriend the kind and humble islanders. I want to meet the mistmakers especially. What made the story more enjoyable for me is that Eva Ibbotson dropped some hints about her ideas on certain topics between the lines, and I knew from these hints that she was someone I would like to talk to. It was also very interesting to discover the parallels to the Harry Potter series. There is something beautiful in these Lewis-Tolkien moments, in which authors got inspiration from each other.

Jess says

Chapter book - fantasy

For grades 2-7

An ogre, a wizard, a fey and a hag are sent to our world to rescue a young prince who was stolen as a baby in this humorous, low-fantasy adventure.

Every nine years, for nine days, a doorway is open between our world and the Island, which is inhabited by all manner of fantastical creatures; when four of these magical people come through to rescue their prince, the mix-ups and adventure that ensue are more than enough to keep any young fantasy fan entertained. Ibbotson's writing is chatty and her world is full of endearing and quirky characters, from the young hag Odge who wishes she could cough up frogs like her sister, to the friendly Ben who everyone wishes were the prince, instead of the unpleasant Raymond. While the fairly simple plot may appeal more to slightly younger readers, the pace, humor and characters would make this a great read-aloud for older children as well. It would also make a good read-alike for Harry Potter fans, particularly those who enjoy the atmosphere, fantastical creatures, and the humorous elements of the stories.

The Publisher's Weekly review focuses on description before managing to finally comment on the predictability, "well-drawn characters" and amusing qualities. School Library Journal has a more appealing description of the set-up, calling it a "lively fantasy" and commenting on similarities to Roald Dahl, another good read-alike suggestion.

Meaghan says

These are third grade student reviews!

MAEVE

This surprisingly twisty turny tale is about a fey, a magnificent wizard, a magical garden lady, and last, a floating eyeball (or an Ogre if you would be so kind.) They all live on an island in peace until someone no one knows steals the baby prince and everyone is dreadfully sad. This is when the story really begins... No one except the rescuers know what's in the world of London. The King and Queen make the rescuers set out to find their long lost son. On the way, they meet a family of horrible selfish people...the Trottles. Now this is the problem; the Trottles kidnapped the King and Queen's son! Do you think the rescuers can save the day and bring back the long lost prince?

This is a good book and if you read it I hope you enjoy it! I would rate it 3 out of 5 stars!

MAK

Platform 13 is an old platform at King's Cross Station in London's Underground Railways that holds old secrets mostly forgotten by the public. It includes an old doorway-the cloakroom's doorway-that leads toward a magical island and inside this doorway was a 'Gump' that's apparently a portal that takes you to this so-called 'Island'.

Once the King and Queen of the Island had a baby that three nannies took care of. Then they mistakenly get

permission to take the baby-the Prince, Raymond-on an adventure to welcome people through the Gump. The nannies selfishness lured them to go through the Gump to get some stuff to eat but then when one of the nannies was waiting outside to let the other two get the food, the baby got stolen by a rich but selfish and fat lady that had wanted a baby that never came.

The nannies went back through the Gump at the last minute so when they noticed Raymond was missing it was too late! Nine years later, rescuers arrived through the Gump from the Island to rescue Raymond-the prince-and take him back to the Island. They did not know what big adventures awaited them.

Read this book by Eva Ibbotson that I rate 2 stars, though, and that's because this book could have more explanations about what's going on at the Island and in London. Hope you enjoy the book and write a review that gives this book 5 stars!

CASSIE

An ogre, hag, fey, and wizard have really set themselves up for an adventure! One night, the most evil person ever, Mrs. Trotter, snatched the baby prince. They must rescue the long lost prince who had lived on a magic island where mermaids and people live together in harmony. And so the race begins to get him back. Will the super bunch save the day or will evil prevail forever?

I recommend this book for people who like a short read. But I think the book could have a less predictable ending . I rate it 2 stars out of 5.

NINA

This surprisingly great tale includes a group of rescuers from an unknown mysterious island. They are assigned an amazing adventure to rescue a stolen baby prince. The thief of the little prince is very greedy and is hard to track down. Can a fey a wizard an ogre and a hag rescue the long lost little prince?

I think The Secret of Platform 13 is a great book because it takes place on a magical island and has a lot of suspense! The big idea of the book is that good fortunes come from good acts and misery comes from evil deeds. READ THIS AMAZING BOOK TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS!

MALIN

The Secret of Platform 13 is a four-star book! It is about a hag, a wizard, a fey, and a young ogre who embark on a journey into the regular world from a mysterious island with a king and queen. They have to save the prince of the island. A mean lady named Mrs. Trotter stole him when he was a baby. As the king and queen weep, the rescuers search frantically for the prince. But is a spoiled boy going to make a good prince? You should read this page-turner if you want to experience an awesome book full of mystery and adventure!

RAINAH

The Secret Of Platform 13 is a delightfully witty book about a gump, planted in Kings Cross Station right in the heart of London. A gump is a magical portal that transports you to a mystical island where you can forget your troubles. There you will find a queen and king and a whole lot of magical creatures who all get along in peace. One day, a baby prince is born. When the queen asks her best nannies to take care of the prince, he gets stolen from the EVIL Mrs. Trotter. She takes him to live with her but the news gets around quick back at the island. Now it is up to a group of misfit immortals to rescue him. A wizard, a fay, a hag, and an ogre make their way to London to retrieve him. But when they see him in action, they are very surprised that he is not the perfect prince like they had hoped. Even worse, they can't convince him to come back to the island! Will they succeed or will the island fall into eternal sorrow? I give this fantastic book 5 stars! If you want a good page-turner, put down this review and pick up The Secret of Platform 13! You'll thank me later!

Mo says

I have a 7 year old granddaughter who is a HUGE Harry Potter fan. I think she would love this book. She (Meredith) has a birthday next month, and this will definately be one of her gifts.

Note: The parallels between The Secret of Platform 13 and Harry Potter are inescapable. This book actually was published 3 years before the first Harry Potter book. I appreciate the fact that it is not nearly as dark as the Harry Potter series.

Heather Taake says

I read this because I had heard that it may have inspired JK Rowling to write Harry Potter. It is a very cute fantasy story, but meant for a young audience. Maybe third or fourth grade.

LH Johnson says

Oh, oh, oh, my love for Eva Ibbotson utterly continues.

The Secret of Platform 13 is furiously magical and madly inventive. It's the story of a hidden island, wrapped away from the 'everyday' by magic and mists (mists made, fyi, by the *most* amazing creation ever - mistmakers, seal-like creatures who produce mist every time they hear beautiful music). The island is accessible through a secret door on Platform 13, Kings Cross which opens briefly every nine years.

The island is desperately missing their Prince, kidnapped when the island last opened, and now they're going to get him back. It's a rescue mission, haphazard and chaotic and dizzily funny, and it doesn't run smoothly!

Ibbotson's beautiful skills with magical and mysterious creatures remains ineffable. She writes with a loving, brilliantly inventive touch and isn't afraid to inject darker overtones (the Harpies, for example, are amazingly unnerving).

I love Ibbotson, and if you've not discovered her before, this is an excellent starting point. The parallels between The Secret of Platform 13 and Harry Potter are inescapable (Platform 13 was printed first, fyi) and I'd recommend The Secret of Platform 13 for readers who are searching to discover the 'new' Harry Potter series. There's a lot of life in the old dog yet.

Jane Potter says

I remember loving this novel when I was a kid. It was one of the first fantasy novels I ever read. And I was excited to reread it.

The story is easy to get into and fun to read. I love the simplicity of the plot and the fun fantasy elements in

the characters and their interactions. it's pretty easy to figure out where the story is going but that wasn't a surprise for a children's novel.

Ben is so easy to love and root for. Raymond was so ridiculous I had to laugh at him over and over. And I love the quirks of each of the rescuers sent to bring back the prince.

I actually found myself comparing this book to Harry Potter on this reread, lots of fun similarities.

Definitely a book I will be reading aloud to my children one day!
