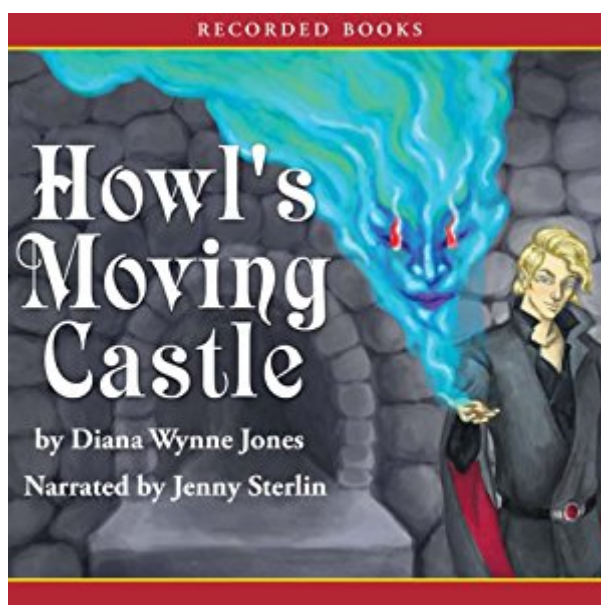


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# Howl's Moving Castle



## Synopsis

In the land of Ingary, such things as spells, invisible cloaks, and seven-league boots were everyday things. The Witch of the Waste was another matter. After fifty years of quiet, it was rumored that the Witch was about to terrorize the country again. So when a moving black castle, blowing dark smoke from its four thin turrets, appeared on the horizon, everyone thought it was the Witch. The castle, however, belonged to Wizard Howl, who, it was said, liked to suck the souls of young girls. The Hatter sisters--Sophie, Lettie, and Martha--and all the other girls were warned not to venture into the streets alone. But that was only the beginning. In this giant jigsaw puzzle of a fantasy, people and things are never quite what they seem. Destinies are intertwined, identities exchanged, lovers confused. The Witch has placed a spell on Howl. Does the clue to breaking it lie in a famous poem? And what will happen to Sophie Hatter when she enters Howl's castle? Diana Wynne Jones's entrancing fantasy is filled with surprises at every turn, but when the final stormy duel between the Witch and the Wizard is finished, all the pieces fall magically into place. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Diana Wynne-Jones has a well-deserved reputation for funny, well-plotted, keep-you-riveted-to-your-chair fantasy stories. Here she provides an unusual sorcerer, an unlikely heroine, and a lot of sly winks at fantasies and fairy tales. Very entertaining. Sophie Hatter is the eldest of three daughters, which in this fantasyland means that she's the one who doesn't have an astounding "fortune" to seek. Instead she's stuck at the hat shop. One day a plump, very rude

woman comes to see the hats, and Sophie uncharacteristically insults her. Unfortunately, this woman is the Witch of the Wastes, and responds by aging Sophie into a crone. Peeved out of being shy and retiring, she tramps off to the "Moving Castle" of the supposedly evil wizard Howl, who reportedly [steals] out the souls of young girls. After arriving at the castle, she encounters Howl's pleasant apprentice and contracted fire demon Calcifer (who promises to disenchant Sophie if she breaks his contract). Though she annoys the rather self-absorbed Howl and drives Calcifer almost nuts at times, Sophie becomes the cleaning lady at the Moving Castle. She begins searching for the chewed-up hearts of the girls, only to find something a lot more bizarre -- including her own peculiar magic. If you've ever read a fairy tale -- Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast -- you'll know that the youngest kids are always the favored ones. They go on to marry princes or princesses, become wealthy and beloved. Jones mocks this and many other fairy-tale cliches, such as the hilarious scene where Sophie lurches around in seven-league boots. There's even a brief homage to J.R.R. Tolkien. It's certainly an interesting twist to have a not-so-evil evil-wizard, a harried apprentice, and a heroine who appears to be in her nineties.

Before the movie came out on DVD I wanted to read the novel. I know what the movie is about and I heard it was "loosely based" on the novel. Little did I know that the novel was so delightful! As much as I love Miyazaki films, I don't think he could have wrapped up all the delightful parts for his readers in 2 hours or so. For those who have not seen the movie, I think the two can remain separate (meaning you can partake in one and not the other and be equally satisfied) because from what I read of Miyazaki's interviews, the movie goes along very different focuses and themes. What I found the most enchanting about the book were the rich characters. I don't think any movie could ever do it justice, Miyazaki or not. Howl seems to be the absolute opposite of what a hero should be, but he does grow on the reader and he's really not quite as clueless and self-absorbed as he leads others to believe. And Sophie is the spunky heroine that I thought she would be, although flawed and imperfect, she is very human and this makes her admirable. It's an easy 300 some pages to read and I finished it in a day (laughter occupied some time, and I reread the ending 2x). It brings back familiar themes of fairytales from childhood and evokes some nostalgia on the reader's part. There's an evil witch, a hero and heroine, rich people and poor people, the working middle class and royalty. But the author is a riot in the way she says things so simplistically, matter-of-factly and sarcastically. She's very witty throughout, which makes it such an entertaining read! In this book there are surprises around the bend, and nothing is as it appears.

Howl's Moving Castle is, overall, a good book. That said, I don't think it is even in the same sphere of interest as J. R. R. Tolkien, or J. K. Rowling. The tone is different; DWJ maintains a witty tone, very emotional, but practical as well. She keeps you interested because of the ways her characters act. Sophie is a particularly complex character, and I enjoyed the ways in which she tried to deny her, um, feelings for Howl (especially the weed killer). I found Tolkien to be more detail-oriented, and less character-based. His books weren't as easy (or, in my opinion, interesting) to read. J. K. Rowling? A different story entirely. The three books don't compare, and not because one is better than the other. They're just completely different. The book and the movie differ as well. At least two people I know, faced with me coaxing them into reading the book after seeing the movie, declined, with the excuse that they didn't think the book would be as good. This is definitely NOT TRUE. Miyazaki couldn't possibly summarize the character's personalities (Sophie's stubbornness and emotionalness; Howl's selfishness, and total escapism, and his courage, bravery, genius and hot! body, haha). He didn't even try. Come on. Even though I love Miyazaki, admire his films, and think he is truly skilled, I don't think this film was at all his best. The characters were saccharine. Sophie was a nice old woman without a lot of personality, and Howl was a seemingly selfish man who turned out to be a flying bird turned war hero turned 'ideal' male lead. And then there was the Witch. She WASN'T GOOD. SHE WAS EVIL. I know I sound pessimistic, and there were parts of the movie that made me love it... but as a movie. I loved this book first, and I was really disappointed with the movie.

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