

## The Looking Glass Wars

**Author:** Frank Beddor

**Rating:** 7.5

**Genre:** Fantasy

**Pages:** 384

**Binding:** Hardcover

**Series:** The Looking Glass Wars

**Reviewer:** LastCall

**Publisher:** Dial

## FBS Quick Take

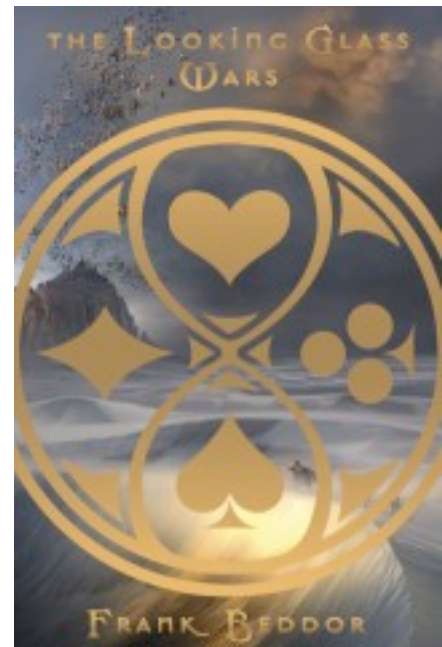
*It contains some very clever moments and the re-imaginings of the main characters are a constant source of enjoyment that keeps you on your toes.*

The Looking Glass Wars is a retelling of the story of Alice in Wonderland. All of the characters, plot points and events are cast in a different light. The reconfigured characters are often cast in completely different roles. In the kingdom of Wonderland there are two types of Imagination, Black and White. Each school of magic has its specific attributes, disciples and practitioners. Current Queen Genevieve and her daughter Alyss as well as the royal family are all practitioners of White Imagination. Genevieve's estranged sister Redd is the foremost practitioner of Black Imagination. Redd, who believes she is the rightful Queen, kills Alyss' father in the second chapter, over throws the current monarchy and beheads the queen. All the prosperity that Wonderland had under Alyss' families rule becomes corrupt under Queen Redd's selfish rule.

Alyss is rescued from the bloody coup by Hatter Madigan, the Queens elite bodyguard. He takes her to the Pool of Tears, a mysterious transportation device that is connected to other worlds, times and dimensions. Having been separated from Hatter Alyss comes through the portal alone. She lands in London, England in 1859 and him in Paris, France.

Alyss eventually goes to an orphanage and gets adopted by the Liddell's. She is befriended by the family friend Lewis Carroll. Carroll listens to her stories of a fantastical world and publishes a variation of them as Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.

Hatter spends 13 years scouring the globe for Alyss. Many years later he finds a clue in the form of the books. Hatter tracks down Carroll and organizes a rescue right before she is to be married. By this time she has come to think of her childhood "dreams" as the wild imaginings of a child and also untrue.



The final act finds the newly returned Princess Alyss leading a rag tag band of rebels against Queen Redd. Along the way before Redd's eventual overthrow Alyss must learn to reclaim her ability to conduct Imagination and learn to be Queen.

All in all there is a lot to recommend here though it is not without its faults. It contains some very clever moments and the re-imaginings of the main characters are a constant source of enjoyment that keeps you on your toes. The characters are a little thin but this is marketed as a YA book. The biggest problem for me with the characters is that there is no grey area for them. If they are presented from the beginning as good or bad then they don't change, there are no grey area characters just black and white. The characters could have benefited from more depth. There do appear to be some holes in the plot, but for a probable explanation please see my thoughts below. The story model is that of The Lion King with little or no variation which some have argued is itself a watered down Hamlet. I say it's a simple tale simply told. Now that the primary arc is told, the predictable arc as it were, I'm really interested to see what the next two volumes will bring. Unlike other introductory novels of a multi-book sequence there aren't many broader arcs that are left unresolved to be picked up at a later date, everything kinds of wraps itself up nicely.

Bottom line: Flawed but recommendable and I'm especially curious about later volumes

An observation that didn't affect my review:

The Looking Glass Wars is proposed as a multimedia platform. It's slated to be a trilogy of novels. There are also plans to bring other aspects of the greater story to other mediums including video games, movies and comics. One of the comics has already started to be released. It's called Hatter M and chronicles the 13 years that it took him to find Princess Alyss. It should prove to be an interesting experiment in not only marketing but also world building. The first novel already contains great blank spots where things are left unexplained or are explained too quickly. The assumption is that those gaps would be filled in by the other platforms.

If one isn't aware of the other platforms though then the enjoyment of the one that you're partaking in could potentially be lessened. Another possibility is that if one segment of the Looking Glass Wars buying market doesn't use or isn't aware of the other outlets then chances are they won't continue with the series. It's a business model filled with possibilities but also the potential to fail. Using myself as a microcosm to provide an example. Of the four proposed media outlets I would buy the future books and the comics, possibly see the movie and never play the video games. Needless to say that I'm going to be pretty pissed if a key plot point for the novels takes place in the video game. Like I said, should be interesting.