



A Gift of Magic

Lois Duncan

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When the old woman died, she left each of her grandchildren something very special. For Kirby, the gift of dance. For Brendon, the gift of music. And for Nancy, the most extraordinary gift of all . . . the *gift of magic*.

A Gift of Magic Details

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From Reader Review A Gift of Magic for online ebook

Sarah Sammis says

I can't remember why I put A Gift of Magic by Lois Duncan on my wishlist but I did. I've started to try to read through that list by locating the books at my local libraries.

A Gift of Magic differs from Duncan's typical young adult thrillers. This one has magical realism instead of a mystery. A mother recently divorced moves her three children into the home she's inherited from her mother. Along with the home the children begin to develop heightened skills: one gets music, one gets dance and the third gets ESP.

Mostly this book is about the children coming to terms with their new lives. They had been used to traveling all over the world and now they are grounded in a small town, in a home they have no emotional attachment to. For the most part the book is slow and different from other Duncan books I've read.

But there's an underlying twist that's foreshadowed throughout. A few details struck me as odd and I have to admit that I kept reading to see if those details would work themselves out. They do in the epilogue. For that tight ending I'm giving the book a perfect rating. If I did partial ratings, I would drop it down by half a star for the some awkward pacing earlier on in the novel.

Andrea says

Plot spoilers

The storyline was interesting, about their grandmother giving her three grandchildren a gift. She gave Nancy the gift of magic, Kirby got the gift of dance, and Brendon got the gift of music. I thought that was really unique, and was curious to see where it was going to go. But then I found out the kids were so young and it went downhill from there. The girls were in middle school, and Brendon was in elementary school. I hated that they were so young, and I think the story would have been much better had they all been teenagers in high school.

Kirby got on my nerves with her inability to focus on anything but dancing. She didn't care about boys, friends, school—nothing except dancing. Being good at something is one thing; having to do it all the time is another. Nancy was just a selfish, bratty little kid, and it absolutely sucked being in her perspective. I am way too old for this book, but I kept with it because I didn't want to quit.

I was disappointed because I expected more of their abilities. They barely did anything with them; I guess since the book was so short they didn't really have time to develop. Kirby was all about being a dancer; Nancy did some stuff with her gift, but I expected way much more from the gift of magic, and Brendon did barely anything with his. The wrap-up at the end was a little depressing. I hate when authors fast forward and sum up the characters' lives. It was good to learn that Kirby went on to be a dancer. The author, keeping with her constant theme of babies, had Nancy marry early and have 5 kids. Just swell. And Brendon was the most disappointing of all. He became a helicopter pilot, and only played piano at clubs, filling in for other people or something like that. What a waste. I hated that the kids' dad and mom split up, and I was hoping that they were going to get back together, because initially Nancy had seen that her dad was at a dinner table with a

business partner and being briefed on the assignment, but he hadn't been writing down any notes and was thinking of them. I thought he still loved their mom and was going to get back together with her. But when it became apparent that Elizabeth was going to get with Tom Duncan I was like whatever. I *hated* when their dad married that other woman. Ugh! But Elizabeth and Tom ended up together, and I guess that's good, cuz they'd been childhood sweethearts. Whatever. And they had a kid named Lois, who had the gift of storytelling. Hmm...At first I was like is this a biography of yourself? Cuz why would you use your own name in a book? But then I was like this must be the author's way of tooting her own horn.

Relyn says

All I can say is that Lois has had her day, and I am glad to be finally finished with this little project of mine. There is nothing wrong with Lois Duncan, and she has written a few really good books. Duncan had phenomenal success at a time when not that many books for teens were being published. So, I intend no disrespect when I say that I am no longer a teen and am more than finished with these books. I have learned a few things from this project, though.

1. There are too many great books in the world to spend time reading books just because I thought I had a good idea and said I was going to.
2. I do love young adult literature, but I can not have a steady diet of it. I'm left with a mental stomachache.
3. I do love suspense stories and have not outgrown the little thrill I get from creepy, slightly-paranormal stories. I just need to find the grown up versions.

This one was not as creepy as the rest of Duncan's books, which was a bummer. But was probably better written than the ones I've recently read. I dunno - maybe not. Too much Duncan lately to know for sure.

Grace says

First read this book in elementary school, many times. Gave it 5 stars because it has stayed with me all these years, any time I come across an ESP reference. Big difference in reading it now as an adult. Back then, I loved Nancy and felt so sorry for her, being ignored by her sister and worried about her parents. But now, I just saw a self-centered brat who is extremely judgmental and thinks she knows what is best for everyone. I disliked her. The story completely held up. Moral of Nancy's story: with great power, comes great responsibility. I'll read it again in 10 years! .

Swankivy says

This is a story about a family whose grandmother gave her grandchildren "gifts"--Kirby got the gift of dance, Brendon got the gift of music, and Nancy got something else that she's not sure what it is. She doesn't know much about ESP, but when she reads up about it and realizes it describes what she can do, she's both kinda afraid and kinda interested in developing it. But then, of course, it ends up hitting her that she might have a responsibility that comes with her unusual talent, and she's not sure what to do when it seems to become bigger than she is. This is really well-written. You totally get inside this character's head. I loved it as a

young girl and really related to the main character.

Homeschoolmama says

I can imagine that I'd have liked this book a lot at a younger age. The story line would have intrigued me back then, at age 10 or so. It still did intrigue me, but the writing wasn't very good, the characters, particularly the mother, spoke in stereotyped stilted ways, *"Now, Dear, remember to wash your hands."*

Scott says

This is a YA book that was written (1972) long before they had that category. I read this book around 7th or 8th grade and it struck some kind of something with me because I read it many many times in the six years after I got it.

This would be my first re-read since I got out of high school. It did bug me a little that the book has obviously been touched up for modern times (e.g. the addition of email and text technology) but I can live with it.

Our story follows a family of three children directly after their parents divorce. These three children have been given "gifts" by their long dead grandmother. One child has the gift of dance, one child the gift of music and the last child the gift of E.S.P. (remember this was written in the early 70's). The main plotlines deal with how the kids deal with their parents divorce, their new living situations and how they deal with their gifts (which they don't know they've been given).

I'm now a 44 year old father and I appreciate this book for different reasons than I did when I first read it at age 13 but I still loved it. I see now that it is a little predictable but it did not lessen my enjoyment. Whole heartedly would recommend this.

Daisy says

this book was full of magic which by the way matches the name that it was given. I enjoyed reading this book because it was very magical and i could relate to it! this book was mostly about a family with divorced parents and kids called Kirby, Nancy, and Brendon. During these family's life they are living in Florida home of the beaches and crabs where Nancy and her sister and brother are attending a new school and making new friends making it feel like they are completely normal!what is special about this typical family is the fact that they all received a special gift from their grandmother who died. She gave Kirby the gift of dance,Brendon the gift of music, and for Nancy the gift of magic.Later on Elizabeth learns that her high school "sweetheart", Tom Duncan lives just down the beach from her home.Nancy is determined to put back her parents and keep Tom Duncan away from her mom. Circumstances lead her to read about ESP, a special gift that the principal is interested about knowing, which is what Nancy was born to do...read minds!Kirby recognizes her talent of dancing as well as former dancer instructor madame vilar who recommends for Kirby a scholarship. Brendon takes to the piano without reading music and noticing his talent. This book was full of supernatural events that helped the reader understand the story more better!

Elaine says

This is one of my absolute favorite books. The book focuses on a main character with psychic gifts that are well known and supported by her family-- a nice touch for a YA novel. The story chronicles her self-discovery, worries, skills. Excellently developed characters. Could not recommend more highly.

If you liked this book, I recommend:

Shadowland

Violet Eyes

So You Want to Be a Wizard

Joan says

Lois Duncan is able to pack a very 3-dimensional cast of characters into a pretty small book—I'm impressed. Reading this felt like a nostalgic trip back to junior high, despite me not having much in common with the characters other than having been an angry, angsty preteen like Nancy. Also, I wish kids still said cute stuff like “for rats’ sake!” and “cripes!”

Sarah Evans says

Less of a supernatural thriller and more of a family drama tinged with magical realism. But Duncan's eye for details and the emotions of both teens and children makes it an enjoyable read. Particularly good for teens dealing with divorce.

Eden says

Before Elizabeth's mother died, she gave her grandchildren three gifts. Kirby would have the gift of dance, Brendon the gift of music and Nancy was given her grandmother's very own gift, which Elizabeth seemed to miss.

Now, many years later, Elizabeth is back in her hometown with her own children and Nancy doesn't like it one bit. Changes are happening and she knows it, as she just has a way of knowing things. Nancy wants to find a way to keep everything the same and at the same time, trying to learn about her gift and deciding what she should do with it.

I thought this book was very interesting. It was a bit slow at first, but after the first chapter or so, the story definitely picked up. And as for the characters, they all had their faults, they were all selfish in someway. I felt sorry for all the characters at different times in the story, but I think I felt the most sorry for Nancy. The changes seemed to be especially hard for her.

I think the book teaches some good messages. One is that we don't always get what we want and even if we

know someone is making a mistake, we have to let them live their life.

It's not one of my favorites by Lois Duncan, but it was good. I really liked it.

Erin ? *Proud Book Hoarder* says

This is an older book, but I can't tell you how excited I was to read it once found. The back cover blurb simply intrigued me - I was into the magic thing as I just came off some other Urban Fantasy, and the thought of the different gifts of dance, music, and magic allured. I also was intriguing by the ending line, was there a creepy part of it or not? I was in the mood for more young adult and again, this is an older edition people likely won't hunt down, but if you run into it, it's highly recommended.

The writing style is formal and almost gothic, distant in style. Not dramatic at all like some of the other gothic stuff, but to fit the atmosphere.

It was like a childlike fairytale and ethereal, yet not childish in any way, either though dealing with younger audiences. Beautifully written, this magical tale was impossible to put down. Literally. I had to put it down after the first few pages this morning to go to work, but finished it in one sitting once picking it up again.

I do wish there was more and it was longer, and the epilogue WAS a bit cheesy. However, there was a clever mishmash of various personalities erupting with marvelous talents, and I dug the mother and all the children. At times I was wondering how dark it would go based on the main characters actions and internal dialogue, but it wasn't as dark and suspenseful as I imagined from the back blurb. More of a drama than anything, but still seeps into the brain all the same. I loved this book and am now curious about more Lois Duncan.

Tayzia says

Well... first of all, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. I thought that it was a little bit short, but the author was very descriptive, and the plot was very interesting. I loved how developed the personalities of the characters were. Nancy was very serious all of the time, Kirby was always zoning out, thinking about dancing, and Brendon was a troublemaker. I loved how it all worked out in the end, and I loved the "Once upon a time" and "happily ever after" thing. overall rating: one of my favs.

Amber says

I know I say this about a lot of books, but this is definitely an amazing book. This idea is amazing and the mystery/secrets is amazing. The whole idea of this "magic" gift is amazing and the sci-fi concept is great. I definitely recommend this book. Like you should stop reading this review right now so that you can read this book. No I'm serious. Read the book. STOP READING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!Stop reading now. Why are you still reading? I hate you. Now go read the book.

Penny Landon says

I first read this book when I was in middle school and loved to read Lois Duncan books. I decided to re-read A Gift of Magic to see if it was as good as I remembered. I was not disappointed. It is a simple storyline that you can definitely figure out what happens next, but it is still an engaging story. Kirby's struggle to become a dancer was great to read and could have been improved if the author had just devoted a few more pages to her. Nancy's narration also made the book more interesting to read. I like reading about her struggle with her social studies teacher. The only downside to this book was the ending. The epilogue was very cheesy and did a terrible job of wrapping up the storyline. I would have liked at least 5 more pages to wrap up all of the problems of the characters. Brandon's story also was never really explored in the way it should have been. I would recommend this book, but keep in mind it is written for younger readers.

Chelsea says

I read this when I was eleven and it was an instant favorite. I believed so much of Nancy's experiences with ESP. I remember the book giving me chills and I would stay up late on summer nights unable to put the book down. I read it at least five times when I was a child. I re-read it recently and found it just as wonderful. Obviously it's meant for a young reader audience, and it was written awhile back, so some of the language is a bit corny but I loved it still. It reaffirmed my beliefs in our human intuition and ways of communicating that aren't necessarily quantifiable.

Jack705 says

I think that this book is saying with great power comes great responsibility. In this story, the main character Nancy, finds out that she has ESP, or extra sensory perception. She has the ability to go back the past, see where people are and what they are doing in the present. She's able to tell what people are thinking, and she knows what's going to happen in the future. With these great powers she could easily influence people's lives - what they do and think - and this is a huge responsibility. Nancy once used her ESP for a good thing. She used her ESP to save her brother's life, when he was stranded in the water, in a boat that wouldn't move, she could tell somebody that he was stranded there, and they could go get him.

I can relate to this book, because even if I don't have ESP, I can relate to having a responsibility to do the right thing. It's not as big of a responsibility, but when I have to hang out with my cousin, who is 4, it's pretty hard to stop myself from running away. I get very bored watching movies like cars, but I do it anyway. I have to make sure I don't hurt his feelings, by running away. I have to be careful not to use that power for my good too. It would be easy to get him to do things for him, like get me water, or a snack.

Nancy has to restrain from using her powers for something that would harm somebody else, which could also be something that would give her personal gain. I know that it would be hard for me to restrain myself.

girl writing says

One of Duncan's tamer stories but with a fun twist at the end.

Violet says

This was one of the most boring paranormal books I've every read. It was SO boring. There could have been so much more done. It was a wonderful concept, but Lois Duncan went nowhere with it. There could have been someone trying to get them because of their gifts, or some more contact with the late grandmother, or SOMETHING more! It was so cheesy in some parts (the "can't let mother marry somone other then dad"). There was a happy sappy ending (I hate those). So you can guess that I really didn't like this book. It was boring and cheesy and the sad thing is that it had so much potential! Sad really.....
