



## The City of Ember

*Jeanne DuPrau*

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Many hundreds of years ago, the city of Ember was created by the Builders to contain everything needed for human survival. It worked...but now the storerooms are almost out of food, crops are blighted, corruption is spreading through the city and worst of all—the lights are failing. Soon Ember could be engulfed by darkness...

But when two children, Lina and Doon, discover fragments of an ancient parchment, they begin to wonder if there could be a way out of Ember. Can they decipher the words from long ago and find a new future for everyone? Will the people of Ember listen to them?

## **The City of Ember Details**

Date : Published 2003 by Yearling Books

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Author : Jeanne DuPrau

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## From Reader Review The City of Ember for online ebook

### Christine says

(This is for my book report)

"The City of Ember" is all about these two regular kids saving their city. Doon and Lina had never thought of being twelve years old and getting jobs. Lina originally got chosen to work in the sewers as a pipework's laborer, but Doon knew being a messenger wouldn't do anything to help save the city, so he traded with Lina. Luckily, Lina just so happened to be a super fast runner and that's why she thought messenger would be a perfect job for her. Doon wasn't the kind of boy who loved sports and computer games, he would rather be a quiet gentleman who paid attention to his bug collection all day long, spending more time at the library than on the couch, so it wasn't normal for Doon to scream to others, "The city of Ember is not prospering, in fact everything is getting worse and worse by the minute! The lights go out all the time now and the shortages, the shortages are getting low on everything! If no one does anything about it, something terrible is going to happen!" When Doon and Lina unite together to solve the mysteries of their city, they discover the truths of the past and the present. Some people aren't as trustworthy as they seem to be. When Doon and Lina figure out the last piece of the puzzle, they're stuck. How should the City of Ember know about the great discovery they had made? I would recommend this book to anyone.

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### Shelly says

My 12 year old son just knew I would love this book. He's been hounding me to read it since... early last spring. Finally, I have read it and Jacob (my son) was right.

Omigosh. What first hooked me were the vivid character descriptions that show more than tell, so the reader can draw their own conclusions. The story is told in third person, limited in two different perspectives. Lina Mayfleet, twelve years old, sat "winding a strand of her long, dark hair around her finger, winding and unwinding it again and again." Doon Harrow, also twelve, "sat with his shoulder's hunched, his eyes squeezed shut in concentration, and his hands clasped tightly together."

So I'm busy marking up my paperback copy for examples to share with my own students when it becomes more than a coincidence - that I'm noticing the similarities between Ember, the city, and the Community in Lois Lowry's The Giver. But then... there is just more and more and more. I especially loved the questioning, like Lina's friend Clary's "Where does life come from? What is life?" and Doon's father's words of wisdom that sound strangely familiar: "What you get is what you get. What you do with what you get, thought... that's more the point..." and "Pay close attention to everything, notice what no one else notices. Then you'll know what no one else knows, and that's always useful."

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## **Michael says**

I asked my best friend what kinds of books his children were reading (I'm always looking for books for my niece) and he said his oldest son had read and enjoyed the City of Ember series. So much so that he'd passed them along to his parents, who had read them and found them interesting as well. Add to it a movie coming out and I decided I would give the series a try.

The City of Ember exists inside the darkness, where it's always night. Darkness is held at bay twelve hours a day by artifical light, though the electricity is becoming sporadic and the city is running out of replacement bulbs. Founded many years before, there was some instructions on how to leave the darkness left behind but lost by one of the city's mayors. The city is facing shortages of supplies and the residents live in a sense of paranoia that the lights will go out forver, plunging them into enternal darkness.

It's a fascinating premise for a novel and one that begs a lot of questions, especially when you find certain things about Ember in the novel's final pages. The story follows two children, Doon and Lina, who have completed their schooling and have been given new jobs. Doon wants to fix the city and trades to have a job in the underside of the city, hoping to explore the mystery of Ember. Lina gets a job as a messenger and is able to run across the city, taking messages back and forth and discovering the full extend of the shortags to come. The two eventually begin to share their knowledge and piece together just what's going on in Ember. They also find a bit of the original instructions and try to fanthom what they mean (Lina's younger sibling eats part of them).

Lina and Doon discover there's more going on that meets the eye. The Mayor is a corrupt individual, hoarding resources for himself and seeking to discredit or lock up anyone who discovers otherwise. Lina and Doon are soon on a path to being rebels and forced to flee into the darkness surrounding the City.

A fascinating, compelling story that left me with a lot of questions and some good answers. The book is satisfying in that if offers resolution to some questions but leaves the door open for natural follow-ups.

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## **Jon says**

DuPrau makes a typical first-time novelist mistake throughout this book: she doesn't trust her reader to infer. In other words, she often over-explains, following up dialogue and action sequences with redundant descriptions of a character's take on what just happened. Another disappointment is that the mystery of Ember unfolds in an entirely predictable manner. There are no great surprises.

DuPrau's characterization of Doon is one dimensional. His spurts of rage create the only complexity in an otherwise flat character. Lina, on the other hand, rings true as a 12-year old throughout the book, with one exception: when her grandmother dies, Lina's grieving process is so brief it feels like the author has ignored something very important.

The book's strongest element was the setting, Ember. Throughout reading the book, I could see the dark, amber lights and the anxious people throughout the city. I hope DuPrau will learn from some of her mistakes and produce a stronger sequel—Ember is rich with possibilities for a greater story.

Σε αυτ? το βιβλ?ο γραμμ?νο με ξεχωριστ? δεξιοτεχν?α ξετυλ?γεται το κουβ?ρι της ανθρ?πινης εξ?λιξης σε συνθ?κες εξαιρετικ? δ?σκολες για την ?παρξη και την συν?χιση του ανθρ?πινου ε?δους.

Το μ?νυμα που π?ρναει ειναι η θ?ληση για ζω?, ο φ?βος μπροστ? σε ?ναν επικε?μενο αφανισμ? λ?γω των συνθηκ?v και παρ?λληλα το σθ?νος,η θ?ληση,το θ?ρρος των ανθρ?πων για επιβ?ωση που αγων?ζονται με απαρ?μιλλη ευαισθησ?α για το καλ? των συνανθρ?πων τους αλλ? και εξαιρετικ? μαχητικ? δι?θεση απ?ναντι στους διεφθαρμ?νους ισχυρο?ς ανθρ?πους που κρ?βουν την αλ?θεια οικειοποιο?νται δημ?σια αγαθ? και προσπαθο?ν κοντολογ?ς να προστατ?ψουν μ?νο τα τομ?ρια τους αδιαφορ?ντας για το κοιν? καλ? και το μ?λλον.

Οι μικρο? πρωταγωνιστ?ς?ς δ?νουν πραγματικ? μαθ?ματα αγ?πης συμπ?νιας ανθρωπ?ς και αλληλεγγ?ης μπα?νοντας σε μια ?νιση μ?χη αν?μεσα στους ?διους και την εγκληματικ? αμ?λεια και διαφθορ? των αρχ?ν της υπ?γειας πολιτε?ας.

Μια πολιτε?α που κ?ποτε ευημερο?σε και ?σως κατ?φερε πετ?χει το σκοπ? για τον οπο?ο δημιουργ?θηκε, να σ?σει το ανθρ?πινο ε?δος. ?μως τ?ρα ?χει αρχ?σει η αντ?στροφη μ?τρηση και πρ?πει οι κ?τοικοι στα ?γκατα της γης να ξεκιν?σουν ταξ?δι προς το φως της γης και της ζω?ς.

Τι υπ?ρχει στην επιφ?νεια της γης ?που θα πρ?πει να γ?νει το ν?ο σπιτι των προσφ?γων απ? τα βαθι? και σκοτειν? γ?κατα δεν το ξ?ρουμε τελει?νοντας το πρ?το μ?ρος.

Στο δε?τέρο μ?ρος Π?ρα απ? το σκοτ?δι θα ταξιδ?ψουμε παρ?α με τους ?ρωες μας για να ανακαλ?ψουμε και να παραδειγματιστο?με απ? τη δ?ναμη και το κουρ?γιο τους. Ε?χομαι να πετ?χουν το καλ?τέρο και να λυτρ?σουν ?λους τους συμπολ?τες τους που αγνοο?ν ακ?μη και την ?παρξη του ηλ?ου.

Καλ? αν?γνωση !!  
Πολλο?ς ασπασμο?ς.

## Olivier Delaye says

Before The Hunger Games (2008) there was The City of Ember (2003).

Well, that's not exactly true because, to be completely honest about it, before HG there were the Japanese novel (1999) and then movie (2000) Battle Royale from which only the blind would say that HG isn't based upon or at least heavily inspired by. Which, don't get me wrong, is totally fine; inspiration comes in every shape and form, and if a great book/movie inspired HG author Suzanne Collins to write a great series, then more power to her and more fun to us readers. So all is good;-)

Back to CE, the reason why I compare it to HG is because when it came out it was to my knowledge the first

post-apocalyptic YA to ever hit the market. In that, DuPrau can only be praised for her originality and avant-gardism. But there the comparison ends. Because if you're looking for poor kids fighting for survival in a beat-up world, look somewhere else. CE is not about that. At all. Rather, it is more about discovery (both self- and world-), about not taking the truth that's given to us unquestioningly and instead go and look for another one despite all the obstacles along the way. So again, if you're looking for point-blank survival, full-frontal fights and gruesome deaths, you're not going to get it in this book. In this sense it is a very clean and very-young-reader oriented story, which, however, doesn't fail to catch the fancy of older readers as well, and thus transcends all age groups. The two main characters, Lina and Doon, are very real, very relatable and very likable; the story is very satisfactory, if somewhat a little slow-paced at times; the writing is very easy-reading and will never make you scratch your head in confusion; finally, the ending is great and will make you want to pick up book 2 right away.

Long story short, it's a winner to me!

**OLIVIER DELAYE**

Author of the SEBASTEN OF ATLANTIS series

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### **Patrick says**

Maybe 18 months ago, I came out of my office to find my 5 year old son laying in the hallway reading a book.

He wasn't just flipping through a picture book, either. He was actually reading it. A book with all words and no pictures.

This was that book. He'd read it with his mom a over a month's worth of bedtimes. Then, of his own volition while walking through the hallway, he'd pulled it off the shelf, sat down, and started to read it again.

That's a recommendation beyond anything I can give it.

\* \* \*

About a week ago, I went on a car trip with Oot, and we listened to this book together. I see why he liked it. It's very tightly written. Good setting. Good mystery. Two POV characters, one boy and one girl. They each have their own plots, and their own character arcs. Their own problems they struggle to resolve. The boy gets angry sometimes, and his father talks to him about it, and the boy tries throughout the book to get a grip on his anger with varying success.

What's more, they both make mistakes. And they're *\*obviously\** mistakes. If only the boy would have told his father about X, things would have gone better. It's kinda the opposite of Harry Potter. It's nice to have that in a kid's book.

Anyway. Yeah. Good book. Good Audio. Two thumbs up. One from me, and one from Oot.

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## **Jennifer says**

The City of Ember is an engaging children's fiction novel that introduces young readers to courageous characters who take steps to make change happen. The author Jeanne DuPrau writes age-appropriate fantasy/dystopia with mystery, action, adventure, and an exciting cliffhanger that keeps kids interested in the series. My son absolutely LOVES this book! Loves it so much he doesn't want to watch the film adaption for fear of ruining his reading experience (he has learned this lesson early in life LOL). As soon as he finished reading his library copy, he took his allowance money to buy the book so he can own it (I'm SOOOOO proud!). I read this book along with him and I have to say it was pretty good! If you have a young person in your care that needs some reading recommendations, offer this title for them to consider! It is the first of four books so it should keep readers busy for a while.

#1: The City of Ember

#2: The People of Sparks

#3: The Prophet of Yonwood

#4: The Diamond of Darkhold

The City of Ember: The Graphic Novel

### **Interest Level**

Grades 6 - 8

### **Reading Level**

Grade level Equivalent: 5.1

Lexile® Measure: 680L

DRA: 60

Guided Reading: W

### **Type of Book**

Chapter Book

### **Genre**

Mystery and Suspense

Fantasy

### **Theme/Subject**

Family Life

Courage, Bravery, Heroism

Leadership and Responsibility

Friends and Friendship

### **03/10/2015**

What do you do when your fifth grader tells you he's reading the greatest book ever and he wants you to try it? You do whatever it takes to find that book and you read it with him. Enthusiasm is contagious...and supporting a child's love for reading is priceless.

Review to come...once I finish this *strongly* recommended book :)

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## C.G. Drews says

Okay, but excuse me...I THINK MY BOOK WAS MISSING THE FINALE?!?! \*collapses screaming\* **Just so you know, this has a really INTENSE cliffhanger.** I have so many questions!! I need book 2 asap!! **I really liked this story, I did, but I didn't love it.** I had a lot of quibbles? Because I'm a quibbler, okay? And that stops me from bumping it up to a higher rating but I still rather loved it. I also adore the movie and have a sever crush on Lina's shirt. YES. I do. No shame. I love her shirt.

THIS SHIRT. GIVE IT TO ME, SOMEONE.

Ahem. SO I *adore* that movie and my adoration leaks into my love and enjoyment of this story.

**It's written really simply...and is very firmly middle-grade.** It reminded me a lot of The Giver's style. Except that this was more wordy. The Giver was all for succulently crisp language, but I felt City of Ember dragged a bit? Like long paragraphs and not so much dialogue. Meh. I found myself skimming at times and had to settle down and read properly.

### **A Brief List of Things I'm Not Fond Of:**

- The ending...I like a good cliffhanger. I DO. But it honestly felt like it ended mid-thought.
- I really wish there'd been *more* between Lina and Doon. I'm not talking romance, HECK NO. I'm talking about more intensity and sparks for their friendship. They honestly felt like "Eh, we could be friends" and "Eh, but maybe we won't be tomorrow...it doesn't even matter to us." AND THAT SADDENS ME. I really like strong friendships!
- Poppy....hmm. I think it said she was 2? But she acts WAY younger than that. Her age just wasn't consistent. She was talking okay and then suddenly she could only "toddle"?? Then she was dribbling soup like she couldn't chew (??) but *then* she was scribbling confidently with a pencil, which a small baby wouldn't do. They'd just chew the pencil. SO I DON'T KNOW. I have many baby relatives, but who knows? Everyone is different.
- I did get rather bored a lot. There really isn't a lot of adversary or action.

**But despite ALL THAT, pfft, whatever. I STILL LIKED IT.** Because, for starters, the idea is *epic*. A dystopian where people are underground and they're relying on stockpiles of tinned food?!? IT IS SOOOO COOOOL. It's like an entire town of Hobbits! (Ahem.) And I love the whole old feel. The book really *felt* old. With the flickering lightbulbs and the second-hand-everything and the messes. I was just really *in* the book. And then I loved how Lina was SUCH a good big sister to Poppy. N'awww. Be still my beating heart. **It's definitely more Lina's story than Darrow's.** Although they do share the narration. I love the names and the jobs and GAH. Just the world is A+

A little more action would've been nice....something to break up the long paragraphs of just description and narration of what they were doing. It needed a bit of a BANG, maybe??

**Either way: ME LIKEE DYSTOPIANS AND TINNED FOOD.** There is pineapple in this book, of which I highly approve. And I love the premise and GAH I JUST NEED THE NEXT BOOK. Also I need Lina's shirt. So I'm just gonna slip over to Ember and steal that. Brb.

(I need to rewatch the movie now...)

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### **Eric says**

The City of Ember is a young adult novel that is a fantastic allegory for spiritual awakening, though I have no idea if it was intended as such. The story is of a girl who lives in an underground and completely self-contained city created by the “Builders.” The population of the city knows of nothing outside the city, in fact, though they speak English many of the words in it like “sky” are not understood in any terms but metaphorically. The problem is that the city is falling apart, the lights are going out, the vast stores of supplies of light bulbs, canned food, and vitamins are running out. The reader is in on a worse calamity, namely, that a secret message in a timed lock box that was left by the Builders, which was meant to be handed down from mayor to mayor and that would open just in time to explain to the city dwellers how to get out of the city, was lost many generations back. Well, being a young adult novel it’s pretty predictable in that the box is in our hero’s closet, but a nice turn of events it is found by our hero’s baby sister who chews on it for a while before our hero gets her hands on it leaving the message is only partially legible. So the bulk of the story is the deciphering of the message, followed by the experience of trying to communicate its contents to the adults, who of course don’t accept the message (where else is there but here?) which is the equivalent of all prophets experiences of rejection by the status-quo. And finally, there is the adventure of eventual escape.

This book reworks the universal theme of Plato’s cave, and of all mysticism. What we think of as the whole universe is but shadow, and further, that to enter that “kingdom of heaven” you must be like a child. The insight that this version of that universal story led me to is part of the answer to why childishness is a necessary component of the transformation. Children haven’t yet become someone. Which means who they are is not yet at stake. For some reason our culture has this question “what are you going to be when you grow up?” Think about the hidden structures and assumptions in that question. Who are you? Have you figured it out yet? Is what you do, who you are? Is what you believe who you are? Is who you associate with who you are? I write these questions myself in shadow not in the condition of childishness, and with all of this, as Quaker’s say, “a notion,” i.e. not something that I have experienced, but rather something I think. But this thing that is mostly a notion for me, that the distinction between notional and experiential living is key to awakening, I am begining in small ways to actually experience.

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### **Kate Willis says**

This year I rediscovered *The City of Ember*. Watching the movie with my siblings reminded me how much I loved the books, and I decided to start the series again. This time since I already knew the story I was free to slow down and enjoy every aspect of it. I could feel the impending doom of Ember with the rust and the mold and the damp and the blackouts. I could feel what it was like to hold your breath and count until the lights came back on with the absolute terror of not knowing where you were and what was going to happen next. I didn’t just enjoy Lina and Doon’s attempts to solve the riddle of the torn instructions, instead I was rooting for them to find the way out.

Even though this was a fantasy book, the people and place names were never so odd that it detracted from the story but instead it gave the background development of people far removed from regular life but still holding onto aspects of it. Lina and Doon were written as real, live people with loves and hates, worries and hopes, and faults even too. A small metaphor that I had completely missed came out this time and left me smiling. Doon watching a worm build its cocoon and break free, Lina planting a seed and watching it sprout-

-metaphors of hope. (And a good explanation of the next book's cover.) The author's frank writing style still left room for poetry and I found myself experiencing the disorientation of (view spoiler) and the wonder of (view spoiler)! I honestly cried at that one. ;)

Many readers have noticed the odd references in this book about religion. Side characters are heard wondering if there is a great Being watching over them and saying maybe or maybe not. Doon also wonders where life comes from and knows it's a power greater than the Builders. The Believers are a group of people that aren't in the book very much but do have the most "beliefs" of anyone. They claim to have seen the Builders coming again to "show them the way" in a dream. Now of course, (view spoiler) which is a great case for humanism, isn't it? Except...the Builders (view spoiler) I think it's positing an interaction between their own efforts and what has been provided for them. It's really not a huge theme of the book, but I would recommend some parental guidance for younger readers who are not strong in what they believe.

Best quote(s): "The trouble with anger is, it gets hold of you. And then you aren't the master of yourself anymore. Anger is. And when anger is the boss, you get unintended consequences."

"Wouldn't it be strange, she thought, to have a blue sky? But she liked the way it looked. It would be beautiful - a blue sky."

I very much enjoyed this book and can't wait to start re-reading the second one! Definitely a great series. ;)

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### **Angela Delgado says**

I didn't realize what the biggest problem with this book was until I had finished it - which, thankfully, only took about an hour from start to finish. The biggest problem is that the entire city, society, economy, and all, feels like it was only created to give the main characters something to do with their time.

It seems impossible to me that a city could exist for 200+ years with no innovations, no improvements, no advancements, nothing. They're all dependent on a dwindling stock of canned goods and panicking about the periodic short-term blackouts (the longest mentioned in the book is 7 minutes) even though the blackouts have been part of life for everyone there as long as they can remember. Even beyond that, it explicitly states that no one in that 200+ years has managed to create \*any kind\* of portable light.

Think about that. Not only are there no flashlights, there are no lanterns. There are no candles. There are no oil lamps. A couple of people manage to catch a stick on fire and wander into the darkness outside the city with it, only to go mad when the stick inevitably burns out - and NO ONE tries any experiments with any other type of flammable substance to see which might last longer, how it might be fueled, or even think about carrying, what, maybe a back-up stick?

The thing about humans is that they're always trying to find out "what happens IF." What happens if I combine vinegar and baking soda. What happens if I set my deodorant on fire (don't laugh; my brother actually did this). What happens if I push this big red button. Without any hint that the people of Ember were being controlled by radio waves, or drugs in their food, or hypno-dream-therapy, I find it completely unbelievable that every single one of them would have such a complete lack of curiosity or even just desperation at their existing circumstances that they don't even attempt to see, maybe, what kinds of fungus are edible, or experiment with any of the electrics while they were still in full supply to find out how they really worked.

And that brings us to our heroes: the only two people in the history of Ember who seem to have both an understanding of the deterioration of their society AND the impetus to do something about it (besides marching ineffectually with placards in front of the mayor's house - another sign that the general population of Ember is pretty much standing around begging for someone else to save them). This is why I say that the city is basically a straw-man argument - the only reason for it existing the way it does, for the people acting the way they do, is if you have pre-determined that you want to have a couple of twelve-year-old heroes who are the only ones clever enough, brave enough, and determined enough to accomplish anything at all. The rest of the population is just a monotone backdrop to let the two of them stand out even further.

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### **Miss Nuding C8B says**

This books makes you appreciate even the smallest of things that you may take for granted. I look forward to seeing how the movie compares with the book!

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### **Marvin says**

I am sort of a late-comer with Young Adult novels. I blame it on my age. When I was a teenager in the 60s there was no real level between children and adult literature. Teen literature was a bit of a no man's land. I didn't realize there might actually be real literature in YA until I read the Harry Potter series. Since then, I've dabble a bit with the genre and discovered some gems: The Hunger Games series, Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*, and Dan Wells' John Wayne Cleaver series. Of course there are plenty of duds too (Hello, *Twilight*!). Yet I am more willing to explore in this field than I was before.

*The City of Ember* was our book club pick precisely because some members wanted to add a YA read to our repertoire. I was looking forward to it due to the great press it has receive. If I read this in my teens I would have been Ga-Ga Ape Shit over this book and possibly the entire series. Jeanne DuPrau is a very good writer and does a beautiful job in bringing this fantasy city to life. Yet, as an adult and reviewer, I need to relate this to other books in the same genre. While DuPrau kept my attention, the resolution of this story became fairly obvious and, frankly, a little lame if you are familiar with other sci-fi tales. I don't want to give it away but I expected more. I also had some serious logic problems on why the obviously intelligent Builders would devise such a flawed method for delivering a two hundred year old message. Or how the inhabitants of the city never received or never devised portable lights. Fortunately the characters of Lina and Doon were enough to keep me interested and this is where the story gets its success; from the realness and energy of these two adolescents. Nonetheless, compared to books of similar YA genres like *The Hunger Games*, this novel comes out a little tame. Still, it is a good story and I would have no problems recommending it to a young teen audience.

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### **JonathanT says**

HEY LOOK WHO FINALLY READ THIS. xD Confession: I actually saw the movie first. But I don't remember nearly anything from the movie??? SO I THINK WE'RE GOOD.

Anyways, I've been meaning to read this one for a while, and I'm super glad I finally stopped procrastinating it!

This was really fun and bouncy and intriguing and I LOVED the storyline. Although it maybe felt just a little creepy for an MG book? Maybe that's just me though. It was an easy read, and fairly fast-paced. The plot was really simplistic and kinda predictable (to be fair, this could just be because I've seen the movie)... but somehow it still worked.

The characters were.. ok? They felt really shallow, but this *is* MG after all. I wasn't expecting super complex characters. But I would have like for Lina and Doon to have changed over the course of the story. \*nods\*

Also, this was COMPLETELY CLEAN WOOT. Nothing *content-wise* that would make me feel uncomfortable giving this to anyone 10+. However, that being said, this had *decidedly* humanistic undertones. I think the author overdid it a little... she pretty much just layered her worldview on over the story. Which isn't necessarily bad, but when your worldview is humanism, then I don't agree with you. xP So I'm thinking this would be better for teens who are more discerning.

But, I did enjoy this book for its plot and creative premise. Not sure if I should try the next one though...  
HELP ME OUT, GUYS. XD

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