

# Book Lovers: Get Your English On!

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## ***The Looking Glass Wars* — Review by Chris**

Alice in Wonderland is real. Well, according to this excellent re-imagining of Alice in Wonderland, she is — and in a book that is good enough to enthrall a youngster. Our memories often are of the Disney-fied Alice in Wonderland and Technicolor Wizard of Oz, not the original violent, political books. Re-read “fairy tales” as adults and discover that youth/children’s fiction is not at all for the squeamish. Disney can soften the edges, but the literature cannot be tamed. This is the case for *The Looking Glass Wars* by [Frank Beddor](#), the first of a trilogy about Alyss, princess of Wonderland. Frank Beddor does not disappoint. After I became familiar with Wonderland, I found the book an easy and enjoyable read. It is technically “youth fiction” — but Beddor trusts his readers to take on more grown-up ideas and action sequences.

This book is not for the feint of heart. It is violent and scary and unpredictable and relentless. In short: it’s fabulous. Alyss is the mischevious and imaginative 7-year-old daughter of Queen Genevieve and her consort King Nolan. The Heart dynasty seeks to create peace and alliances to prevent the usurping of the Heart throne by a very distasteful character. The Heart dynasty’s one problem is psychotic and violent Redd, Genevieve’s sister who has been cast out for her anti-social and dangerous ways. Small asides from Bibwit Harte, Alyss’ tutor (and the tutor of three Heart generations before her) demonstrate that Redd is neither comedic nor should she be dismissed. When she says, “Off with their heads,” Redd means it — aided by beautiful red roses with hungry thorns. When Redd returns to Wonderland in a fantastic and frenetic series of events that will make even the strongest reader blanch, Alyss must flee — and her mode of transportation will make you look twice at puddles. Wonderland and 1800s England are brutal, wicked, violent and cruel. Dickens’ pictures are nearly rosy in comparison to Beddor’s. Her appearance in our world is magical, sudden, violent and absolutely heartbreaking — almost as much as her removal from it. This is a movie waiting to be made. However, it is written with the rich context of a novel, rather than the brief and picturesque writing of screenplay-ready books like “The Last Templar.” Many of the characters in this book are familiar: Hatter Mattigan, the family’s personal guard; The Cat, a feline exterminator; the Caterpillars, sages of Wonderland (and deep into their hookahs); Bibwit Harte, the big-eared and big-hearted tutor; the Liddells, who adopt a street urchin and introduce her to the family friend, Mr. Dodgson. Beddor introduces readers to a few other unforgettable characters: Jack of Diamonds, Generals Doppel and Gänger, Dodge Anders, walrus butlers. The weapons — oh, the weapons. I like Beddor’s ideas of weapons in Wonderland, and how a pogo stick and hula hoop came into being. Frankly, I like a lot of his ideas, and I am very much looking forward to reading *Seeing Redd*, the second book in the series. In time — reading a sequel too close to the last book can spell disaster, so I will be patient and pace myself. It will be worth the wait. While you’re at it, visit Frank Beddor’s Web site for *The Looking Glass Wars*. It’s an experience unto itself. (By the way, after seeing the unfolding images of the card soldiers, I dare you to put down the book. If you can, turn in your library card and turn on the television. Honestly.)

Posted by Chris at 9:40 PM