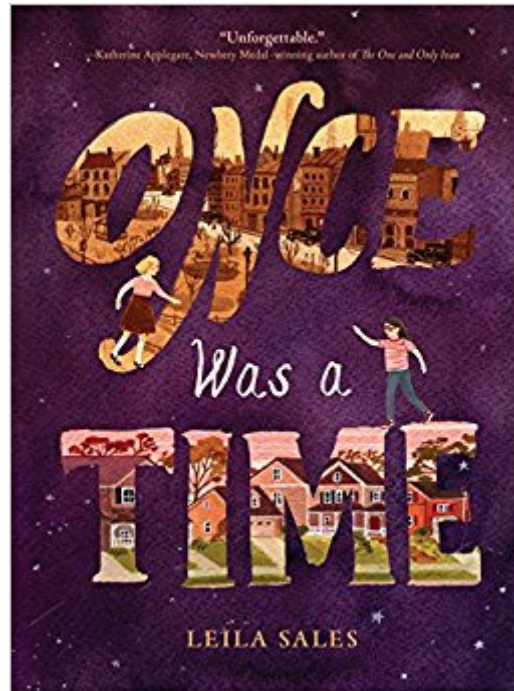




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# Once Was A Time



## Synopsis

In the war-ravaged England of 1940, Charlotte Bromley is sure of only one thing: Kitty McLaughlin is her best friend in the whole world. But when Charlotte's scientist father makes an astonishing discovery that the Germans will covet for themselves, Charlotte is faced with an impossible choice between danger and safety. Should she remain with her friend or journey to another time and place? Her split-second decision has huge consequences, and when she finds herself alone in the world, unsure of Kitty's fate, she knows that somehow, some way, she must find her way back to her friend. Written in the spirit of classic time-travel tales, this book is an imaginative and heartfelt tribute to the unbreakable ties of friendship.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 760 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: Chronicle Books (April 5, 2016)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 7.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #90,860 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #72 in [Books > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Time Travel](#) #1839 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship](#) #2463 in [Books > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy & Magic](#)

Age Range: 10 - 13 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-6-"Most people don't believe in time travel," begins this work of fantasy/sci-fi set in 1940s wartime London. Ten-year-old Lottie and her best friend, the anagram-obsessed Kitty, certainly do. Lottie's dad is engaged in top-secret scientific research that may help win the war. Sales's story takes an abrupt detour as Lottie travels to suburban Wisconsin in the year 2013, without any clothes, without any clues, and, worst of all, without Kitty. With the help of a friendly librarian, some clueless but kind foster parents, and a geeky outcast artist, Lottie finds a new life, but she can't

forget her dearest friend. She's determined to find her again, though time and space themselves stand in the way. Packed with literary allusions, meditations on friendship, and historical/geographical tidbits, this book is a bit of an unwieldy read, and its never-ending stream of coincidence, luck, and nice people can get a little wearing (has any Child Protective Services interview ever gone so well with so little paperwork?). The science is fluff, but the book shines in its portrayal of friendship, both the intense bond between Lottie and Kitty and the blossoming trust between Lottie and her new friend, Jake. VERDICT This genre mash-up will appeal to fans of Rebecca Stead's *When You Reach Me* (Random, 2009) and Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*.-Katya Schapiro, Brooklyn Public LibraryÂ (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

"A timeless story of best friendship that is as original as it is authentic, as elegant as it is heart-wrenching. Sales is a master storyteller." -Courtney Sheinmel, author of *Sincerely* and the *Stella Batts* series  
The friendship of two 10-year-old English girls is tested when one travels through a portal to the future. In 1940, food rationing and fear of bombs are the backdrop for best friends Lottie and Kitty, who care more about anagrams and playing make-believe than the war. Lottie's scientist father researches time travel, work that's governed by the Official Secrets Act and coveted by the Nazis. The girls are kidnapped and taken to a cellar where Germans are trying to coerce Lottie's father into revealing his research. Lottie sees a shimmering portal and leaps through just as shots are fired, landing in a small Wisconsin town in 2013. She's befriended by a helpful librarian and a boy her own age named Jake. The passage of three years confirms her father's hypothesis that there is no returning to her own time. Lottie adjusts to a new school and life with a foster family, when she finds a postcard from Kitty addressed to her and stuck in a library book, raising her hopes that her friend is still somewhere to be found. Lottie's first-person account has a lighthearted tone, with lots of dialogue and details contrasting childhood in wartime England with modern-day America. Her transition to her new life is awkward but realistic, and the focus of this charming novel is always on friendship and loyalty. Rewarding and uplifting."Will delight those who prefer to revel in the vast mysteries of time and coincidence."--The Horn Book Magazine"Touching, bittersweet ending."-VOYA: Voice of Youth Advocates"The bond between Lottie and Kitty-proves to be both tender and unstoppable." -Booklist"Superb. Months after first reading the book, I find myself reflecting on its characters and outcomes."--The Children's Book Review"Shines in its portrayal of friendship... will appeal to fans of *When You Reach Me* and *A Wrinkle in Time*."-School Library Journal"Once Was a Time has it all: suspense, humor, an intrepid heroine, and an intriguing take on

time travel. But at its heart, Leila Sales's dazzling tale is about a friendship so powerful that nothing-not even time itself-can break its bonds. Unforgettable." -Katherine Applegate, Newbery Medal-winning author of *The One and Only Ivan*"Lottie's fortitude and resolve make her an admirable and sympathetic protagonist."-Publishers Weekly"Blew me away... heart-wrenching and beautiful and totally unexpected."-- Geek Dad"At once epic and intimate, bold and gentle, and as boundary-breaking and timeless as the friendship that is at this story's magnificent heart. A gorgeous, exciting read." -Anne Ursu, author of the National Book Award-longlisted *The Real Boy*"An imaginative and heartfelt tribute to the unbreakable ties of friendship."--Middle Shelf Magazine"A very beautiful story about the power of friendship."--India Winslow, children's bookseller, Brookline Booksmith

*Once Was a Time* is one of the most beautiful stories of friendship I have ever read. I am a huge fan of *"When You Reach Me"* by Rebecca Stead and that book is often mentioned in the same conversation as *"Once Was a Time."* Both books deal with the concept of time travel, but not in a science fiction way. The concept of time travel is really a peripheral idea. The story is about a young girl named Charlotte and her friend Kitty who live in England during World War II. Charlotte's father is a scientist for the British government, studying the idea of time travel. One night, Charlotte and Kitty are kidnapped. Just as tragedy is about to happen, Charlotte finds a time portal and jumps through it. She is instantly transported to Wisconsin in 2013. Here she begins a new life as an American teenager, complete with mean girls and overprotective foster parents. Then, one day, something happens that changes Charlotte's life and sends her on an incredible journey to find Kitty. I loved this book. It was exciting and beautifully written. There are many different tributes to other beautiful books, including *"A Little Princess."* And, not to give anything away, but the end, which could have been extremely cheesy or overly dramatic, was just about perfect. Seriously, I had a tear in my eye as I read the last page. I would definitely recommend this book for middle grade students. It is probably appropriate for children toward the end of 3rd grade, but would be a great read for students in the fourth grade and up.

A middle grade treasure.

I enjoyed this book as it combined historical context with fiction and sci fi. A surprising twist at the end.

So good@!!!!

In "Once Was a Time," Leila Sales accomplishes a feat I'd thought impossible: she writes a gripping love story with no sex or even attraction, just the fierce loyalty and yearning we feel for friends so dear as to become part of us. The book is marketed to tweens, but readers of any age will relate to the main character's struggles with disappointment, loneliness, cliques, peer pressure, grief, kindness, cruelty, limitless possibility, and failing to be one's best self. While original, the tale is also a universal one in that it addresses family in all its many permutations, from the one we're born into to surrogates acquired along the way. The reader is left with an aching sadness over both relatives easily relinquished and others sorely missed. The plot concerns time travel, yes, but more so the passage of time in a life well lived. Its historical setting is also subtle; one learns lessons about World War II, from rationing to blackouts, in a way that feels organic to the story rather than forced. Though not without its faults, including a middle that drags and a bit of missing depth in situations that would cause most of us great distress (perhaps as an attempt to lighten things up for a younger audience), "Once Was a Time" is superb. Months after first reading the book, I find myself reflecting on its characters and outcomes. If it gives me, a grown woman and mother of three, solace to think of a young girl and those around her settling into a life of contentment and fulfillment after what initially seemed to be a poor fit and bad draw all around, I can only imagine how comforting this read will be for the angst-ridden younger set.

3.5 stars\*Though Once Was a Time is about time travel, I found it to be a cute \*and\* educational book. You can tell Ms. Sales did her research regarding the 40s and the way things were, how they spoke in England during that time, et cetera. I think it's good that UWaT is a MG book, because there were a few instances where I had questions that sort of drove me nuts. It was as if, by the end, there were a few things wrapped up so quickly and "obviously" that I didn't really have the right to say, "But wait..." However, I loved Jake and the library being such a huge part of the story and Lottie getting to read (including the incorporation of so many books that, perhaps, more kids will be interested in reading). I also loved Jake's interactions with his brother (that really brightened things up and I found myself wishing they'd been incorporated in the storyline sooner!!!). The whole bully thing hit a chord and I'm sure it will for readers, too. (So hard to read sometimes, though, especially the 10 year-old Charlotte/Jake part.) Maybe Charlotte finally being able to choose friends over fitting in will benefit others and give them the gumption or courage to also stand up for themselves (or not

be as apt to bully in the future). All in all, *Once Was a Time* was a sweet book and I think MG readers will enjoy it a lot. \*I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

**Summary:** 10-year-old Charlotte lives in England in 1940. She and her best friend Kitty love to hear Charlotte's father talk about the work he does researching time travel. As World War II intensifies, his work becomes more and more secretive, until one night Charlotte and Kitty are kidnapped by Nazis and taken to her father's lab. The Nazis threaten to shoot the two girls if her father doesn't tell them the secrets of time travel. At the last second, much to her amazement, Charlotte sees a time-travel portal like her father has described to her many times before. She runs through it, and finds herself in 2013 Wisconsin. Knowing she can never travel back to her original time, she does the best she can to make a new life for herself, but she never forgets about Kitty. Just when she has given up all hope of ever finding her, she opens a library book and finds a postcard from an adult Kitty, which just might be the clue she needs to reconnect. 272 pages; grades 4-7. **Pros:** An enchanting mix of friendship story, historical fiction, and science fiction. **Cons:** A pretty good dose of suspension of disbelief is required to accept the time travel portion of the story.

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