



2004

Basilisk

Lillian Heil

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Browne, N. M. *Basilisk*. Bloomsbury, 2004. ISBN 1582348766. \$17.95. 300 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian Heil

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Not recommended

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Monsters--Juvenile fiction; Dragons--Juvenile fiction; Dreams--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Basilisk is the story of how two young people, Donna and Rej, bring an end to the cruel dictatorship that has enslaved two worlds – the Combers, who live underground, and the Abovers, who inhabit a once beautiful city above ground. After Donna and Rej discover that the evil dictator is trying to make a basilisk that can actually scare people to death, they are left to carry out Browne's compelling story.

The objection to this story is that it contains a great deal of violence with the blood and gore described in graphic detail. It is true that evil people murder and torture others, but it doesn't have to be spelled out in such vivid terms for the reader to know it happened. The other objection is Browne's pessimistic view of the results so heroically achieved by Donna and Rej. One of the characters philosophically sums up the situation in these words, "Barba will rule for a time. He wants the power and is used to it and his henchmen will enforce things for him, at least until the army returns- and then, who knows?" Browne's moral stance is that not much has changed – one dictator has been replaced by another. She is entitled to her own pessimistic view of mankind but it is not one that will help young people.