



2006

Skulduggery Pleasant

Rachel Wadham

Rachel_Wadham@byu.edu

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Wadham, Rachel (2006) "Skulduggery Pleasant," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 27 : Iss. 3 , Article 22.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol27/iss3/22>

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Landy, Derek. *Skulduggery Pleasant*. HarperCollins, 2007. ISBN 9780061231155. \$17.99. 400 p.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Readers will easily be drawn into this rip-roaring comic fantasy adventure where a young girl, Stephanie, teams up with the wise-cracking skeleton and a host of equally unique characters to defeat an ancient evil, wielded by a criminal mastermind. Landy, a Dublin-based screenwriter who wrote the 2003 thriller *Dead Bodies* and the 2005 dark comedy *Boy Eats Girl*, has burst on to the children's literature scene with this outstanding first novel. The first of seven or eight in a planned series, *Skulduggery Pleasant* will not disappoint readers who love fast-paced action with lots of plot twists and turns.

The motley crew of characters is outstanding and despite the female protagonist this book will find appeal with both boys and girls. The created world of magic that rests solidly next to reality is believable because of its well-explained details. While some might equate this novel as a next read for Harry Potter, Young James Bond, or Discworld fans, there is so much more here than can be described with those three categories alone. The magic, action, mystery, and humor only add to the journey that Stephanie takes as she becomes involved in a new world that she never dreamed of, where she finds a place much more satisfying to her than her old life. Even with an ever-present evil threat, Skulduggery's wit as he faces insurmountable odds provides great levity to a work that could have easily become dark and moody. This is one of those rare novels where everything works to make an outstanding read that readers will not want to put down.