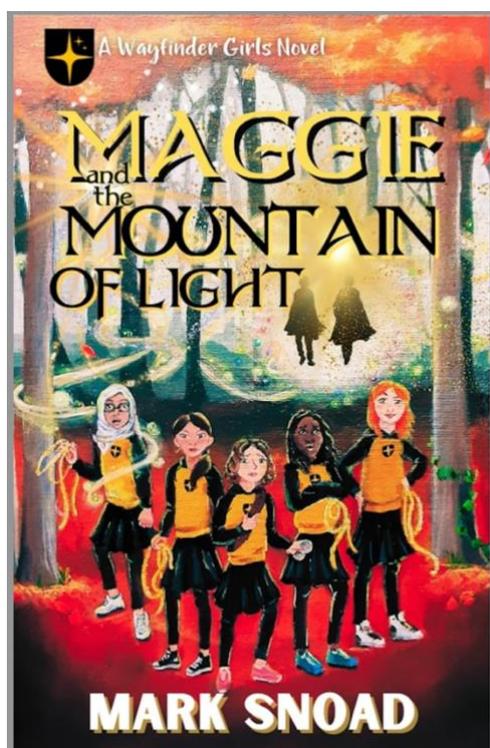
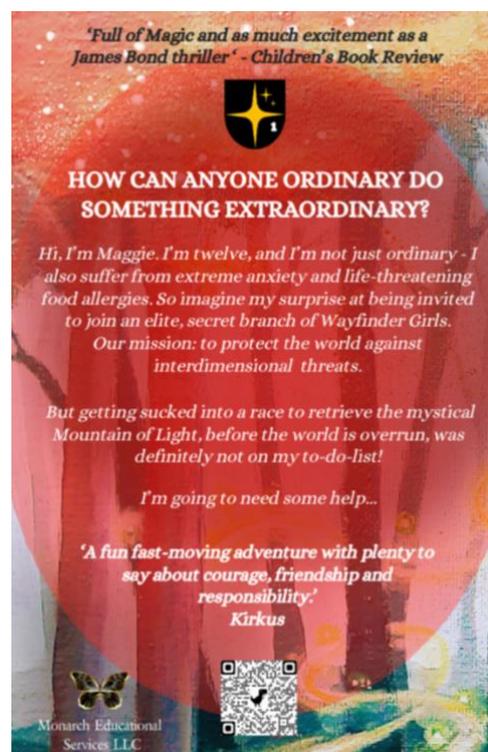


Kia ora, I'm Mark Snod, a 56-year-old teacher living in *Tāmaki Makaurau* Auckland. My debut Middle Grade fantasy novel, *Maggie and the Mountain of Light*, was published in April 2023 by Monarch Educational Services, an independent publisher based in North Carolina, USA.



Inspired by my eldest daughter's battle with severe food allergies and anxiety, I wrote this contemporary fantasy featuring a main character facing similar challenges, but still embarking on a magical adventure. Maggie is 12 and despite her allergies and anxiety, she is proud to be a member of the Wayfinder Girls (a pseudo Girl Guiding organisation). Maggie attends a fun 'apocalypse training' camp in London with her best friend Anahira, where she has to navigate all the challenges any food allergic kid faces when attending a camp. Maggie and Anahira discover a secret programme the Wayfinder Girls keep hidden from the world - an elite group of girls, known as Guardians, protect our world from interdimensional threats. Anahira wants to become a Guardian, but Maggie is not so sure, it's hard enough just coping with her life in this world, let alone facing down threats from other worlds. The story then explores whether Maggie will face her fears and journey into the unknown.

I was also inspired by a comment one of my Afghani refugee students made at school one day, insisting that England should give back their nation's diamond. The diamond is known as the Koh-i-Noor, which translates to English as Mountain of Light, and is currently part of the Queen Mothers Crown held securely in the Tower of London. The diamond is said to be cursed, with previous owners suffering all manner of betrayals and brutal deaths. My premise in my book is that the diamond doesn't belong to our world but is actually a relic from the world of the Fae, and they want it back. In my story, Maggie is tricked into helping two Fae, Tylwyth and Teg, effectively binding her to the fate of their task. She soon encounters a significant problem, Tylwyth and Teg want Maggie to give them back the Mountain of Light, which means she'll need to somehow get it from the Jewel House in the Tower of London. *Impossible!!*



[Kirkus:](#)

*A fun, fast-moving adventure with plenty to say about courage, friendship, and responsibility.*

[Children's Book Review:](#)

*At the same time, the story itself is full of magic and as much excitement as a James Bond thriller.*