



Practical Magic

Alice Hoffman

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The Owens sisters confront the challenges of life and love in this bewitching novel from *New York Times* bestselling author Alice Hoffman.

For more than two hundred years, the Owens women have been blamed for everything that has gone wrong in their Massachusetts town. Gillian and Sally have endured that fate as well: as children, the sisters were forever outsiders, taunted, talked about, pointed at. Their elderly aunts almost seemed to encourage the whispers of witchery, with their musty house and their exotic concoctions and their crowd of black cats. But all Gillian and Sally wanted was to escape.

One will do so by marrying, the other by running away. But the bonds they share will bring them back—almost as if by magic...

Practical Magic Details

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From Reader Review Practical Magic for online ebook

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

I guess I have changed.

I have my little paperback copy I got and read years ago. And of course I found it after I bought the one with the cool boot on the front ?

Anyway, I loved the book so much back then and now it's just meh! I still love the movie but something just didn't get me as pulled in as before. Oh well. It's still good.

Mel ♥?

Justin Tate says

The first clue that this was going to be a slog was the two audio versions. Unabridged, the running time is 9 hours 12 minutes. The abridged version is a mere 3 hours 6 minutes. As a general rule, if you can cut 70% of your book and it's still coherent, that's not a good sign.

Unfortunately the purist in me had to listen to the unabridged version. Now that it's over, I can confirm that 70% could easily be cut. Probably more.

That's not to say the entire experience was terrible. Hoffman is clearly a talented writer. If I did have to pinpoint where it went wrong, I'd say the confusing POV changes had a part in it. There was a general passiveness in the storytelling. There aren't a lot of "scenes" but there is a ton of summary. Consequently I got the vague sense of characters but could never really connect with them without concrete moments. The magic of love is a reoccurring theme, but supernatural or not, the threads of love connections felt forced and unbelievable. Obviously there was a lot of filler.

I've never seen the movie, but I'm sure it's better than the book. Actually, I did see the 2 minute trailer and even that snippet was better. In the end, with so many books and so little time, I wish I had skipped this one.

Julie says

Practical Magic by Alice Hoffman is 2003 Penguin publication. (Originally published in 1995)

When I heard Hoffman was releasing a 'prequel' to Practical Magic, this past year, I knew I wanted to read it, but before I did, I needed to reacquaint myself with this book.

I read this book a long, long time ago, even before the movie was released. But, the book was something entirely different from the movie, which is a very charming and delightful adaptation, in my opinion. 'You put the lime in the coconut' ... (one of my favorite scenes)

I've seen the movie so many times I think it has clouded or confused my memories of the book. So, before I delved into *'Rules of Magic'*, I thought a refresher was in order.

The book is centered around Sally and Gillian, sisters taken in by their aunts after the death of their parents. They are extraordinarily close while growing up, needing to stick close to each other when they are not accepted in their community or at school, ostracized because of their aunt's reputations as witches.

While they took different paths in life, Gillian having left home, while Sally stayed behind and started a family, their bonds will be reinforced when Gillian returns home after a long absence, and bringing big trouble with her.

When Gillian begins to insert herself into Sally's life, it disrupts her relationship with her children, and the cracks in their relationship begin to widen, but they still stick together, because to do otherwise, could mean Gillian will end up in prison.

Haunted by the abusive former boyfriend Gillian was running from, the ladies try to handle the situation themselves, but to no avail, meaning that a call to their seemingly aloof aunts might be in order.

Yes, the aunts are witches who specialize in matters of the heart, which can lead to 'be careful what you wish for' in some instances, because their spells really do work, but they are not featured prominently in the book. Instead the focus is solely on Gillian and Sally, and the bonds of sisterhood, love, and romance.

It is hard, very hard, to come to terms with the book if you have seen the movie. They are as different as night and day, and I think it is fair to say the movie is LOOSELY based on the book.

I hate to do movie/book comparisons, since most of the time I am very frustrated by the way Hollywood handles the material, often leaving out or changing things that gives the story an entirely different spin. I hate it. But, in this instance the movie version appeals to a much broader audience and is much lighter and whimsical, whereas the book is much darker, serious, almost sinister in nature.

The magical realism aspects were an asset to the story, but it isn't facetious or flirty- in fact, it's a last resort measure.

I felt like the novel highlighted the differences between the sisters, and how they still managed to love and forgive one another despite the contentiousness that stood between them. I was happy to see any misperceptions the girls had about their aunts cleared up at long last and so, on that note, I must say, I'm really looking forward to reading a bit more about them in the 'prequel'. I'll have to cool my heels a little because the wait time at the library is quite lengthy, but from what I hear it is worth the wait.

If you haven't read this book, just prepare yourself in advance, and keep an open mind. The story is a bit darker than what you may be expecting, but if those movie images weren't floating around in your mind, you could probably appreciate the author's initial meanings without prejudice.

This is one of those rare cases where I enjoyed the book AND the movie, despite the massive differences between them. I think they both have merit and should be judged separately, without comparisons, although I doubt that's even possible.

Regardless, the novel was to my liking, so it gets 4 stars

Melissa says

3.75 stars

I'm a little embarrassed to admit it wasn't until I read my first Alice Hoffman novel last year (*The Museum of Extraordinary Things*) that I realized *Practical Magic* was more than just a swoon-worthy movie I'd watched a dozen times over—it's also a book. With numerous viewings under my belt and the upcoming release of the prequel, *The Rules of Magic*, I figured now was as good of a time as any to dive in and give this a read. I mean how could I not, the book is *always* better than the movie, right?

Well, maybe not always. In this instance, I wouldn't say the movie is necessarily better than the book, I'd say **I prefer the movie version**. Both are great stories, they're just **completely different**.

Raised by their aunts and shunned by their classmates for being witches, sisters Gillian and Sally struggled to find their own versions of happiness. Gillian has always been the 'wild child', rearing to get out of Massachusetts and adamant that she wouldn't be caught dead east of the Mississippi ever again; until she needs her older sister Sally to bail her out. After the death of her husband, Sally left the aunts behind and the little town they called home for a place where she could just fade into the background and raise her daughters; escaping the rumors, whispers and odd looks that met her everywhere she went. It's Gillian's unexpected arrival on Sally's doorstep that stirs things up for *everyone*.

The major aspects of the storyline that carry over from the book to the movie are Jimmy's demise, the gorgeous flowers that overtake the Owens' yard and the appearance of Gary. Aside from that, there is no 'one blue, one green eye' incantation (*boo!*), no midnight margarita time with the aunts (*they actually don't play much of a role in the book*) and there is less whimsy in regards to the magic and the curse that surrounds any man who falls in love with an Owens woman. If you remember from the movie, Sally opens a plant based cosmetics shop and neither sister shies away from using her powers or casting spells, which I thought added a fun dynamic to the mix. In this version, it felt like the sisters were always running from who they were and things just sort of happened all around them instead.

Despite the many issues that would typically derail my enjoyment—the complete lack of dialogue throughout much of the story, the non-existent chapters (*this book was written in 4 large chunks instead of in a chapter format, which drove me a little mad at times*) and the way the author tended to change perspectives mid-page or from one paragraph to the next—I still found myself enjoying my time with this version of the Owens women. There's no denying this author has a unique way with words.

PorshaJo says

This one is a hard one to review. I think most know the movie *Practical Magic*. I love this movie as I'm sure that most do. Everytime it's on, I watch it. Does not matter at what time I catch it, I watch till the end and swoon. When I started watching the movie, initially, I had no idea it was based on a book. So for years now I've been wanting to read this one. But then I see the movie is on and watch it. But the prequel is coming out and I have a copy and figured it's time I read it.

Let me just say...the book **is nothing** like the movie, or the movie **is nothing** like the book. Comparing the two is comparing apples to pumpkins. They have the same characters, Jimmy has the same fate, and that's about it. Well, they both had margaritas too, but in two totally different context. So to focus on the book, it tells the story of the Owens sisters. Gillian is a free spirit, moving around from place to place, and

guy to guy. Sally is more settled and rigid (uptight), having two children. Gillian and Sally lived for many years with their aunts, who play very minor roles in this book. I think the story is more about sisters. The bond between Gillian and Sally, how much they fight but also how they can depend on one another. The same about Sally's two girls, you hear a lot more about their lives, their fighting, and what brings them together. I don't really consider any of them witches, they have strong intuitions that they act upon. The initial story of the aunts was a bit more detailed with local women coming to them for help in love, but I still did not think them witches.

I did enjoy this one and I'm glad I finally got to it. It's a good character study of the bonds of sisters and the stories of love. Do not go into this one with the movie version in mind, again, they are soooooo completely different. They must be thought of two different things. I really wanted the audio so I searched and found it on Hoopla (tip, make sure to get the 9 hr version, not the condensed 3 hr version - really, they trimmed it that much). The narration was just OK for me. Maybe I could not separate the movie from my head and the voices the narrator used just did not match, or work for me. I could have had the print or audio in this case. I am so looking forward to getting into the prequel and hearing so much more about the aunts.

One funny thing I must say....I tend to listen to most audios while I'm in the kitchen making dinner. There was about a page or two of some *very* risqué talk about Gillian and her new man. I actually was a bit shocked as I didn't expect it. Naturally, it was at that very moment my husband came into the kitchen and said 'what in the H*LL are you listening to????' Ha! So an FYI if you listen in public or around children or others. :-)

Katie says

My fear about this was I wouldn't get on with the magical realism element. However that wasn't a problem. The problem was more my feeling that it lacked a *raison d'être*. For a long time it felt like a story was continually being set up but never quite happening. I've never seen the film but have a hunch it might be better than the novel because there's a lot of padding in the book, lots of asides. Essentially a light and fun read, intelligent chick lit (every male character in this book is a lover) with some good observations about female relationships, insecurities and loneliness but I was in the mood for something of more substance and this didn't quite hit the spot.

Cheri says

"The lesson Sally had learned so long ago in the kitchen—to be careful what you wish for—was so far and so faded it had turned to yellow dust. But it was the sort of dust that can never be swept up, and instead waits in the corner and blows into the eyes of those you love when a draft moves through your house."

It's only recently that I left Hoffman's world in *"The Rules of Magic,"* and so I returned to that world of the Owens family, to pick up where I'd left off, with a return to the home of the aunts in Massachusetts, in *"Practical Magic"*. Of course, I've seen the movie at least a dozen times over the years, which played somewhat of a factor. It's hard to disassociate yourself from all the lines, the actors, the scenes you remember so well from the movie, and impossible to forget certain scenes. So, I'll just say that I felt this was very different from the movie.

Gillian and Sally are sisters, grown now, Sally has two daughters of her own, is sensitive, compassionate and has succeeded in building a life for herself, them, removed from the aunts, removed from magic and all the

stares and the softly murmured gossip, the condemnation that followed them like a shadow. Gillian is reckless and wild, impulsive and unlucky in love. Extremely unlucky this latest time, and so she heads to the only place she can think of, home, and since she is leaving her latest abode, she heads to Sally's home, dragging her past with her.

Having read this after reading "*The Rules of Magic*", I felt her growth as an author in her latest, or perhaps I just preferred it, overall. This is definitely worth reading, but even going into it determined to avoid comparisons to Hollywood's "enhancements" on her novel (almost impossible), I still found myself comparing it to "*The Rules of Magic*".

What I did love in "*Practical Magic*" was the sense of magic being everywhere, which added a lovely touch, a reminder of how life itself is a magical experience. The references to those everyday magical moments, infused with just a pinch more "practical" magic to transport you away.

"Always keep mint on your windowsill in August, to ensure that buzzing flies will stay outside, where they belong. Don't think the summer is over, even when roses droop and turn brown and the stars shift position in the sky. Never presume August is a safe or reliable time of the year. It is the seas on reversals, when the birds no longer sing in the morning and the evenings are made up of equal parts golden light and black clouds. The rock-solid and the tenuous can easily exchange places until everything you know can be questioned and put into doubt."

Celeste says

Full review now posted!

Rating: 3.5/5 stars

Some people love Halloween, but don't enjoy being frightened. This book is perfect for them; its magical and uncanny and feels perfect for fall. There are ghosts, supposed witches, magical gardens, and lots of black cats. And the entire story revolves around the women of the Owens family, their unusual attractiveness and their troubles with love. Even though the story transpires over years and every season, it feels quintessentially autumnal. There is a pretty famous movie adaptation of this book, which I haven't yet seen, but if it's anything like the novel that inspired it I'm sure it would be a fun, cozy movie to watch right around Halloween.

The Owens women are unlike anyone else. They're all almost unnaturally beautiful, each in a completely unique way. They draw men to themselves like flies are drawn to honey. Gillian and Sally, orphaned sisters who are raised by their unusual aunts. They were given an uncommon amount of freedom, which affects both girls different. Gillian is a wild child, who as an adult seems allergic to setting down roots anywhere or with anyone. Sally, on the other hand, has struggled to give her own daughters a perfectly normal life, in a town where no one knows her unusual family history. But trouble manages to find her anyway, in the form of her wayward sister.

How Gillian and Sally, along with Sally's daughters, deal with the fallout from Gillian's past is the central action of the story. But the central theme of the story is surrendering to love, especially when you least expected it. Which is a theme that honestly makes me roll my eyes and groan internally. I hate insta-love stories. I believe in lust or infatuation at first sight and love at first conversation, but I don't believe that you can instantly fall in love with a person based solely on their appearance. Insta-love was a definite factor in

this novel, and I'll admit to some eye-rolling. But it's a cute little romance that I enjoyed in spite of groaning on occasion.

There was a lot to enjoy in this book. The writing style was lovely; there something gentle and sweet about the flow of the prose. The narrative was vivid and lush and compelling. I could smell the lavender and feel breezes with no known source brush my face and taste magic sizzling on my tongue. The pace meandered, but the story unfolded quickly enough to prevent the tale from feeling slow. It was a fun, sweet, short novel, and perfect for readers looking to get into the Halloween spirit without being scared in the process.

Original review can be found at Booknest.

Mike (the Paladin) says

I was a little hesitant about the rating to give this book. There are what I would call, good moments. Mostly I don't care for it. There is an odd streak of amorality underlying it (I can just hear someone asking "who's morals are you talking about"). You have the two old ladies referred to as "the aunts" who raise a young girl to be selfish, obstinate, and rebellious (treating these as the best of good desirable traits) and then wondering that tragedy follows. There are shifting personalities in the characters and twisting attitudes about right and wrong.

As always I felt it incumbent on me to mention that some love this book, but I find it terribly flawed and almost went all the way down to 1 star. It is saved by a few odd plot points and it's readability. In my "chauvinistic" way, I'd say this book will be far more popular with women than with men, but I found it readable. The author is known for writing YA books...which gave me some concern for a while.

The book is somewhat like a romantic ghost story, with a sort of mystery tacked on at the end. This was needed to give the romance finality.

I could go into a lot of problems in the book...even the understanding of love it puts forth. It's basically the common view confusing infatuation/desire with actual love. This view partially accounts for the high divorce rate. The type of love that makes a relationship last requires more than the "wow he/she's hot and I want him/her" we find here. The book also drops the "F" bomb now and again for no real apparent reason other than to impress us with the teenage rebellion it signals and possibly the book's daring.

Well, (I'd say "in short" here, but it's too late) I didn't hate the book, but I didn't like it ether. 1.5 stars I suppose, rounded up to 2.

Racheal says

This is one of those rare examples of the movie being better than the book. Yeah. I somehow managed to get through it, but this book was like one never-ending series of mood-setting lists. An example:

"Sally thought long and hard each time she hung up the phone. She thought about the girl in the drugstore and the sound of Antonia's footsteps on the stairs when she went to bed without a good-night hug. She thought about Michael's life and his death, and about every second they had spent together. She considered each of his kisses and all the words he had ever said to her. Everything was still gray— the paintings Antonia brought home from school and slipped beneath her door, the flannel pajamas Kylie wore on chilly mornings,

the velvet curtains that kept the world at bay. But now Sally began to order things in her mind— grief and joy, dollars and cents, a baby's cry and the look on her face when you blew her a kiss on a windy afternoon. Such things might be worth something, a glance, a peek, a deeper look."

I count 4 lists in just one paragraph. Within the next page, the total of similar lists goes up to 8. In two pages. This kind of writing feels sloppy when it is used beyond the beginning stages of scene setting, and when it is almost the only way the author seems to be able to convey meaning it becomes teeth-gnashingly annoying. Add to this a complete lack of momentum and a generally meandering story line and you get a sad face (or maybe bitch face if I'm being honest) and a thumbs down from me.

Anna says

This is the first time in my reading life that I can say that the movie is better than the book. I honestly wish that I'd read the book first, because the monumental let down of reading the book after the movie has been something I cannot reconcile. The movie is beautiful, the storyline is engaging and witty, and the characters draw you in and make you laugh and cry. Yet the book is so far removed from the movie, they are hardly relatable at all, with such flimsy linkages, you could actually see them as two completely different stories.

The book is slow, very American, with a somewhat annoying narration. I did not love any of the main characters, and for a book that makes a vague attempt at being supernatural, many of the 'magical' things that happened in the book were less believable because it did not step strongly enough into the supernatural theme. It was like any other suburban novel, with a few sparkly tweaks.

I've never been so disappointed in a novel. I was looking forward to really knowing the Aunts, to feel myself in that old house, but it wasn't too be. I felt like I was reading just some book, not the original premise of my favourite movie.

I'm completely bummed.

Florence (Lefty) MacIntosh says

Remember being addicted to dark fairytales like Aesop's & Grimm's as a kid? Then at around ten figuring it's time you grew up, setting them aside & heading over to the library teen section? Have you missed them all these years? Check out magical realism. Hey, the same twisted supernatural tales, riddled with conflict & hidden meanings –repackaged for grownups!

Practical Magic was published long before another of this genre I just read - Garden Spells - they're both good and pretty similar. Quirky - feature a couple of sisters with polar opposite personalities - share the same understated magical elements. Where 'Garden Spells' was nice it was pretty much sweetness & light. This is better, improved by a darker twist – it is about witches after all. Its theme the importance of sticking together as a family; doesn't matter if they're a bunch of weird misfits – still family. And as every good fairytale should its got a lesson:

Be careful what you wish for....

For its genre of magical-realism 4 well deserved stars

Con's: With every female in it a flawless beauty the realism aspect kinda went out the window. My intro to reading Alice Hoffman, hopefully all her characters aren't written this way – that would wear thin real fast.

“A mist appears. It’s the color of regret; it’s the color of heartbreak, the gray of doves and early morning”

L says

[Review written by my high school self]

I used to love the movie for this book, and I didn’t even know until after I had seen it that it was originally in book form. After finally getting a copy of the book and reading it, something magical happened: I didn’t know which one I liked better. Usually, having to decide favorites between the book and the movie is very easy. Except in the case of Grisham’s *The Pelican Brief*, I almost always prefer the book versions. In some cases (as with *Gone with the Wind* and *Scarlett*), I simply refuse to see the movie, while in other cases (like *The Great Gatsby* and *Jurassic Park*) I prefer the book hands-down though the movie versions are certainly more than tolerable. With Hoffman’s *Practical Magic*, I just don’t know.

Part of the reason for this anomaly in my reading life may be the fact that the movie and book bear little resemblance to each other. Here is what is in the book that is also in the movie: the names of the characters (which in itself is a bit skewed), and the fact that this all has to do with witches, family, and magic. That’s about it. Other than that, even the basic plotline is very different. I can understand how the movie might need to condense the plotline to fit its regular two hours, but this plotline has been almost completely altered.

Unlike the movie, the book gives more equal attention to each of the sister protagonists, Sally and Gillian. This was both a good and a bad thing for me, due to my fascination with the characters and my partiality towards actress Sandra Bullock, who plays Sally in the movie version. The aunts, who are prominently figured in the movie as well, appear only as absent characters throughout most of the book. The children, Antonia and Kylie (their names are switched in the movie), are much older than their elementary school-age movie counterparts, and have very deep and intriguing characterizations that are lacking from the movie. Overall, the book does a better job of observing and presenting the importance, history, and closeness of sisterly relationships.

Hoffman’s writing has an utterly absorbing lyrical and poetic quality to it that I greatly admire. I ate this book up, partly because I was pushing for the protagonist Sally’s vindication (a point made in such a focused and concentrated manner in the movie), and partly because Hoffman’s writing is just superb and catching. I swallowed down pieces of this book for hours at a time, and would have to literally shake myself out of the mood of it all if I were so RUDELY interrupted. =)

The “magic” is of a different kind in the book, less magical in some senses, and focusing more on clairvoyance and intuition, a point much easier made and mystified in book form. Hoffman takes full charge of this, infusing this in every sentence of her text, and making the readers literary clairvoyants in their own sense. The predictability and unpredictability of this story makes it a book that can be read as I did in one gulp as I did or in a strolling leisurely fashion without losing anything of the book’s power or meaning.

Without a doubt, the movie has tainted, and at the same time, enhanced my reading of the book, so much so that I don’t even have a suggestion as to which medium persons should expose themselves to first. Should you read the book after seeing the movie, though, there are some things you should keep in mind. Certainly, one of the main things to remember is that Hoffman’s Gillian is no Nicole Kidman. Another thing to remember is that the movie, because of its required brevity, only touches upon the deep psychological implications and character insight of the book. Most importantly, the book characters don’t get wasted on midnight margaritas and dance around the dinner table to Harry Nilsson’s “Coconut” song.

Phryne says

I always like a bit of magic so I enjoyed this book very much, my only disappointment being that Sally and Gillian did not embrace their powers and use them! At least the aunts knew how to mix up a really good potion and cast an appropriate spell when necessary.

I enjoy the way Hoffman writes. Her characters are well rounded and likable, and her descriptions of things like the rampant lilac and hordes of toads in the garden are gorgeous.

Altogether a very readable, entertaining piece of nonsense. If you like witches you must read it:)

Brina says

During the last few months of last year I had been eagerly awaiting Alice Hoffman's new book Rules of Magic. I had read new books by some of my go to authors for magical realism, which had left a bitter taste in my mouth because these books were contemporary and devoid of magical occurrences. Rules of Magic, while not necessarily magical realism, was simply magical. As soon as I finished reading the tale of Frances and Jet Owens, I reserved the story where it all began, Practical Magic. Much to my dismay, many people had the same idea, and I had to wait another two months to read Hoffman's first installment of the Owens family. Finally getting my hands on this magical family saga, I was as enthralled as I had been with the new prequel.

Sally and Gillian Owens grew up in the rural Massachusetts home of their elderly great aunts Frannie and Jet Owens. In this Magnolia Street home that I got to know so well in Rules of Magic, Frannie continued the family business of assisting women in concocting various forms of love potions. Although it was well known that the Owens family had been witches for the past three hundred years, women in desperate situations still turned to Frannie and Jet in times of need. The aunts also brewed black soap twice a year and tended to their garden where supernatural events happened over time. Raising Sally and Gillian devoid of normal parental rules, the girls were allowed to stay up until midnight on a regular basis, eat candy bars for supper, and, adhering to the family tradition, wear black wool coats to school even in the heat of summer.

The entire town realized that Sally and Gillian were different and ridiculed them on a daily basis, only to have the aunts come to their rescue. An entire classroom teased Gillian; no problem; the aunts would come to school for a classroom party and the other children would find themselves tongue tied. The girls grew up as close as sisters, yet were literally as different as night and day. Gillian continued the Owens tradition of blond hair and of making every man who came in her path lovesick. She broke many hearts, married three times as a result of these supernatural occurrences, and moved as far away from the aunts as she could in an attempt to prevent magic from happening. Meanwhile, Sally maintained the Owens line of a head of long black hair, living practically as alluded to in the title, and moving the family forward to the next generation as she became the mother to two girls, as different as night and day, Antonia and Kylie. Sally also desired a normal life for her children so she, too, moved away from the safety of the aunts to a suburban Long Island community. There she became a respected member of her neighborhood, and, more importantly, no one knew of the family history of witch craft.

As much as things changed, they also stayed the same. Gillian continued to break hearts, and Sally lived a

practical life. Neither embraced their heritage yet noted the supernatural events that would take place near them like familiars entering their home, lilac bushes blooming out of season, and the appearance of portends on the longest night of the year. The magic continued with Antonia, although she did not know it, as boys and men had their blood boil or turn to ice water the second she entered the room. Both girls attempted a normal life, yet, when their aunt Gillian reentered their lives during their teenaged years, the girls' lives were anything but normal. While Sally and Gillian desired a life devoid of magic, as they moved toward middle age, witchcraft seemed to find them and the rest of their family. As a result, the entire plot of Practical Magic is full of the same magical prose that I grew to love in Rules of Magic.

While the aunts in Rules of Magic do not play as large of a role in Practical Magic as I would have liked, they exposed Sally and Gillian to the family traditions as girls so that they would turn to magic in times of need as adults. Although each successive generation becomes less magical than the last, the Owens family continue to embrace their place as witches in the context of society at large, giving others the opportunity to laud rather than ridicule them. Both Kylie and Antonia stand out as different in appearance yet are popular members of their school where no one realizes that they are witches. The girls; however, love the time spent in the presence of their elderly, spinster aunts and will be able to continue the family traditions to the next generation when their time comes. Whether it comes in the form of concocting black soap or acquiring a pet toad, the Owens magical line appears to be safe as Antonia and Kylie Owens come of age.

Magical realism continues to be my preferred reading genre. I enjoy the Latin American branch of the genre most as these occurrences seem to flow from the culture. In the three books of Hoffman's that I have read, I have been wowed by her ability to produce magical realism in a North American culture. Practical Magic introduced readers to the Owens family, setting the stage for the equally if not more magical Rules of Magic years later. With the prose ending with the Owens trademark rules to live by, the door is open for yet another story featuring Antonia and Kylie Owens down the road. If this is indeed the case, I would run to read this installment as well as I have found my time spent with the Owens family to be simply magical.

* 4 magical stars *
