



The Robot King

Brian Selznick

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"Ezra, a mute since his mother's death, compulsively collects small things that older sister Lucy uses to craft mechanical toys. When she assembles a man-sized figure and inserts their mother's music box as a heart, it comes to life—and what a life! Readers will respond to this...haunting, enigmatic tale of two lonely children who create something wonderful."—K.

The Robot King Details

Date : Published August 24th 1995 by HarperCollins

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Author : Brian Selznick

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From Reader Review The Robot King for online ebook

Ivan says

Selznick is a genius - there is no question. This was one of his first. It's a fable. It's full to bursting with fantasy and heart. The Illustrations are breathtaking (as we've come to expect).

Carmen says

This is really a mixed bag.

Lucy and her younger brother, Ezra, live in Paris. Their mother is dead. They often go to visit her in the graveyard. They collect things - little bits of glass, junk, and buttons. Lucy is a scientist and uses these things to create mechanical toys.

Ezra is mute ever since his mother died. This reminded me of the movie Jumanji.

Lucy, for her part, seems to have become something of an agoraphobic as a result of her mother's death. She sees the attic as her own little world with everything she needs.

One day, Lucy builds a robot with some of her dead mother's belongings. The robot comes to life. The children name him The Robot King.

When The Robot King's knees shatter into a thousand pieces of china, the pieces fly out the window. They come back to haunt The Robot King at night. Any broken object can be fixed and also can fly if a piece of The Robot King's broken knees enters the object.

The Robot King experiments with his magical powers by taking off pieces of himself (fingertips, toes) and placing them in broken-down objects, which makes them function again and gives them the power of flight.

Then, one morning, the children wake up and The Robot King has disappeared? Where has he gone? The children go off to look for him...

....

This was an enchanting story. It is beautifully written. Selznick has a way with words and the prose of the book is very pretty.

The illustrations are beautiful and charming.

I like the strong sister-brother relationship in the book (I have a real weakness for this in stories.)

So why only 3 stars?

Well, nothing is ever really explained or resolved. Perhaps that is unimportant to some people, but not to me. Is the mom's spirit powering The Robot King? Why can it bring objects 'to life?' What is it's purpose? Where is it going? What is it doing? Why is it obsessed with 'outside?' Simply to (view spoiler) Nothing is

explained and no explanation is even hinted at. This leaves me frustrated, even though the book is gorgeous. I understand that the kids are 'coming to terms' with their mom's death through the building of and caring for The Robot King but I am unsure about what is going on and what it all means.

MaryJane says

This modern/medieval steampunk "fairytales" is a gem!

Bridget says

4.75/5

Imperfectly & Happily Adulting for my thoughts

Claudia says

Brian Selznick has such a mesmerizing style of writing and his drawings add a whole other dimension to experiencing his books.

The ending doesn't seem quite complete somehow. The kids, feeling gyped of a solid and clear ending complained, "That was the ending?!?!" But this book is still worth reading.

The Robot King was a quick read but took us on a magical journey that I'm sure we'll return to time and time again.

Kyrie says

I would have loved to read this book as a child - sort of Lewis Carroll mixed in with fairy tales and a bit of mechanical wizardry - all in a dreamlike setting. Well, not a sweet dream - a real kid's dream with scary bits and weird bits and all.

Jackie B. - Death by Tsundoku says

[After building their own Robot King, it is discovered that he can make other inanimate objects come to life and the kids experience a few magical evenings with him before realizing they can continue their lives without their mot

Nancy Kotkin says

A subtle children's chapter book, in the fantasy genre, about a sister and brother dealing with their grief over the death of their mother and subsequent withdrawal of their father. They build a robot, who then comes to life. Basically this book is steampunk for children, with maternal love substituted for romance. Poignant and full of magic. Strong sibling relationship. Very accomplished illustrations, even though this is Selznick's early work. There are some unanswered questions, which may leave some readers dissatisfied, but I found the story mostly complete and quite enjoyable. The writing is lovely and flows well. Unlike Selznick's later, longer books for middle grade readers, this is a chapter book and should be read for the simple flight of fantasy that it is. Occasional full-page illustrations are interspersed throughout the text, like a typical chapter book, so this is not the half-graphic, half-text story-telling that Selznick became famous for more recently.

Qt says

3 1/2 stars. I didn't really understand it (probably my fault, not the book's), but it was still a haunting, often beautiful story--and I love the pictures!

Cindy says

This was a weird, magical sort of book that I picked up at the library for my son. He loved it so much he bugged me to read it too. So I picked it up to read today while my pie was in the oven.

The book wasn't at all what I expected. The beginning was as I thought, but it took a strange and wonderful turn and continued on, surprising me with every page and illustration. Really a fantastic book to read to children and worth looking for.

Sharon says

Brian Selznick is wonderful !!! Looking forward to more from him !!!

Christy Broderick says

Very detailed illustrations & went well with the story. A little different than what I'm used to reading by Selznick, but was still a good read.

Robert DaGasta says

I'm a big fan of Brian Selznick's books ever since I first discovered The Invention of Hugo Cabret (way before it was beautifully made into the movie, Hugo, by Martin Scorsese). Interestingly, the title character in this book resembles the "mechanical man" automaton in Hugo Cabret so I'm sure there was some inspiration from one book to the next. Beautiful, haunting illustrations for what is technically a children's book with a simple, but poignant story. Check out Boy of a Thousand Faces (homage to Lon Chaney) and Wonderstruck (his latest which I hope to make into a movie as well).

Callie says

I loved the creation.

Maggie says

I would definitely say this is a book for older elementary school kids. It's a story of children dealing with the loss of their mother, and the distance that has grown between them and their father. The boy collects all kinds of doo dads and the sister puts them together to create little machines. She creates a robot and puts their mother's music box in it's chest which brings him to life. The robot king runs on magic and not so much the machinery, and the kids fall in love with him and he them. One night he flies a way and the kids run after him finding objects he's enchanted all throughout their town. Finally his magic takes them soaring through space, but they never see him again. It's a very pretty book, with beautiful metaphors, but I had a hard time understanding what the ending meant, so I think most child readers would have simular problems.
