



School spells TROUBLE for Mildred Hubble

THE WORST WITCH

ANNIVERSARY
50th
EDITION



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JILL MURPHY



‘A lovely sparkly book’

Observer



‘Hurray for Jill Murphy! Children
will love the antics of Mildred Hubble
and her hopeless tabby cat’

Independent

‘Millions of young readers have
fallen under the spell of
Jill Murphy’s Worst Witch!’

Sunday Express

‘Hugely entertaining with
wonderful illustrations’

LoveReading4Kids

‘You won’t fail to warm to Mildred Hubble!’

BookTrust



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Books by Jill Murphy

THE WORST WITCH

THE WORST WITCH STRIKES AGAIN

A BAD SPELL FOR THE WORST WITCH

THE WORST WITCH ALL AT SEA

THE WORST WITCH SAVES THE DAY

THE WORST WITCH TO THE RESCUE

THE WORST WITCH AND THE WISHING STAR

FIRST PRIZE FOR THE WORST WITCH

DEAR HOUND

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THE WORST WITCH

Jill Murphy started putting books together (literally with a stapler) when she was six. Her Worst Witch series, the first book of which was published in 1974, is hugely successful. She also created several award-winning picture books for younger children.



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THE WORST WITCH



INTRODUCED BY
CRESSIDA COWELL

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A collection of small, stylized stars and sparkles of various sizes and orientations, scattered around the title and author's name.

Real Magic

Cressida Cowell

When Mildred Hubble and I first met in 1974, I was eight years old, and I instantly fell in love with her.

For the most part, the protagonists in the other books I was reading at the time seemed supremely good at everything they did. They shot the winning goal in lacrosse if they were in a school story, or they had extreme and unusual magical gifts if it was a fantasy. They were beautiful and tidy and calm under pressure. Or if they did so happen to be more disobedient in nature, it was a splendid, wilful and justified defiance of authority, a million miles away from my own unintentional small-girl contrariness.

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They were admirable in so many ways, these protagonists . . . but they were not like *me*.

Mildred Hubble, however, was a woefully unlucky and very human hero I could identify with immediately. Her magical abilities were delightfully hit-and-miss, and she seemed to be forever stumbling into nearly as much trouble with Miss Hardbroom as I got into with the teachers at my own girls' school in London.

Both Mildred and I *meant* well. But despite all our best intentions, we ended up in unfortunate muddles nonetheless. The only difference was that Mildred's muddles consisted of turning people into frogs rather than forgetting her homework – an unimportant detail, because despite the witch's hat, Mildred was a *real child*, just like me.

Jill Murphy's beautiful drawings of Mildred and her friends that accompanied

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the text only underlined this. These were *real children*, with untidy hair and lopsided bunches, and glasses that clouded up and went askew when they were flying.

Real, you see, but with a few little, yet desirable, differences. Like Mildred's hair. Oh, how I longed for Mildred Hubble's magically long plaits. *That gloriously untidy hair must be down to her KNEES*, thought I. *Lucky Mildred*. And Tabby the tabby cat, of course, who you could take along to lessons but who could never quite balance properly on a broomstick.

Oh, how I wanted those plaits, and the tabby cat, and the flying lessons. How I dreamed of being a fellow student at Miss Cackle's Academy, so that I could be best



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friends with Mildred, Maud and Enid and reveal that I was nearly as bad at spelling as Mildred herself.

Strange that the thing I longed for the most, the extra-long plaits, was actually the most achievable. But if the truth be told, *all* of these longings seemed very legitimate and not too hopeless at the time. There is something about the unique, affectionate and child-centred way that Jill Murphy wrote and drew these stories that makes them so. She created a warm, funny, wise and wonderful world where anything was possible, and the hapless hero was as kind as she was accident-prone. And you wanted to be a part of it with all of your heart.

The idea of a school where you could learn magic is an intoxicating one to any child, and I would later come across this in books such as Ursula K. Le Guin's magnificent *A Wizard of Earthsea*. But the school for wizards on the island of Roke,

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although I revelled in it, was situated in a glorious but distant fantasy world that I knew from its description was far, far away.

By comparison, Jill Murphy's very different vision of what a magical school might be felt modern and down to earth. Something about the cosy domestic detail of the stories told me that this was a very real magic that was probably carrying on just down the road from where I lived. I could get off at the wrong stop on the Number 11 bus and there Mildred and the school would be.

And here, I think, is one of the clues to the longevity of Jill Murphy's characters and her books. They are not only loveable but are also immensely believable.

The Worst Witch is now fifty years old, but there will be accident-prone, well-intentioned, magic-loving little eight-year-olds who will pick up this book today and feel exactly as I did in 1974: that Mildred

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