



Beyond Platform 13

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[Diana Barnes](#) [3]

Not on Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

Following on from **The Secret of Platform 13** by Eva Ibbotson, who died in 2010, Sibéal Pounder picks up on a reference in the original when the King realizes that the harpies would like to rule the Island of Mist. In this story, the harpies have taken charge, many characters, including the King and Queen, have been banished Up There, and the mistmakers, who look a bit like baby seals, are so sad that they are hardly making any mist. The young Prince, Ben, who was restored to the kingdom by the young and not-at-all ugly hag, Odge Gribble, in the original, is now 18, and in hiding, and Odge has been dispatched to find an expert on mistmakers to bring through the gump (portal) in Vienna. 9 year-old Lina, who believes in magic, has dreamed about mistmakers and made her backpack look like one, is accidentally brought through instead, but of course, she is a resourceful girl, and does indeed help to save the Island of Mist from the evil harpies. She has to go home at the end of the story, but it looks as if there is a possibility that she could return next time the gump opens, in another 9 years.

There is enough back story to explain what the reader needs to know about what happened before, but your reviewer did re read, with pleasure, **The Secret of Platform 13** on your behalf to check it all out, and to make a comparison of the styles. There is not quite so much gentle humour in this new book, but it is a good story and will stand alone. There are extra additions, like the pearly mermaids, who talk in cockney rhyming slang (all explained to Viennese Lina), and there is fun to be had with the ghosts, and the King and Queen getting jobs in a school kitchen. The Queen deep fries homework as well as chips, and the King, employed to wash up, is persuaded to wash the children's sports kit as well. The fact that Aunt Maureen can turn people bald, mentioned in the original, is crucially important to the story. Odge's hag family, especially Netty who was so ugly that she has been a hag-model, are fun, and we also learn that not all harpies are necessarily evil?

Platform 13, with its portal to another world, is on King's Cross Station, and **The Secret of Platform 13** was written 3 years before Harry Potter, but Eva Ibbotson declined to sue. As journalist Amanda Craig wrote in 2006, "Ibbotson would seem to have at least as good a case for claiming plagiarism as [the American author](#) [4] currently suing J. K. Rowling, but unlike her, Ibbotson says she would 'like to shake her by the hand. I think we all borrow from each other as writers.?? The original was re-issued for its 20th anniversary, and a new edition is planned for the 25th coming up. If your library or bookshelf does not already have a copy, it would be worth buying as a companion to this story, as both are good reads and recommended.

Read our [Q&A interview with Sibeal Pounder](#). [5]

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