

Camping with Unicorns: Another Phoebe and Her Unicorn Adventure

Dana Simpson

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Written and illustrated by Dana Simpson, *Camping with Unicorns* is an enchanting, charming text with colorful illustrations.

School is officially out, which means that Phoebe and her glamorous unicorn, Marigold Heavenly Nostrils, have the whole summer to cast spells, get into mischief, and maybe even make some new friends. With Marigold by her side, Phoebe confronts her frenemy, Dakota, and learns that the most powerful magic comes from reaching out to others while staying true to yourself.

Only a small portion of the story involves camping; subplots see Marigold and Phoebe doing everything from braving the wilderness to meeting a candy dragon. Individually, the adventures are exciting and surprising, though as the story skips from scene to scene, the whole can be hard to follow: at one point, Phoebe and Marigold go from arguing over pegasi to Phoebe learning to play the piano alone.

Exchanges convey the quirks and essences of each character: Dakota is snarky, Marigold is glamorous, and Phoebe is curious. They're each able to see the best in each other, and a central message—to value friends and yourself—is seen throughout, though Phoebe's father's declaration that "character it is a filthy lie grownups tell" is less clear.

Laid out in comic book style, with several panels on each page, the book's illustrations are engaging and bright, a perfect complement to the book's brief dialogues. It encourages expansions of vocabularies with advanced words like "garish" and "pretentious," and there's an accessible glossary in the back.

Camping with Unicorns is a delightful middle grade adventure in which a sweet friendship between a girl and her unicorn contains just enough magic to ensure that there's never a dull moment.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (March / April 2020)

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