



The School for Wicked Witches

by Will Taylor

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The Story

In Oz, most kids with magical powers are sent from the North, South, East, and West to fancy witch academies, where they are taught to use their magic for good.

But if you misbehave? Or your magic goes horribly wrong?

You get sent to the School for Wicked Witches.

When Ava Heartstraw leaves her home, she thinks she's on a good-witch path. But then her magic does some really destructive things, and before she knows it, she's banished to the School for Wicked Witches. It's no place like home for her . . . but it's possible there's more to the school than its famously wicked ways.

Will she make it through?

Reading Group Questions

1. What do you think the difference is between a Good Witch and a Wicked Witch? Are witches born Good or Wicked, or do they become Good or Wicked?
2. At what points in the books do you think Ava makes the right choices, and at what points do you think she makes the wrong choices? What do you think she's learned by the end of the book?
3. The students at the School for Wicked Witches all have their own unique magical powers. Which witch's power from the book would you most want to have? What's a power that's NOT in the book that you'd like to have?
4. Who is your favorite character in the book? What do you like about them?

About the Author



Photo © Joshua Huston

Will Taylor cast his first spell when he was ten and has yet to be carried off by a dragon, so it seems to have worked. He is a reader, writer, and honeybee fan, and lives in downtown Seattle surrounded by all the seagulls and not quite too many teacups. When not writing, he can be found searching for the perfect bakery, talking to trees in parks, and completely losing his cool when he meets longhaired dachshunds. His books include *The Language of Seabirds*, *Catch That Dog!*, *Slimed* (writing as Liam Gray), *Maggie & Abby's Neverending Pillow Fort*, and *Maggie & Abby and the Shipwreck Treehouse*. You can visit him online at willtaylorbooks.com.

Author Q&A

What was it that excited you about the idea of writing a series set in the land of Oz?

The layers! Oz has inspired so many creators since the first book came out in 1900, and now with the *Wicked* movies, we're getting to experience a movie based on a musical based on a book reinterpreting the 1939 movie and original book. I've been obsessed with "otherworld" adventures since before I learned to read, most especially *Wonderland* and *Narnia*, as well as fantasy realms like *Middle Earth* and *Earthsea*. Getting to add my imagination to a world with so much history and so many iconic themes, characters, and locations has been a genuine dream come true!

In the *Wizard of Oz* movie, there seems to be a very clear distinction between a "good witch" and a "wicked witch." How do you play with that here?

I think that question lies at the heart of the entire Oz series: What does it mean to be good? It's explored in all sorts of ways in *Wicked*, and I carried on that tradition in *The School for Wicked Witches*, as Ava struggles with more power than she knows how to control and is forced to confront the labels that others, mostly grownups, apply to her before they even know her. That question of whether Ava is truly good or wicked will continue in future books.

What do you think is the key to understanding your heroine, Ava?

We address this directly in book two, so I don't want to give too much away, but one key is that Ava is the youngest in a very large family living on the boring outer edge of Oz. All her older brothers and sisters are capable and useful as they help on the family farm, and Ava yearns to find a new and different way to be useful, something truly special that's only hers.

There are so many wonderful supporting characters in this book—is there any that was particularly fun to write? Why?

It has to be Tinabella Grouse, Ava's roommate and best frenemy. Tinabella was an absolute joy to write since I never had any idea what she was going to do next. From her very first action (which involves a bucket of water), she caught me completely by surprise. I'd heard other authors talk about that experience with a character before, but I'd never experienced it so directly. We will definitely be hearing a lot more from Tinabella in future books!