



The Sweet Far Thing

Libba Bray

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* “A huge work of massive ambition.”—Publishers Weekly, *Starred*

It has been a year of change since Gemma Doyle arrived at the foreboding Spence Academy. Her mother murdered, her father alaudanum addict, Gemma has relied on an unsuspected strength and has discovered an ability to travel to an enchanted world called the realms, where dark magic runs wild. Despite certain peril, Gemma has bound the magic to herself and forged unlikely new alliances. Now, as Gemma approaches her London debut, the time has come to test these bonds.

The Order—the mysterious group her mother was once part of—is grappling for control of the realms, as is the Rakshana. Spence's burned East Wing is being rebuilt, but why now? Gemma and her friends see Pippa, but she is not the same. And their friendship faces its gravest trial as Gemma must decide once and for all what role she is meant for.

A Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year

A #1 Book Sense Bestseller

A New York Times Bestseller

A Publishers Weekly Bestseller

A USA Today Bestseller

A 2008 New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age

The Sweet Far Thing Details

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From Reader Review The Sweet Far Thing for online ebook

Angie says

And so ends the trilogy that began with A Great and Terrible Beauty, continued with Rebel Angels, and concludes in this final volume. I liked the first one well enough because of its unique blend of a wild, magical, mythical realm barely constrained behind stiff Victorian curtains. I really got into the second one as the plot became more complex, Gemma came into her own powers, Felicity and Ann's stories became more layered, and poor beautiful Pippa was relegated to the Realms indefinitely. When I saw how thick the third one was, my eagerness ratcheted up a notch. After all, I have been sitting around lately asking for longer books. Suddenly, here one is.

Unfortunately, 800 pages later, the best thing about it remains the first four words, it's lovely title, taken from a poem by W.B. Yeats. And it does capture the extremely bittersweet feel of the last portion of the book. But somehow this installment failed to capture my imagination. It frustrated me more than anything. Instead of making good use of everything she fought for in Rebel Angels, Gemma spends the entire novel trying to decide whether or not to do what she decided to do at the end of the last book. Not until the final pages does she get a grip on herself and do what needs to be done. I thought we were done with crippling indecision in the previous books. I wanted the Gorgon to just let loose and throttle her! Meanwhile, Felicity and Ann are apparently thirteen again and spend the majority of their time being petty and distrustful, backstabbing Gemma whenever they get the chance. Pippa is the most interesting of the original friends, munching on the berries of the dead in all her Miss Havisham glory. But her path is extremely predictable. And Kartik? Fiery, beautiful Kartik? Sigh. The end to his story had far too much in common with Merlin's fate for my taste. I will say that the scene where Gemma and Kartik place their hands inside the stone was achingly beautiful. But, as with much in this hefty book, it was too little too late and I'm left feeling sad. Wishing, somehow, it could all have gone differently.

Hailey (HaileyinBookland) says

This was okay, definitely not as good as the other two books in the series primarily because it was so unnecessarily long. I was pretty bored. Gemma was also much more of an unlikable character than usual. But overall I enjoyed the trilogy a lot!

Fables&Wren says

WrensReads Review:

This was a reread of a reread of a reread et cetera (literally can't tell you how many times I have put myself through this book). But I knew I needed to read this book again to have it fresh in my mind in order to review it correctly.

When asking my sister (who introduced this series to me in grade school) how I should review this book, she stated that I should just use crying gifs... so here are a few of those:

Libba Bray does not hold back when it comes to your heart. Yes, this book is a really, really long one, but Bray likes her descriptions and her character development. There are so many things going on in this book that are just on the side, but are so important to the characters and why they make the decisions that they make.

I will let you know that some people believe there is some “fat shaming” in this, and I can see where they are coming from, but you also have to see when the book was written and what time period this is in. You also have to understand this is a bunch of girls who are just trying to get the upper hand on each other, and that is an easy stab. And it isn’t anything that is glorified. Libba is very big in the diversity and acceptance community; with that said, that would never be her intent to do that to anyone.

Our three girls Gemma, Felicity and Anne believe they are in the clear. They put Circe in her place and all they have to do is share the magic with some of the creatures and people in The Realms and things will be great.

But what if Gemma doesn’t want to give up the magic? What if Felicity and Anne want the magic to change the path their parents and guardians carved for them to take? What if, putting Circe in her place actually was exactly where she wanted to be? What if changing the path of the magic opened new doors for the Winterlands?

I can’t review this book properly. It breaks my heart every time I read it and it legitimately makes me cry every time. I read this with a friend this time, knowing she would need emotional support, and she got mad at me because I put her through that roller coaster.

This series is so close to my heart. It is the series that made me not just love books but into a reader.

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Chapter 69 is the absolute worst omg I hate this I’m dying my heart. I can’t. I.. omg I will never love again.

- - -

50%: I hate the build up because I know what’s going to happen, this being a reread x1000, but it doesn’t make it hurt any less. This book means the absolute world to me. It’s one of those books you always want to reread but then you remember “wait this book murdered me. Why am I reading this again?”

Buddy Read (Re-Read for me) with my main girl Kayla because she doesn't understand the extent of emotional trauma she's about to experience.

Eshusdaughter says

In the final book of the Gemma Doyle trilogy, the Order, the Rakshana and the creatures of the realms all want one thing - the magic. Gemma is caught between as everyone around her tumbles into chaos and the

fight for the magic begins in earnest. While the creatures of the winterlands make a bid for control and Circe stirs, Gemma struggles to come to terms with the magic she holds and her place in this world and in the realms. As the story unfolds, Gemma discovers that nothing, and no one, is as they seem.

The end of a series is bittersweet. If the author has done her job well, it is at once satisfying and distressing. Libba Bray has done her job very, very well. This is a wonderful conclusion to the series that satisfies on all counts, wrapping up the main threads of the trilogy quite effectively. More surprising is the fact that nothing was cliché or expected. I am sad there will be no more books in the series but in love with the ones we've been given.

Libba Bray seems to possess a magic of her own, peppering words on a page and conjuring a world that is believable and engaging, filled with complex, fully realized characters that are sometimes sympathetic and sometimes repellent. She allows her characters to have flaws, to make mistakes, to be deluded and tricked. She allows them to triumph, to fall, to realize truth and embrace lies. She presents us with a view of the world as it is and then spins that on its side and makes us see it, and ourselves, anew. Gemma's story is beautifully told and I am glad I had the chance to read it.

Pinky says

“And that is how change happens. One gesture. One person. One moment at a time.”

I have been reading this book for 2 weeks and I finally finished reading this book at lunch. I am currently in class and since I finished all of the things that I need to do, I thought that I would write a quick review on this book. This book was beautiful, I loved it so much, I was so sad when I finished it. I can't believe I finished the book, it was so crazy and so much happened.

This book is the last book in the Gemma Doyle trilogy. It was an amazing installment and made the perfect ending. Some people were upset with the ending of this book and I was too, but I loved this book so much because there were so many things that I didn't believe would happen in this book. I still can't get over this book and I don't know when I am going to recover.

“People have a habit of inventing fictions they will believe wholeheartedly in order to ignore the truth they cannot accept.”

There were so many powerful statements in this book and I loved how the book was divided and formatted. It was so epic and there was so much action near the end of the book. When everything was starting to get chaotic, I was going crazy myself, I was so excited and jumpy.

“Sometimes, I think you can glimpse it in another.”

When I was reading this book, I was so into it that I didn't realize that my friends were calling me. It felt like I was in a different world. Whenever I read, I always zone out and jump into the beautiful worlds and I never want to leave. Sometimes, I forget where I am and lose track of time.

“I am a jumble of passions, misgivings, and wants. It seems that I am always in a state of wishing and rarely in a state of contentment.”

I felt like one of the things that I didn't like about the book was the decisions Gemma made. Some of the decisions did not make sense and I felt like if she did things differently, nothing horrible would have happened. I wish she would think before she acts and think of a proper plan. I felt bad for her because at parts she felt alone. I felt like I could relate to her in many ways.

“It is funny how you do not miss affection until it is given, but once it is, it can never be enough; you would drown in it if possible.”

The characters were amazing and I loved MOST of them. Kartik was one of the characters that were my favorite. Gemma's character development was amazing and she is so strong. She had Felicity and Ann, but I felt like they weren't that supportive at times and they weren't always there for Gemma. Kartik was one of those characters who had your back. :(

“Power changes everything till it is difficult to say who are the heroes and who the villains.”

This story is one of those stories where you read and you don't know who to trust. Everyone could be untrustworthy at times and it is so hard to find a person who will help you out. Sure there were a few people who were there, but they weren't always there for you because they were selfish.... Anyway, I feel like I kept getting tricked because I trusted the wrong people. Gemma made so many mistakes with trusting the wrong people.

“I do not want to pass the time. I want to grab hold of it and leave my mark upon the world.”

I have so much more to say but so little time. The ending was bittersweet but I still loved the book. Although it was slow in parts, I still enjoyed reading this book and I recommend this to those who haven't read this series. It is amazing and you won't regret it... But at the same time, you might because of the ending... Okay I am scared that I am going to spoil this book so I am going to go to my next class. See ya!

Kristi says

i've finally finished the eight hundred some pages of The Sweet Far Thing by Libba Bray. And I must say that in the last two days I have felt what I believe to be every possible emotion there is. I almost find myself at a loss for words in the shock that I still feel.

We once again join in the adventures of the girls of Spence that we have grown to love. The story once is centered on the magic of the Realms and what Gemma must do with it now that she has bound it to herself. Although I rather enjoyed the underlying storyline of Gemma and Kartik, which is just one of many that concludes this tale.

It seems that everyone and everything are against Gemma. She can't seem to open the portal since Christmas and she no longer feels the magic within herself. She fears that the magic has not chosen her to continue in the Order. The mysterious East Wing is being rebuilt and a masked ball is to be held in its wake. And Gemma has still not seen Kartik, and his whereabouts are also a constant strain on her thoughts.

When all else fails Gemma feels she will never return to the realms until a mysterious stone is found in the midst of the East Wing construction. Which turns out to be a secret door in which she has seen in her visions complements of a Miss Wilhelmina Wyatt, former Spence Lady and author of A History of Secret Societies.

Once back in the Realms, Gemma cannot deny the changes that are happening around her, but yet she is still not ready to share the power. Gemma must carry around the responsibility of the magic, figure out whom she can trust, try to help her friends and also work toward her debut season! No wonder it took eight hundred pages!

Bray does not disappoint in the final chapter of Gemma's tale. The plot twists where plenty! Felicity was her brash self and Ann as insecure as ever, but in the end these girls surprised me for the better! The writing was detailed and painted vivid pictures even more so than the two previous books. I couldn't put it down, and now that's it over I fear I will miss these girls.

Sunny Rae says

I cannot even describe my love for this trilogy. It is simply amazing.

Girls finding their wings, and finding their light and dark corners. You will have to read to find out what that means.

lol, it is beautifully written, this author does not twist the truth, which i love. She tells the story as if it might happen to everyone, like the characters own personal plots. There are many unexpected twists(huge crying moments)

I really did find out more about myself. The person i want to become, and how much life ccan be bent into whatever i choose it to be. This book is my favorite book. Girls kick ass, revenge, love, affairs, deceit, all that good stuff.

Here are some of my favorit quote, go to the authors website, she is quite a character, i love her writing :]]

"In each of us lie good and bad, light and dark, art and pain, choice and regret, cruelty and sacrifice. We're each of us our own chiaroscuro, our own bit of illusion fighting to emerge into something solid, something real. We've got to forgive ourselves that. I must remember to forgive myself. Because there is a lot of grey to work with. No one can live in the light all the time.

"

— Libba Bray

No one asks how or what I am doing. They could not care less. We're all looking glasses, we girls, existing only to reflect their images back to them as they'd like to be seen. Hollow vessels of girls to be rinsed of our own ambitions, wants, and opinions, just waiting to be filled with the cool, tepid water of gracious compliance.

A fissure forms in the vessel. I'm cracking open.--Libba Bray(the trilogy)

Erin says

Sweet Far Thing by Libba Bray

contains spoilers

I finished the final installment of the Gemma Doyle trilogy last night. It took me over two weeks to finish and I came very close to throwing the damn book across the room with only 70 pages to go. I have to say that I am very upset that Kartik died. VERY. The tension, and affection between Kartik and Gemma was what kept me reading. I was constantly waiting for her to see his red bandanna or meet him in the boathouse. I will admit that the book ended very well but I was still very angry.

I have never cried while reading before, and I have told my friends that I don't understand why people do. I cry in all movies but with a book, you control the tempo. You can stop whenever you please. Simply close the book and try again later, that is how I roll. However, I shed a few tears at the end of Sweet Far Thing. When Kartik died and in the end when Ann and Felicity got what they really wanted, I was very emotional. I am so very glad Libba decided to make both of their characters good in the end. Ann irritated me so much in the first two books, but really held her own in this one, especially towards the end, when she had to stand up to Pippa. I felt like she was always ready to abandon Gemma for the others but in the end that proved false. Felicity could have gone either way right up to the very end because of her love for Pippa, but I was happy to see that she got her inheritance and intends to live as she has always wanted, free and daring, and out from under the hold of her father. I also appreciated how she wrote Circe's character. At work I always tell people that this trilogy is a mix between Harry Potter and the Twilight series, and Circe was Snapelike in my opinion.

I am sad that these books are over. I look forward to reading whatever Libba Bray writes next, but can't imagine a character being as strong, confused, and brave as Gemma. Love her. Definitely one of my favorite characters of all time. I think it is important to remember that a young woman can be powerful and challenge authority, but still long for love and romance.

Final Rating: 4.5/5

I think this book could have easily been written into two installments. Not only because it was 800 pages but because SO much happened. I can't really remember what happened at the beginning of the book.

Tatiana says

Thankfully, this is over. I thought I would never get through this last installment of Gemma Doyle trilogy.

Why, oh why does this book have to be so long? Take out 300-400 pages of unnecessary secondary characters and going nowhere plot lines, its 5 epilogues, and "The Sweet Far Thing" would be a reasonably decent book (I suppose). But alas, Bray chooses to ruin her own rather original series with this endless and bizarre last installment.

I've read quite a few reviews and know how many people are disappointed with the ending. I don't really mind where all the characters end up in this story, but I rather mind how and why they get there.

Gemma's books have never been about romance for me. The underlying idea of these books is women's independence, I get it. So I probably wouldn't have minded Kartik's sacrifice if it made any sense. For me, he dies because of Gemma's stupidity. Should she have done what she promised to do in the end of book 2 (divide the magic among the inhabitants of the realms), none of the events in the books would have happened. Thus his death is pointless in my opinion. In fact, the more I think of the details of Kartik's death, the less I understand what and why exactly happened to him. Basically, Gemma stabs the Tree releasing Winterlands' magic, Kartik sucks in this magic, then pours the magic into Gemma and then becomes a part of the Tree. WTH just happened? Why does he even have to do it? If the Tree doesn't have any more magic, how can it have this power to accept his sacrifice and why is it needed? If the Tree still holds on its evil power, how does Kartik's sacrifice change anything? Doesn't it mean that the Tree will continue its evil business in the Winterlands and will eventually corrupt Kartik the same way it did Eugenia? How is this a solution?

Now to Felicity and Pippa. Seriously, where does the gay issue come from? I have no objections to homosexuality being portrayed in YA literature, but it is handled very heavy-handedly by Bray in this book. First of all, there is no clue about this in the first two books - Felicity is caught kissing a gypsy man, Pippa dreams of a knight in shiny armor. This leads me to believe that this turn in the girls' relationship is an afterthought on Bray's part. Another issue here is that considering that Felicity is only 16 and a victim of sexual abuse, can we really be sure that her newly found sexual preference is a real one and not caused by the abuse? I just think Bray shouldn't have brought up this issue if she didn't have time to handle it responsibly and thoughtfully.

Lastly, "The Sweet Far Thing" is an unbearably long and convoluted tale that needs editing badly. First two books have a great balance of real and supernatural with a great women's independence message. This third book is unnecessarily full of numerous subplots, redundant scenes, and pages of feminist propaganda. I understand Bray wanted to give us her opinion on about every women's issue out there, but it doesn't translate into a good book.

Overall, a disappointing conclusion to an imaginative and original series. I don't necessarily regret reading the trilogy, but I will definitely not recommend it to anyone. Two stars only because I was able to finish it and it gives some kind of closure.

Reading challenge: #14 - 3 of 4

Britt says

I think I liked this one the best of the three in the trilogy. I can't be sure because I read the other two about two years ago, and I just have a vague impression of them. The first two were interesting, but I didn't really

connect with the story. Clearly, I liked them enough to read the whole trilogy though. Looking at the size of each book, I am guessing the first two were more tightly plotted, at least.

The Sweet Far Thing had a lot of good and a lot of bad. First, Libba Bray has a lovely, poetic writing style. I love some of her descriptions. I was surprised by how well written I found it because I remember being a bit indifferent to the prose in the first two. But it probably could have been quite a bit shorter. It seemed to wander aimlessly, and I sometimes wondered what the point was. It also took a long time to find out anything of importance. It was rather repetitive in going over the same information we already had again and again.

Something that really bothered me was the magic. Maybe I was reading too quickly to catch everything, but it was a bit confusing. So, we are told numerous times that the magic is changing. That's fine. It could have been really interesting to look at the magic as an organic, living thing. But. We didn't really get that, did we? Instead, the changing magic was used as an excuse to make the magic do whatever the heck Bray wanted with no rules or guidelines. Rules are mentioned, Gemma said she doesn't know what the magic is capable of, but we never see any rules in action and we don't really see them trying to figure that out. Once with the healing Gemma tried, but other than that it's all talk.

I like how she dealt with our illusions v. reality. I guess what we are generally told through books and movies and other forms of art and communication is that we must rip down our illusions and embrace the truth. But here she's saying that, yeah, facing reality is the best, but sometimes the illusions are necessary. While it's an interesting message, it wasn't really the most subtle one, but she doesn't seem to do subtlety. This is clearly seen in her push for female empowerment.

If you're writing a historical novel, it's probably a good idea to attempt to keep things accurate instead of stuffing it with anachronistic ideals. The characters in this were way too modern for their time. This bothered me in all the books. Their language was often too modern, and they would not have gotten away with everything they did. Felicity debuting? Probably not. Which is not to say feminism should not be portrayed in historical novels, because clearly women didn't just up and decide sometime in the 70's that they wanted rights too; it's just a bit inaccurate for the period. So, good ideas, but it got a bit preachy, especially in the end. I tend to get a little annoyed when authors spend paragraph upon paragraph *telling* me what they want to say. If you're going to do that, try writing essays not fiction.

I think there was a lot of potential to work out how one deals with power and becomes a leader and makes decisions, but she failed with this. Along the same lines, I thought she could have dealt with facing the consequences of your actions, developing responsibility or maybe working hard to get what you want, but another fail. I put these together because I see the failure coming from the same place.

Gemma is in charge of all this magic and is supposed to be protecting it and making decisions regarding the realms and she and Felicity and Anne are going through a variety of issues at home, but they just play with the magic. They use the magic to get what they want with no work on their part. They suffer no

consequences from doing this. Maybe I'm just used to stories that try to teach that taking the easy way is bad. But using the magic to get what they want denies them growth and is an easy answer on the characters' part and on the writer's part. The only one who does learn anything from using the magic is Anne.

Allowing the characters to use magic with no negative consequences, and creating girls who are too modern for their time, and allowing them to have fun and get what they want may be exactly Bray's point. She's writing a fictional novel, so perhaps she wanted to create a world in which magic could be used for your own purposes without backfiring on you. She is writing about multiple characters who all have a lot of suffering in their backgrounds prior to when the novels start, so perhaps for a fictional fantastical book it is not necessarily bad to portray these characters trying to free themselves and be who they are without suffering the often necessary compromises of real life.

The character development and growth was lacking, though I did think the characters were pretty round. I love Kartik; I think he is the most interesting character, possibly the most well done despite his fairly small part. I think all the girls are well-realized teenagers with their own unique qualities and flaws. I loved watching Pippa's decline and seeing how it took shape.

Anne grew the most, I think. We actually saw a progression in her. Pippa changed at least, though it was her corruption we saw. Even Tom grew as a character, though maybe it was a bit abrupt. Gemma & Felicity just kind of stood still.

Gemma would waffle between being insecure and confident, but nothing she did really lead to any actual change in her. She was told numerous times to search her dark corners, which could have provided for some great realizations and growth, but she just brushes it off. She feels she is all alone in the world (as any normal teenager would) but is told time and again that she doesn't have to be. Tom says, "We're every one of us alone in this world, Gemma. . . . But you have company, if you want it" (p. 695). This seems to be a theme of Bray's, yet she sends Gemma off on her own to a new country in the end. Why? Is Gemma incapable of internalizing any lesson taught her?

Felicity especially bothered me, but I think the reason she didn't grow as a character is that the author had already made her the perfectly liberated female character. She did what she wanted, she didn't care what others thought, the suffering in her background spurred her towards this, but we never saw any growth in the novels. The front flap of the book says, "Rule-breaking Felicity must do what she's told or risk losing her inheritance...." But she doesn't do what she's told, does she? The most we see is that she charms the family who is sponsoring her for her debut. So, maybe she should have learned that sometimes we need to do things we don't want. Maybe she doesn't need to grow in that way necessarily, but some growth would have been nice.

I really didn't like that Kartik died, not because we need to have a perfectly happy ending but because it made no sense. At all. Nobody can deny this. Why did he have to die? He said the debt must be paid, but the Winterlands creatures wanted to sacrifice Gemma to get the magic and to make the tree's power stronger? And we do not want this to happen, right? That's why they are fighting? To save the magic from the Winterlands? Am I missing something? What debt is there? Why should there be any debt? Why is it necessary for someone to die? I am totally willing to admit that I am missing something here, because again, I find the magic muddled and confusing.

I read a rumor that Bray killed him because she didn't want readers to think you needed a man to be happy. Alright, fine, that's her prerogative as the author, but at least have the death make sense. Also, there's a difference between needing a man to be happy and finding your soul mate, which Bray clearly showed was the case for Gemma and Kartik. I don't necessarily believe in the idea of one soul mate, but throughout the books we are shown just how enmeshed in each other they are and how they are meant to be together. After emphasizing how not alone Gemma can be (through a number of relationships), why take away the relationship that could arguably be the deepest?

So, lots of complaints, as is my way, but I really did enjoy it overall.

Cyndy says

Okay, I'm going to start off with a warning. I will be talking in detail about how this book made me feel and if you haven't read it yet it is possible that my feelings will give away a crucial plot point. With that all I can say is I feel raw. Absolutely raw. I couldn't breathe. And I cried. A lot of tears were shed. The ending is by far one of the most brilliant, brave things I have EVER read, that does not mean that it wasn't absolutely horrible to read. And knowing that it was necessary, that it had to happen, that it's the perfect ending does not really comfort me but I'll take what I can. The emotion that Libba Bray churned up in me was astounding. From absolute highs, to absolute lows (and I do mean absolute), I loved riding the roller coaster of it all. My second favorite series ever. Read it. Love it. Cry along with me.

Stephanie says

I am utterly distraught by this book. My first hour free of it's torture I was a ball of fury. Nothing made sense, the writing was crappy, and I had so many questions. My poor husband didn't want to come near me and I didn't want to talk to anyone.

I had such high hopes for this book. Kartik and Gemma would finally find a way to be together, the magic of the realms would be figured out and dealt with, and Felicity and Ann would finally become real friends of Gemma's or else be rid of. I definitely expected a little bit more maturity to be given out by those girls, at least by Gemma, because generally when a person is given a large amount of responsibility, despite their age, and consciously decides that they need to live up to it, they don't act like retarded and petty 12 year olds.

Here are just a few of my troubles...

Why the crap does Kartik turn into a tree? This doesn't make any sense. I understand the sacrifice that he is making, but there is no sign that the magic can't be dealt with in another way until the very point where Libba Bray turns him into a tree. It is retarded. There is no sense in this, unless her goal was to piss people off.

Why are Pippa and Felicity lesbian lovers? I don't get this at all. Some people have mentioned in their reviews that they saw signs of this coming. Whatever signs they saw seemed like normal female friendship to me, especially for Victorian period writing. Besides the fact I think that it was just silly, the kiss was

random and out of some teenage boys lesbian lovers fantasy. DUMB! I however, was satisfied when Felicity chose the good side, despite her love for Pippa, who has always irritated me.

The writing was just bad. For someone who has published 2 books already, the writing should have been much better. The plot should have been thought out. The dialogue should have been less George Lucas inspired (by this I am referring to his ability to make very good actors sound like dunces).

I am very frustrated by how poorly the magic of the realms was understood. Obviously Circe was evil, but how did she turn out to be so much better than the people who were supposed to be good and why did she make so much more sense? Bray turns the evil person back to good - to a degree - and then she turns Kartik into a tree? Whatever!

My final annoyance for this review is that of Bray's obsession with women's rights. Holy crap, she went a bit overboard don't you think? I thought to myself at one point that maybe it was just me and that I was a little sensitive to people and their soap boxes... until at the very end Gemma's last request for the girls to be taught how to think for themselves and blah-blah-blah. Thinking for yourself is not at all a bad idea, but honestly. Themes like that are supposed to be thought provoking, not obnoxiously present.

There are so many, many things that I find very wrong with this book. It was a very huge disappointment. I expected so much more than what I was given here.

There were enough good things that I finished the book, but I definitely would not recommend it to anyone.

Lauren Kammerdiener says

Out of the three books in this series, this one was probably the best. It contained more of a well-developed, central plot, stronger characters, more twists and turns than one would have expected.

BUT DANG WAS IT LONG.

Eight hundred pages is too long for a YA book, if you ask me.

I really do think Libba stepped up her game with this, though. For once, I actually felt a sense of connection to the realms: they weren't weak and flimsy feeling as they had been for me in the previous two books. I really began to care about what happened to those worlds, instead of putting up with them to get to the Victorian stuff. That was a **major** improvement.

I also feel like, both throughout the series and this book particularly, almost *every single one* of the characters went through sometime kind of development. And character development is my favorite. The most notable developing in this book pertains to Mrs. Nightwing, Ann, Felicity, and Fowlson. Mrs. Nightwing's transformation from the strict, Victorian schoolmarm to the strict, Victorian schoolmarm who knows about a secret layer of worlds besides our own, was probably one of my favorite things about this trilogy. I loved her relationship with Gemma. I loved her part in the ending story. I think Libba did an excellent job making use of her character.

Ann I ended being so proud of. Though she was relentlessly whiny and helpless through the series, I wanted to give her a standing ovation when she got up the gumption to audition for Charles's show as herself. FINALLY she was making her own decisions and making the most of herself.

Felicity Worthington is probably the most complicated character from these books. She is most certainly **not** the petty mean girl you think she'll be when you first meet her in *A Great and Terrible Beauty*. Libba had her deal with two controversial topics that are highly disputed in our time, and were never even spoken of in Victorian England: sexual abuse and (view spoiler) I personally *applaud* Libba for including those things. She did very well dealing with them, and I think it's important to remember how they affect anyone, in any time or culture.

I was also pleased with how Libba turned Fowlson from (view spoiler) It was fun having him on the team, and getting to know him a little more.

Lastly, *the ending*. I was really happy with how this series wrapped up, more happy than I have been with anything else in a while. There were so many unexpected things about the ending that I loved.

Kartik's (view spoiler) really surprised me. You don't really see YA authors going around (view spoiler)

They're just too essential to the genre. I will take any twist to stereotypic YA with open arms, no matter how I feel about any character.

I really love that Ann, Felicity, and Gemma all got to make their own choices and go their own ways on new adventures. There was a twinge of sadness to this, but it made for a good ending.

Libba finally sold me on this series completely. And I'm not complaining.

Trina (Between Chapters) says

Series review video: <https://youtu.be/a2qPNQILwqE>

The good:

Nay.

The bad:

Wayyy too long. I was bored. The thing wasn't even resolved (they won a battle but not the war). The worst bleeping love triangle I've ever read.

The problematic:

Fat shaming. Horrible attitudes toward disability. Sexual orientation used as a plot twist. Issues of non-consent were never addressed. Sexual abuse backstory to excuse a character's meanness.

Rebecca says

Can I just start by saying that the 2nd book in this trilogy is the best of all. After reading the third book, I find myself still FULL OF QUESTIONS AND DISAPPOINTED with the ending. Seeing that this book is the last one, I expected to have a lot more resolution to the story of Gemma Doyle. I feel that the book was not edited well enough as well. The plot was all over the place, which means you had no idea where the story could go, and there were no rules to follow. I usually expect that fantasy or science fiction novels will have a universe full of rules that are followed and explained fairly well! This is not the case! I really the author would've set up better "rules" for the realms and the use of its magic. I kept thinking about what Gemma could do and "why doesn't she do this" with her magic. I really think what Gemma chose to use her magic

for was odd. She was so strong at the end of the second book. The third book begins and you discover that she has taken a u-turn and is whiny and uses her magic strangely. I kept thinking, "she is still a teenager, so maybe that is how a teenager would act?" I found myself exhausted at the end of this book. The one true source of light in this book was Kartik! Thank goodness for his character or I would've gave up on the book entirely. I really wish for a fourth book "Kartik's Return: Love Conquers All!" That last sentence is my hopelessly romantic side busting out. Can I also say that some of the writing was a bit lame. I laughed inside when I read that someone was "as pale as cheese." That just doesn't speak to me, for I have never considered cheese to be pale. It's just cheese, you know. There were beautiful parts as well and they all involved Gemma and Kartik's romance! I will remember the tiny bits of romance I was given and center my thoughts there. I will try not to remember the rest. And someone please tell me: Why can't Kartik appear to Gemma from the tree just as Eugenia Spence did?" It's driving me nuts!

Jess says

Here's what I expected from this book: that it would maintain the part snarky, part serious, part romantic tone of the first two books; that the characters would grow a bit and the relationships would be as fraught as ever; that there would be some good old fashioned suspense leading up to the conclusion of the trilogy.

If any of those elements were present in this book, they got lost under pages and pages of sub-par writing; I don't come to books like this for Great Literature, but the others were enjoyable even when I rolled my eyes. I was too busy slogging through to roll my eyes.

Ultimately, I didn't really care what happened to any of the characters, and the supposed-to-be-heart-wrenching twist towards the end did not wrench my heart - but I did manage to roll my eyes. I didn't buy the vision of Gemma's future that we are given; I didn't care what happened to Felicity; I was pleased for Ann but it was a bit predictable. I never felt like Gemma really came to terms with using the power that was given to her, and that was a big disappointment.

The fantasy elements weren't strong enough to support the whole thing: so many of the characters in the realms had no real purpose to the story, which is pretty unforgivable when you're wrapping up a trilogy. The whole thing felt more like a scene out of that obnoxious movie, What Dreams May Come, than anything else.

I was relieved to be finished with it. I don't recommend it unless you LOVED the first two and just HAVE to find out what happened. But then you'll probably think the ending IS heart-wrenching, and I will lose all respect for you.

Ben Alderson says

OMG I CRIED THE ENDING WAS PERFECT! I DONT KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH MYSELF

Brigid ☆ Cool Ninja Sharpshooter ☆ says

My old review for this sucked so I'll attempt to sum up my thoughts in a slightly better way.

Well, this book is kind of near and dear to my heart because I was reading it on the night right before my little brother was born. (Awww.) So, whenever I think of this book, I think of that. I also remember how it kept me up until like 3 in the morning because it was so scary and thrilling and awesome and whatnot.

The ending was a bit frustrating, but ... oh well. Over all, this is a fantastic series with a fascinating blend of fantasy and history. The characters are compelling, the writing is great, yada yada.

Also, Libba Bray is a super cool person. I met her over the summer and she was really nice. :) Also she signed my copy of this book. So, YAY!

Caroline says

This was by far my favorite in the series, and I think a lot of it had to do with what Libba Bray was willing to have happen to her characters. The others have had their dark moments, but this was definitely the darkest of the lot. Makes sense, since it is the conclusion of a trilogy, and so there's got to be pretty big events to keep the story going.

It does take a while for the story to pick up, like in the others. Oh, and there's a veritable *ton* of Victorian society happenings that some readers might get a little tired of. Gemma also spends a lot of time debating about the decision of what to do with the magic, which might also bore a lot of readers. I actually really loved how much effort Bray put into fleshing out the Victorian culture for her readers, and didn't mind Gemma's brooding. Hey, if I were in her position, I'd totally be brooding, too!

So, while the first half of the book is good but not great, the second half completely makes up for it. This book is packed full of more action and intrigue than the first two, and some really excellent twists.

I just loved how she tied all the characters' individual stories up. Mrs. Nightwing and Mrs. McCleethy both get a lot more interesting in this one, and even Fowlson finally gets some believable characterization rather than coming off as a 1-dimensional jerk. And Pippa. I wasn't sure what would happen with her, but I have to say I loved it.

For the romantics, there are some really beautiful scenes between Gemma and Kartik. I was really glad she resolved things between the two and at least gave them some really great interactions. I can't say much more without spoiling it, though.

The ending was definitely not a perfect, happy conclusion, but it felt fitting for the series. Some readers are actually probably going to be quite disappointed by how some of it ties up, just with how gruesome it could get. Personally, I found the conclusion beautiful and touching, and it really made the series better as a whole than if she had done a cookie-cutter "look, it's a happy ending!" for us. The whole series is bittersweet, and I love it all the more for that very reason.

Heather says

I think it is a great testament to an author's skill in writing prose, when they can evoke within you such emotions that makes you want to throw your book across the room, when the characters are being stupid, blind, or just acting in ways that are so frustrating you want to scream at them. Or, it is a well written story when your own heart beats against your ribcage when the main protagonist is feeling love, fear, or anger.

In my opinion, what also makes for a good book is when you want to do nothing but read their story, when nothing else matters but getting to the end. I think Libba Bray has written three wonderful books and her magic in writing tripped me in her web. I really enjoyed these books.

The storyline in some people's opinion has been over done, but I think it is up to the author to use their skills to put a fresh spin on the old and I think Bray has done that.

I'm really sad the story had to end... I felt there's room for another book. I'll hold out hope...
