

The Magnificent 12 Series: The Call

Michael Grant

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In days lost past, twelve was a marvelously powerful number, and as Grimluk recalls, the gate to infinity. Back then, there was, perhaps, an infinite range of numbers between twelve and infinity, but for twelve year-old Grimluk, a member of a band of twelve Magnificas, numbers past twelve was superfluous, which led him to the conclusion that three thousand years was akin to forever. Thus, the Magnifica imprison the epitome of evil, the Pale Queen, for three thousand years. When Grimluk witnesses “forever” outliving three thousand years, he finds himself gathering a new group of twelve Magnifica, starting with twelve year-old David MacAvoy, to banish the Pale Queen forever, instead of yet another three thousand years, before she destroys the world and the a future to refer forever to. Phobia-riddled David, who realizes he is being targeted by the Pale Queen’s daughter Princess Ereskigal and her minions, flees with his former bully-turned-protector Stevan, from the beautiful, yet horrifying Princess Ereskigal while seeking the rest of the Magnificas. Their journey takes the two kids to Australia, where the second Magnifica Jarrah and her mother Karri, rescue, then join them.

The Magnificent 12 Series: The Call by Michael Grant is an adventure with humor liberally built into the plot and its characters. The irony is apparent throughout the book, with average, unassuming Mack being the hero, and his Golem doppelganger, who interprets everything people say too literally, and brings Mack to the spotlight in school and at home due to his ludicrous behavior. The characters from Grimluk’s past are presented in a manner in which there is a comical solemnity in their words and actions. Moreover, Grimluk’s story alternates with Mack’s story in the present day, revealing just enough each time so that Grant retains the element of surprise when new characters appear in Mack’s story that are in Grimluk’s. However, enough information is given so that these new characters are not too unexpected, and are able to be expanded upon through dialogue and plot development in Mack’s part of the book. The humor, including the various contradictions in the book, work with the hero-and-villain concept to form a whimsical, entertaining story.

Although the parallel storylines provides background and structure for one another, the tone of the two stories do not complement each other well. While the scenes of Grimluk’s past had a more comical stance, it employs a mock serious, almost sarcastic humor that emphasizes the people’s ignorance and simple-mindedness. Also, Grimluk tends to reference things that did not exist in his youth, and some of the contradictions lose their wittiness due to this. Furthermore, the author only vaguely describes the magical aspects of the book so it is unclear what the Magnifica actually do. Nevertheless, *The Call* is the first in the series so there is a hope for these problems to have been addressed in later books.

The Magnificent 12 Series: The Call is a book I would mainly recommend for middle school students. The story is told through characters who are the same age so the mood the characters create should make a comfortable reading environment for them, even though there are a few difficult words. Other books I would recommend include *Children of the Lamp* by P.B.

Kerr, *Magickeepers* by Erica Kirov, *Rangers Apprentice* by Jon Flanagan, and *Tunnels* by Roderick Gordon.