ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

JUVENILE FICTION

The Magic Book
Leonardo Deangelo
Authorhouse
978-1-4772-1846-4
Two Stars (out of Five)

What begins as a dull and dreary rainy day for twelve-year-old Sam, and his dog, Spot, turns into an adventure through time when Sam receives a dusty box at a garage sale. Among the items in the box is what appears to be a storybook. However, the artifact magically transports Sam and Spot to the ancient land of Notts, where the good King Zimmer battles the evil King Ventor, with each side sporting knights, sorcerers, and mystical beasts.

The Magic Book offers a classic recipe for a child's tale of fantastic adventure and time travel and features a large cast of players in the struggle to win the land of Notts. Intriguing adages at the opening and end of the book refer to the power of magic and truth and set the tone for the story. However, other factors threaten the success of Leonardo Deangelo's tale: Sam and Spot are undeveloped characters, as neither experiences any kind of transformation in the course of the story.

Several action scenes between the good and evil kingdoms add tension to the story, but many of these moments are compromised by Deangelo's repetitive use of words and vague descriptions, For example, when he describes the flying serpents called the Terens, he writes that, "They were a scary sight; and with their loud screeching sounds, they were scary indeed." A couple of paragraphs later, Deangelo refers to the Terens as "a scary sight." In another example of repetition, Deangelo describes Sam chanting over the magic book: "After the words were spoken, there was silence, not a sound could be heard."

The majority of the story relies on telling instead of showing, which diminishes the energy of the battle scenes, including this one between Ziffer, the old dragon, and Oggin, the one-eyed giant: "Oggin used two arms on one side of his body to strike Ziffer with incredible force. One struck on Ziffer's head; the other on his chest. The one to his head did the real damage, and Ziffer was bleeding badly."

Deangelo's book feels unfinished, without fully fleshed out details. The poem by the character Stellina to her love interest, the Knight Zen, is an example of his lack of specificity: "I

delight in your sight / Because of your might. / Wait, here comes the night, / But you still shine bright." This vagueness also prevents the reader from fully connecting with any of the characters.

With better character development and more detail, *The Magic Book* would be a more enticing time-travel tale about a boy and his dog.

Maya Fleischmann