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The Unwanteds by Lisa McMann

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Author: McMann, Lisa

Title: *The Unwanteds* (Unwanteds #1)

Year of Publication: 2011

Publisher: Aladdin

ISBN: 9781442407688

Number of pages: 400

Rating: Excellent

Reading/Interest Level: Intermediate; Young Adult

Keywords: Fantasy; Dystopian; Magic; Twins; Talent

Review:

Alex Stowe is an Unwanted. Condemned to death by the militaristic leaders of Quill, Alex and the other Unwanteds arrive at the Death Farm. But as the large gate locks behind them the farm changes to the magical land of Artime, used by Mr. Today to save every year's batch of new Unwanteds. Taught to embrace their artistic natures by Mr. Today and his helpers, Alex and his friends use their newfound skills to create magic – and use it as a weapon. But Alex can't forget his identical Wanted twin Aaron or his shame at lagging behind his friends in their training. His desire to prove himself and bring Aaron to his magical new home threatens not only his own safety, but the very existence of Artime.

Lisa McMann has created a world that is both dystopian and magical. We long for the beauty and imagination of Artime while recognizing too much of our own world in Quill. With strong characters and a fast pace, this novel flies towards its conclusion. But in flying so fast we miss out on the full development of some key points. Meghan has a large part the book at first, but then largely fades away. Magical training is alluded to more than defined. And the motive for the hate than spurs on the pivotal climax is murky at best. Despite these flaws, *Unwanteds* establishes characters we know in a world that is wonderfully unreal.

Reviewer: Laura Byrd

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