



Gem X

Nicky Singer

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Sixteen-year-old Maxo Strang, the most perfect human ever made, suddenly discovers a crack in his face, which leads him to expose his community's dark underworld of secret scientific research and the city's corrupt supreme leader.

Gem X Details

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From Reader Review Gem X for online ebook

Jamie says

Ok, another clony kinda book, but the problem with this one is that there is so much language/world building given without context that it's hard to follow and consequently you don't really care. I couldn't even plot synopsize, as I lost track well before the halfway point.

Nick says

This story starts out with a strong, interesting premise. In a future society, the upper class gets all of the benefits and perks, including genetic and physical modification, to achieve perfect beauty. If you're rich enough, you can tailor your child's genes to perfection. The title of the book refers to a particular "model" of these children, whose members are all in their mid-teens as the story begins.

One day Maxo, one of these perfect Gem X children discovers the unthinkable...at the age of 16, his face develops a "crack" in it. Projected to live to 135, he learns that he is suddenly aging rapidly. Luckily, his father is a premier biologist, who promises a quick solution...just as soon as he figures out the cause.

Oddly, the author took this complex and fascinating premise, and ran it into the ground. Too many things fail to make sense, or are never explained. I don't like it when authors use science as the basis of a story, and then treat it like magic, of the "it does what I say it does" variety.

Gem X fails to live up to its promise, and is quite disappointing. The ending made me want to throw the book at the author, and say "Fix it!" It disturbs me that her original editor didn't do the same thing.

Karin says

Maxo Strang is one of the most perfect people in the Polis, an exclusive district where only genetically enhanced people can live. He is the GenOff (offspring) of the most important scientist in the Polis. Igo Strang, Maxo's father, is the lead scientist for the Polis. It is his job to continually improve the enhancements. He is always striving for perfections. With the model, GemX, he thinks he is as close to perfect as he can get. Maxo is a GemX.

Maxo enjoys a luxurious life in the Polis. He never gives much thought to the Dreggies that live outside the check points - until he sees Gala on the video screen. Maxo's life is turned upside down when a flaw in the GemX model is discovered. It seems "cracks," a.k.a. wrinkles, are appearing on many of their faces and it is up to Igo Strang to figure out what is causing the unexpected early aging in thousands of the most promising young people of the Polis. The problem is, the leaders don't want to give him the time it will take. Their solution is much more drastic.

Maxo is thrown into an unknown world when he attempts to save himself and others from the secrecy and lies of the Polis.

GEMX didn't live up to it's description. The speed at which Maxo and Gala become obsessed with each other is unbelievable and the story didn't move fast enough. I felt like I was forcing myself to get through it.

Carrie says

[It's really a wrinkle, and he just didn't know what it was. So after that it gets kind of boring. People's skin cracking like porcelain is interesting. Genetically

Adam says

Singer sets out to probe beneath the surface assumptions that we all live by in a day to day fashion. The story gains a lot of traction as it moves forward despite a great deal of it being the introspective musings that eventually challenge our assumptions on socio-economic class, beauty, values of families, and ultimately love. The direct style of writing never leaves you guessing at the what motivates the characters of Maxo, Stretch, Daz, Gala, or Poldrone 1640. The inventive flair of futuristic language reflects the popular trends and adds the gripping potential reality the story offers.

It is a great follow up read to Westerfeld's Uglies or Werlin's Double Helix, both of center on the same subject of genetic manipulation, with more tension and subtleties between the characters.

Hannah Schafer says

The world in this book that the author created was really cool, the GemXs were the perfect ones. What happens when he faces the unperfect? The dreggies...

Although there were some problems with this book. There were a lot words that they just said and you had to figure out, they never explained what they were.

Ann says

I thought this was a pale variation on the Uglies/Pretties trilogy from Westerfeld, and many others. the book takes a great premise and doesn't DO anything with it that we haven't seen before.

Becky says

What kind of book is Gem X? According to the jacket, it is a "gripping futuristic thriller" about the consequences of genetic engineering. Gem X is the story of three teens primarily. Maxo Strang is an Enhanced human. He's got the wealth, the privilege, physically and materially he has everything going for him. Gala and Stretch are brother and sister. Both dreggies. Naturals. Their genes are still "clean." And their clean genes are really the only things they have going for them. For it is these genes which they can sell to the Enhanced scientists for money. The Dreggies--all of them--are poverty stricken, prone to disease, lacking in proper food and water and medical care. Their lives are dismal--at least on the surface. They live in broken down buildings and often lack water and electricity.

Why do the Enhanced need 'clean genes.' Well, their bodies and minds sometimes develop flaws. Clean genes are needed to fix certain problems. These scientists are far from perfect though they like to play god with the human body. Natural "meshing" is not allowed. Touching is not allowed. Everything is done 'virtually' when it comes to dating. And genetic matches must be approved by others (not sure if it's just the parents who get a vote or if the government/scientists must approve as well.) But the whole process is very cold and distant compared to what it should be.

Our story begins when Maxo discovers that he has a crack on his face. This combined with the revelation that all Gem X'ers are developing cracks (or wrinkles) on their faces. Something is wrong--desperately and dangerously wrong!

These stories connect--as you can imagine--and I suppose you could easily classify it as a thriller. It's always moving.

The premise of this one was interesting. I can't deny that. But at the same time, it failed, in a way, to work for me. While hypothetically interesting, I just didn't seem to connect with the characters. I didn't feel their angst, their pain, their confusion. Part of this could have been intentional. The Enhanced humans are supposedly free from being "bogged down" by emotional drama and whatnot. They're very cold and calculating. Very me-me-me oriented. Maxo's parents, especially his mother, is very cold, frigid, and just a horrible person. She has no heart and no depth. Maxo's father is slightly more human. He does seem to care, but for the most part he has been too blinded to really realize how much he is lacking in the fatherhood department. There are other human characters, human adult characters, that just seem odd and out of place in this text. I was never quite sure what to make of them.

Singer has created a world that is very chaotic. A world that is complex. A world that has its own organization, its own vocabulary, its own status quo. The readers never really get an orientation to its history, its politics, its society, its science. And because of that it is a world that could be a bit too confusing to readers. I can't and won't speak for everyone. But I know there were elements that confused me.

Maggie says

Dystopian future tale with a lot of made up language some of which can be a bit off-putting. Many of the names are ridiculous - I found it annoying to have humorous names in a book that wasn't supposed to be funny.

Tenara says

I thought this book was very interesting. The writer has a large number of characters to switch to so that before anything new happens, the reader knows what's going on with each character. After an event takes place, the author switches to all of our characters so we can see what has happened to them during this event.

GemX is obviously in the future of Earth. It's a little like the movie Gattaca, in that there's a different kind of bigotry; genetically enhanced and those that are natural. The Enhanced are all different Gem's (I don't know why it's not called Gen, like Generation, but whatever) and Maxo, our protagonist, is a GemX. There begins

to be flaws in the GemX's perfect faces - wrinkles (or cracks) are beginning to form in places that not even Naturals or "Dreggies" have. The logical, thought processing, egotistical, and quick thinking brains are beginning to dredge back to "Dreggie" emotions, like anger, fear, gratitude, humility, lust, love, ecstasy. Maxo meets Gala, a Natural, and her brother, Phylo "Stretch" Lorrell.

I liked it a lot, but I found that it was sometimes a little irritating when the author wrote for huge paragraphs at a time about things that had not a lot to do with the actual outcome of the story. What was never explained was how the human race actually became this divided, or what the story was behind the names of "The ChristianCult" or "The Global Warming Catastrophe" or the slang word of "celeb". But I did like it a lot.

P.M. says

Maxo Strang is devastated because a crack has appeared near his temple. He is a GEM X, genetically enhanced to be intellectually and physically superior. Something must be drastically wrong and he hopes his GenPap, a brilliant scientist and leading expert in genetics, will tell him what's wrong. Meanwhile, Gala, and her brothers Stretch and Daz, want to find their missing father to honor a last request from their dying mother. Another anomaly is Clodrone 1640 who is beginning to think (he has been engineered only to follow orders) and have strange memories of someone called Finn. These three divergent paths come together after an Atrocity arranged by the Leaderene to cover up the emerging problem with the degradation of the GEM X line. This is another one of those dystopian novels which seems to be becoming more prevalent lately. I didn't like this book in the beginning because Maxo was so narcissistic but he began to be more sympathetic as he delved deeper into the secrets of his culture. My favorite character was the Clodrone 1640 and I felt so sad about the utter despatch that led him to his final decision.

Corey says

When I thought about a book to read for science, this book stood out because it proves that if humans made a "perfect" species of humans, then at some point it will break down, causing serious issues, which seemed interesting. The story is about a teenage boy named Maxo who is part of the Gem X germline, the newest and best line of perfect humans. He soon discovers a crack on his face, that symbolizes the beginning of the end for the Gem Xs. Maxo lives in the Trop, a community split into halves, one half being humans in a germline, (the richer half) and the other half filled with Natural humans. (the much poorer half) As soon as Maxo's Dad, the chief scientist in the Trop, finds that there is a major problem among the Gem Xs that causes them to age at a very fast pace, he does all that he can to help, but it is of no use. Over 90% of all Gem Xs perished. Overall, this touching book will keep you guessing until the very end.

C Solis-Sublette says

This is a nice little utopic sci-fi YA novel that could make for a movie (or a sequel). Of course, you have "dreggies" sequestered into a certain section of town while genetically "Enhanced" individuals run around making nuisances of themselves while exploiting the naturals or dreggies. And, then, you've got the Leaderine who likes the taste of human breast milk (weird), probably because that is the only human contact she has. A quirky society to say the least. So who is going to save the Enhanced, make the dreggies realize their power, and recapture the essence of humanity? The "Throwback Intellectuals" and the artists! Only a

British author could get away with this. Love it!!! And, like any good novel where the intellectuals save the day, nothing happens at the end because the society has to gather and TALK before any action can take place. So...there could be a sequel or we could just assume that the talk lead to eventual action. I really don't mean to sound cynical. I really liked this book. It's awesome!

Kathy says

Like the best science fiction, this takes a current issue (genetic manipulation) and extrapolates it. Sixteen-year-old Maxo Strang is the epitome of beauty and advanced genetic design (model Gem X), living in the elite Polis. Then he discovers a crack in his perfect skin, and he freaks. Meanwhile, Gala is a "Natural", i.e. non-genetically designed, living in the slums reserved for Naturals and caring for her dying mother and younger brothers. Maxo sees Gala on a police camera & falls for her. With strong echoes of Orwell's Big Brother police state from "1984", Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451", and a role-switching reminiscent of Twain's "The Prince and the Pauper", this has lots of action and deep issues to think about.

Heather says

Maxo Strang is one of the most genetically perfect beings on the planet. He lives in the Polis, an exclusive city where only enhanced humans are allowed to live. His life is turned upside down when he finds a crack on his face one day. His lot is thrown in with Gala and Stretch-two 'natural' teenagers who are searching for their father-who disappeared years before.
