



The Trials of the Core

Michael E. Thies

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As Edwyrd Eska approaches his two-hundredth year as Guardian of the Core, he must find an apprentice to train under him. His title and role compel him to safeguard and govern his universe, Gladonus, as each Guardian before him has done and those after him shall continue to do until relieved of such duties by will of the Ancients. Prince Hydro Paen, Eirek Mourse, and Zain Berrese—amongst other contestants—receive invitations to compete in a quest of Trials intended to determine who will become Eska’s apprentice. An old adage goes: “the toughest trials test you truest” – and these events challenge their fortitude through tenuous partnerships, intellectual rivalries, and battles of weapons’ mastery. Along the way, each contestant must attempt to overcome personal demons that haunt them. In this tale of ideal dreams and lucid aspirations, these competitors find theirs threatened by deceit, betrayal, sabotage—and even flesh—as all become vital to success...

The Trials of the Core Details

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Author : Michael E. Thies

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From Reader Review The Trials of the Core for online ebook

Nessa [October Tune] says

Read this review, and many more on my blog [October Tune!](#)

Edwyrd Eska has been the Guardian of the Core for almost two hundred years, so it's time to find an apprentice who will become the new Guardian when time comes. Out of thousands of contestants, he selects only eight who will compete in a series of trials. Prince Hydro Paen, Eirek Mourse and Zain Berrese are among those chosen eight. We follow them and the other contestants as they are tested for their partnership, their skill, their intelligence, and their indurance.

I was lucky to receive this book from the author, thanks to Wendy from Wensend.com. So a big thank you to both Michael E. Thies and Wendy for making this possible! Of course this has not changed my opinion on the book in any way! I was immediately intrigued by the summary, because these are the kind of stories I love. I loved Lord of the Rings, I loved Harry Potter (the trials reminded me of the Triwizard Tournament), and I really liked Game of Thrones. So of course I had to read the Trials of the Core.

What I liked:

I have to admit, it took me a while to finish the story. Honestly, I thought the beginning was a bit slow. Of course, you need to get introduced to the main characters, but me being an action person, I just couldn't get through the first couple of chapters easily. Luckily, after a while, when the Trials started, it got much easier to finish the story.

First of all, I loved that though this story had a very medieval look/feel to it, it was actually a bit more modern (or more futuristic) than you'd think. There were hovercrafts, spaceships, all kinds of amazing science fiction technology; yes, it was amazing, my two favourite genres, fantasy and sci-fi! There was also a map at the beginning of the book, which I love, I love it when authors make maps of the fictional worlds they create, so I can imagine the world even better myself.

Though I normally don't like different point of views in a story, especially not if there are a lot (*cough* game of thrones *cough*), I kind of liked it in this book, after I realised that the little images above the chapter title were the sigils of the character whose chapter it was. Also, it was kind of needed to tell the story properly, to be able to see through all the contestants' minds, how they got through the trials and so forth. I especially liked reading Zain and Eirek's chapters, because they were the two contestants I was actually rooting for. At the beginning I kind of liked Hydro, sympathized with him because of his mother, but as soon as he arrived at the Core, he turned into Draco Malfoy, looking down on everyone who wasn't a prince as well, refusing to call others by their name (by calling them 'The Garian', 'The Commoner'); all my sympathy for him disappeared immediately. Ugh.

I really liked the trials, they made me think of the Triwizard Tournament in Harry Potter a bit, but that made me like them even more.

What I didn't like:

There were only a couple of things I didn't like about this story. The written accents. Though of course, that points out that people are from different countries, different regions than other characters, I just found it

difficult to read what Gabrielle had said sometimes. A lot of times, when she spoke, I had to reread the sentences twice before I knew what she'd said. In the end, I kind of got used to it, but it's still not one of my favourite things, written accents.

Also, the slow beginning was what made me put down this book at first. Though I really wanted to finish and like the story, I wasn't sure if I would like the rest if it would be like the first chapters. Luckily, the rest of the book made up for it.

In the end, I really enjoyed *The Trials of the Core*, and I will definitely recommend this book to people who've enjoyed *Game of Thrones*, *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings*! And just to anyone who loves a good Sci-Fi/Fantasy story! And I will definitely continue reading this series, because I just want to know how it goes on!

Dean C. Moore says

I wasn't sure what to expect when I picked up this book, *The Trials of the Core* (I'd never heard of the author before). I only picked it up because the cover intrigued me—the wax seal was done magnificently. As I started to read the prologue, though, I was hooked. Too many times in fantasy stories prologues do not have any direct connection with the book; happily, here, this was not the case. I really liked, moreover, how the author sets up the premise of the book; he does it in the form of a letter. The letter is addressed to “you”, so right from the beginning it feels as though you, the reader, have been asked to attend these Trials along with the contestants in the story.

Now, speaking of the contestants, I found them to be very interesting although somewhat archetypical. There is an arrogant prince named Hydro Paen (boy do I hate him at times). Like in most stories, there is an orphan underdog named Eirek Morse. But the rest of the characters developed throughout the book are unique, my favorite among them being Zain Berrese. Throughout the novel Zain is constantly battling the guilt of being responsible for his girlfriend's death and also the betrayal he committed towards his best friend, Zakk Shiren who is another contestant asked to participate in the Trials.

Now, as far as the other two characters I mentioned earlier go, even though they are archetypical, they still are unique in their own way. Hydro Paen has a soft spot for his younger brother, which humanizes him, and a hatred for his mother, who blames him for her daughter's death. The father places a large amount of pressure on Hydro; and because of this, Hydro's character slowly devolves throughout the story in a rather absorbing way. Eirek Morse is unique as well, for although he is an orphan, we can definitely see why he was chosen to compete in these Trials—for his intelligence. The bonds he creates with the other characters throughout the novel also really develop his character into one you cannot help but root for to win. The progression of Eirek's character is obvious and organic from the rural town of Creim to the barrenness of the Central Core. I look forward to seeing where he takes Eirek in the second novel.

The Trials in themselves (a labyrinth, a challenge of clever riddles, a weapons' tourney, and an arduous fourth trial that takes place on a planet of fire) make reading the story easy.

One more point I would like to mention is about the magic system in this story, called power. It's unique! The author doesn't have magic being capable of healing individuals; instead, there are people labeled *adored* who specialize in healing people. The only magic that comes into play in this story is elemental power and the ability to use fire, water, lightning, and earth. Now, the trick is that in order to cast magic you need to be

able to see the actual element in play. For example, if you are at sea, water would be the easiest element to control (because of its overwhelming majority) but one could not cast the power of earth. There is an awesome battle scene between both princes during the second trial that uses power.

What I think I liked most about this story, though, was the idea of a clear theme—the testing of one's character and integrity. The Trials really do aim to make sure the apprentice who gets chosen is someone who is of sound character, through and through.

As to my nitpicks, there were times when the overly detailed descriptions slowed the pace of the story. This being said, the author doesn't go off the deep end as is so often the case with this genre of pages of description to the point where you forget the story. And, also, to be fair, there was enough action that some readers might prefer these little breathers the descriptive passages offered. Because of the number of contestants and judges and other personages of influence, I was in the heads of a lot of characters early on in the story, and it just took me a while to sort out accordingly who was who. But eventually, I did catch on, owing in no small part to the author's very distinct use of voices and solidly portrayed and unique characters.

Overall, I found this story to be a splendid start to this young author's career and definitely a worthy kickoff to what I suspect will be an impressive series.

Jon Karoll says

To say the least, the book is ambitious. It's got massive ideas put together that skyrockets to astronomical scale. We're talking here about modern and futuristic technologies, with a pint of medieval pub-crawling mages, douche bag nobles and noble nobles, space exploration with spacecrafts, hovercrafts, cabbies that can jump through the space-time continuum (I might be exaggerating), ninjas, and whatnot. With that said, I'm glad it was done in a way that doesn't inspire people to start cutting their wrists.

Much details about how everything works have been left out for readers to figure out, which isn't to say it's a bad thing. Sure, it got me a few "Huh" and "WTF?", but once you get through that border, you can stand from your fetal position and embrace the sun with a cold drink, and looking back to what you've been through, you think, "That was one hell of a f-king ride." I'll let you decide if it's in a good or bad way - personally it was good.

As for the story itself, basically, it's a Harry Potter: The Goblet of Fire meets The Hunger Games meets Ender's Game. As I recall, Mike himself described it as, and I'm paraphrasing, fantasy set in the future. Where the supposed best and brightest youths all across their solar system gather to compete in an interplanetary Olympics to become the Guardian of the Core's Apprentice. Why is it so important? Well, obviously, from apprenticeship they will eventually become the new Guardian, and who doesn't want to be in that position of power, where citizens of all within the star system wet their pants upon hearing his or her name? Right, it's about securing power. But the real definition of being a Guardian wasn't clear. I've had friends take a swing at the story, and some of them claimed disappointment about the Guardian's blurred role, others, including I, thought it was exciting as we were left with hints for guesswork.

It's a character-driven book, where we get to explore each of the main protagonists' psychology and internal struggles, seeing both sides of the coin. I was annoyed by some characters, I got angry at and with them, I shared a few laughs with them, joined some of their many but often dull dinner parties, spent time with them

in bed, watched them through a keyhole what they did alone in their rooms, which was usually nothing and at one time, thought I was about to witness a special moment with Kenny G saxing in the corner. Later, they opened up to me, revealing fragments of their past, gaining my sympathy and care... for some of them at least. Some of them I wanted to burn in hell. Even the side characters were given the chance to steal the show, as they showed us what they're willing to give up to secure that apprenticeship.

At this point, it's possible that anyone will begin to speculate who will succeed the trials. I've made my guess and I was flat out wrong, like someone just swung a sledgehammer to my face. There's a lot of sword swinging and spell casting for entertainment value, and a slush pile of mysteries, which are obvious setups for future story arcs.

I'll say that Mike could have done a few alternatives for the book, such as more character growth. I suppose we'll see that in the next book. But suffice to say, Trials of the Core did its job well, which was to entertain and evoke emotions.

Nádia Batista says

Until this day I am still asking myself the reason why this book caught my attention. Its cover did not please me, and the synopsis didn't seem like something new and wonderful; still, I gave it a try, and I'm glad I did so. This first volume in Guardian of the Core series is really good.

The Trials of the Core tells the adventures of six contestants, who fight among themselves to win a spot as the Guardian of the Core's apprentice. At the beginning, they were eight, but we only know six (and the plot thickens...), who have to fight to win the four trials. At the end, there will be only one winner. Who will it be?

One of the things that I liked the most was the fact of the story being told by three of the characters. This gives us a different insight of the people, while we get to know them better, and this made me fight with myself on the way I felt about the characters. Prince Hydro, for example. When we was the one telling the story, I felt sorry for him and was rooting for him; when he was seen by others, he was nothing more than a cocky coward who should have lost at the first trial. This example reminds me of another fantastic thing about this book: the intelligent and complex creation of the characters.

As the story is told by different characters, we have different ways of looking at it. I already spoke about Prince Hydro, who made me feel compassionate and disgusted. Eirek, the commoner, the poor contestant whose greatest desire was a better world. Zain, that we hate at the beginning, but that eventually conquers our heart. Zain is probably the character that had the greatest development and enrichment, and his final decision amazed me. The remaining contestants, although we don't get to know their side of the story, keep creating conflicts on the reader: Cadmar, harsh and sensitive; Cain, cocky and good; Gabrielle, accomplice and treacherous. Michael E. Thies did such a great work at creating the characters and this fact, all alone, makes this book worthy.

We have mystery and action throughout the book. There is no dead moments, there's always something in the air in The Trials of the Core. Whether it is the hidden motives behind someone's action, or Zakk's apparitions, or Hydro's necklace, or the girl with the black hair... (and yes, without telling you any spoiler, I was trying to make you curious!)

I don't know if it's usual for those who read this book, but it reminded me a lot of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone and Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. I'm not saying that it is a bad comparison, in this case it was actually pretty nice. The only thing is that I don't know if it was intentional or not. If it was, it's a

good tribute; if it wasn't, than it's a tremendous coincidence.

Besides this, I'd like to add that there is something missing in this book, regarding maps, families' trees, badges. There should be an illustrated appendix with this information, so that the reader can have a clearer view of the book. Maybe in the next volume.

As a very promising series, there are left a lot of things to explain and develop. Besides choosing the winner, he or she still has fifteen years of training ahead. And I'm curious about knowing which characters will be returning or not. Are they all returning, or only a few of them? Also, I want to know if Michael E. Thies can write a second volume as good as the first one, with the same quality, or of course, better.

I highly recommend *The Trials of the Core* to everyone who loves a good fantasy book, with a little of science fiction on it, a lot of technology and magic, a lot of intrigues and mysteries. And there's even room for love - even love is part of the game. Which side are you on?

<http://eu-e-o-bam.blogspot.pt/2013/12...>

[Portuguese Link]

Kelsey Swanson says

I picked up this novel at the request of a friend, and I was excited to see the completion. Though self-published by the author, he took great pains to present a professional product. There are almost no grammatical or typeset errors (which can often happen with self-published products) and the chapter beginnings even offer a similar flair to other comparable novels in the genre. As a physical book, it fits in with anything released by a well-established publisher.

More importantly, there is a story here.

Taking into account the various points of view, this was a very easy story to follow. From the start, the characters were clear and established, their motivations layered but understandable. Thies didn't need overly-complex backgrounds to set the stage for these characters—he had it in the nature of the world and their homes, the basic desires of their family and friends as influence. Each contestant went to the trials for a different reason. Each reason was legitimate for the character's upbringing and previous personal trials. These personalities continued to evolve throughout the story, giving the reader a more intimate sense of the characters and who they were becoming. The use of multiple viewpoints without repeating any scenes was refreshing without confusion, and it helped the reader to see some of the idiosyncrasies of both the character that was telling, and those it was telling about. It also set the stage for what promises to be an exciting and unpredictable next novel. What started simple enough with character motivations has quickly become a mix of anger, disappointment, ambition, yearning, atonement, and an array of other complex motivators that will battle it out moving forward.

Stepping back from the characters, I want to address pacing. As mentioned, the multiple viewpoints helped keep the story fresh. Days between the trials were handled simply, without dragging the slower parts of the story. In a novel where the passage of time from start to finish covers more than a few days, this synoptic progression keeps the reader involved. Even during the trial scenes and other intense exchanges, Thies kept to the essential exchanges of dialogue and movement.

There were a few parts of the novel that dragged for me. Thies sticks to a consistent flourish with his

descriptions, but after hearing of the thirtieth person with whatever set of clothing, I found myself tuning out. For some characters the clothing seemed important to give a snapshot of character, but hearing in every scene a detail of cloth, gems, or associated seal became too much after a while. Also, the author tends to introduce a healing flower, for example, then feels the need to offer a continued description of the planet and kingdom of origin, information which never seems to be fully pertinent later (so far as we know). *As I side, I have a love-hate with these types of descriptions. I love hearing more about the worlds authors create, and their own understanding of the importance of the details. I dislike when I feel I have been given an over-abundance of information that takes me too far out of the story, without later offering a concrete reason why the extra description was included at that time.* It was the same with names and titles, which became so extensive there was no way to keep track of which were essential to remember. Though many planet or kingdom names offered suggestive environments—Acquava being a water-based kingdom, for example—it was still difficult to retain all the descriptions and histories. Throw in multiple gods and religion bases, and I expect the story will take an interesting turn as it progresses, but for a single novel it felt overwhelming. A basic glossary could have assisted immensely with this confusion.

Despite these misgivings, I found Guardian of the Core both exciting and a promise. Though the one-line quotes and moral statements could get wearisome, the hints at greater dangers to follow are enticing. For a reader drawn mostly by character development, I found the potential of these characters growing on me. I needed a few chapters to get into the story, but by the end I felt like the author was starting to settle into his own. Thies walks a fine line of mystery and information given to the reader, leaving us with a cliff-hanger that could take many roads. What is certain is that there is little predictability for the future of these characters, and it is clear that their trials are only just beginning. I will be picking up the second novel, and I look forward to seeing where Thies takes the adventure next.

Tania Godwin-evans says

I want to start this review by saying that the copy I had was an Advance Readers Copy (ARC) which had no chapter headings. It was clunky and repetitive in places, which was possibly due to poor copy editing and or proofing. It is this reader's hope that these issues were rectified before final copy was passed for press.

That said the read was very compelling, and I was up until 6am a couple of night reading just to find out what happened next. However, the use of names, especially the best friends, was confusing as they were so similar (why to authors have to do that?).

The novel is rather loquacious about a group of young flawed people and their trials and tribulations through an intensive course of trials that tests their character, perseverance, courage, friendships and ambitions. Along with the trails these characters also have to deal with feuds and intrigues that test their integrity and morals. Along with these main characters there is a plethora of secondary characters that help shape and move the story along, and each has their own agenda with regards to who they want to win.

There is obviously a great deal of action but there are also slower passages where the characters are developed following the trial recently experienced. So as to not muddy the waters with all these characters, each is written with a distinctive voice so after a while it was quite easy to identify who was who.

There are some twists and turns along the way and two of the reveals were not too far a stretch and this reader managed to work them out. We still really do not know the purpose of the Guardian and it is hoped

this will be revealed in later books in the serial.

Although initially slow, due to the world building and the introduction to the numerous characters and their various points of view; this was a pleasant read with an interesting ending. This reader was invested enough in these characters to want to know what happens next in this series.

If you like science fiction and fantasy then this may well be the book for you. Go on give it a go, you will not be disappointed.

Full Disclosure: ARC received from Netgalley for an honest review.

Badseedgirl says

Per FTC guidelines this review for [The Trials of the Core](#) by Michael Thies is for a book received for free in a Goodreads.com First Read Giveaway.

I'm not going to bother to give a recap of the novel. But will instead get right into my thoughts and opinions of this debut novel.

Michael Thies has written a wonderful freshman story in [Trials of the Core](#). There is excellent character development, and the world building in one word; amazing. Let's start with this world building. Throughout the entire novel this world felt so familiar to me. And it was not until the very end, when the winner of the apprenticeship was going through the questioning by the families and the question regarding power and technology was asked, that it hit me. The world Mr. Thies has created reminded me very much of the world created by Frank Herbert for his iconic [Dune](#). Not the physical desert aspects, but instead a society where humanity has advanced to the point that it embraced a mix of mental powers and technology, of advanced computerization, and space travel all within a quasi-medieval society. I always found this eclectic mix one of the most interesting aspects of the Dune world, and it was as good if not better in [Trials of the Core](#).

Regarding the development of the characters and storyline, it is obvious this is the first book in a larger series. Because of that, Mr. Thies was able to devote more pages to character development than he could have in a stand-alone novel. The skill shown by the author was in how organically he was able to drop character development throughout the novel.

As for the characters themselves, it was impossible to point to one character and say "This is the hero". All the characters have flaws and as anyone who has dealt with teens knows even the best teen can be horrible at times. Mr. Thies never spoon feeds the reader as to who to root for in the challenges. Even the "bad" guy is more of a tragic character than an evil mastermind. Actions in this novel have consequences, and mistakes characters make in the beginning of the novel eventually come home to roost. Although not terribly surprised by who eventually becomes the apprentice, the way in which the character wins was an excellent plot twist that I did not see coming. My one complaint would have to be that my enjoyment and understanding of the novel might have been enhanced with maps of the worlds and or a glossary of the world in the novel.

All and all [Trials of the Core](#) is an excellent start for what this reader can only hope is a long and fruitful career for Michael Thies. 4.5 Of 5 stars

Sue Blanchard says

Thankyou to NetGalley, BooksGoSocial and Michael E Thies for the opportunity to read a copy of The Trials Of The Core in exchange for an honest and unbiased review.

I am the first to admit, even though I enjoy fantasy novels, I am very fussy with the fantasy novels I will read. I was drawn to this book by the cover, then the description. It was promising a lot, so I was curious to see if it delivered. And, OMG, it did.

I loved this book. The storyline was well written with characters that are engaging. I had trouble putting this book down.

If you enjoy the genre, then do yourself a favour and read this book. Be warned, don't expect to do too much else until you finish the last page. I certainly am looking forward to reading more from this author.

Mary says

First of all. WOW! The Trials of The Core left me somehow in awe due to the fact that it built a whole new world, Thies gives detailed explanations and complex situations, meaning everything and everyone is intertwined, it is a little hard to follow the story if you read on your way home, but if you take your time, and think through it, you start building your own theories, though I didn't like fact that even though the author goes through a lot of trouble in order to make us understand the scenario and gives plenty of details when it comes to the trials, there are a lot of blanks that in my opinion, could be filled in with subtle hints, something to keep our theories from going to the edge of insanity, it is great to have such an universe and characters, the author is not annoyingly vague, but mysterious, though it can be disturbing the fact that I never understood the characters' motivations for participating in the trials. There are key blanks in the story and that's probably due to the book being the first of a series, I'm sure they'll be revealed in the following books, but I'd like to have a better understanding of the main topic-The Guardian Of The Core-.

I personally loved that the story involves so many characters and relations between them, because it makes the reading a lot more interesting, it makes me slow down and enjoy the reading a lot more, it's like eating a Ferrero Rocher, if you eat it slowly you find flavors and textures you can't even fanthom while devouring it all at once. A word of advice, be redy to think through the reading and not just pass every page like crazy, you're not to take an hour on each page, but do take your time to read this book, and you won't regret it.

I'd like to mention that this book was given to me through NetGalley completely free in exchange for an honest review, NOT a summary.

Samiha says

I'm not going to write a summary before going to the review. If you want a summary, it's there on the top of the page. Also there are a couple of spoilers

This was a great book. It was completely different from most teen fiction that I've read by younger authors, which almost always involve some form of instalove.

I especially love the characters. They are each flawed in their own way, and that is what makes them human. Even though Hydro is supposed to be the "villain/anti hero", I didn't end up hating as much as that title merits.(view spoiler)

The world that the author has created is absorbing! I love the fact that magic and technology have been combined so well and they give an interesting flavour to the book. I have to say, though, that some of the proper nouns here and there were not explained. Also, the reader is left without much sense of the geography of the place.

It's superb that there is practically no sexism in this book, something that I find is a huge issue in other books.

I know that the author is planning a sequel(s), but I still felt that he had left the reader without any clue of what being the Guardian of the Core really means. There are literally zero hints. I mean honestly, the book's title contains "guardian of the core," and no one has an inkling of what it really means, aside from the fact that it comes with great power and follows that it entails great responsibility.

Another issue I found with the book was how Gabrielle spoke(in her Frenchy accent) and a couple of others, who spoke in a sort of Cockney. Yes, they speak like that, but it makes life harder, reading paragraphs where all the "th"s have been swapped out for "z"s(Frenchy) or where the sound "th" is nonexistent(Cockney).

Anyway, long story short, great book! Overall an easy read, as one is not swamped by fancy terms and descriptions. Maybe a few more details required, but a pleasing read all round. I look forward to reading the sequel.

Chris Bateman says

The Trials of the Core took me on an immersive adventure into a whole new world, with in-depth descriptions of both the characters and the universe they live in. Although it was once the foundation was laid that the real action began. After the forming chapters of the book, the journey takes some unexpected (but welcomed) twists and turns. The action chapters as well as the more dialogue driven chapters are well thought out and really hooked me to the point where some twists had me audibly saying 'damn!'. The style of Michaels descriptive writing allowed me to be fully immersed in each new scene, painting the picture like an artist with his words.

Setting the book up for a series of books and ultimately potential of a small or big screen adaption, I am eagerly anticipating book 2 in this series.

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths Reviews

Sometimes, I run across a book that is difficult for me to write a review about, usually this is because I hated it so much I could not finish it, but then there are times when the book had all the appropriate elements

(action, decent writing, good characters, world building) but for some unknown reason, I could not get into it. An analogy is going out on a first date with someone who is attractive and has all your same interest, but you feel zero spark between you. Why didn't it work? On eharmony, it looked like the best thing ever, but as you sit there at dinner wondering when this will be over, you can't stop asking yourself what happened to the damn compatibility algorithms. And that is how I felt after finishing *The Trials of the Core*. There is not any reason why I did not "connect" with this story, but I just didn't. I don't hate it. Rather, the novel left me feeling indifferent. I guess, *The Trials of the Core* and I had better just stay friends.

Oh, you want me to stop with the dating analogies and tell you about the actual story already?

Sure. No problem.

Anyway, *The Trials of the Core* is a genre bender of science fiction and fantasy as dreamed up by author Michael Thies. Here he gifts his readers with a universe that has a dash of Harry Potter, a little bit of Star Wars and a whole lot of intrigue circa The Hunger Games.

Far, far away in a distant solar system spin five, diverse planets. Upon these shining globes are a host of nations - each with their own distinct inhabitants and cultures - that together form a system spanning imperium ruled over by a "Guardian," who protects and governs his subjects. However, even an all powerful Guardian of the Core cannot rule forever, and since the current Guardian is closing in on his 200th year, he determines to seek out an apprentice to beginning training as his ultimate successor. To find this protégée, invitations are sent out to the brightest of the bright among the intergalactic kingdom; these select people to compete in a grueling series of trials that will sort the strong from the weak.

Since there can be only one apprentice to the Guardian, each of the contestant is desperate to win for their own individual reasons, and so the plot line becomes who will ultimately triumph in this intrigue filled contest and to what lengths will the participants go to be the last person standing?

While this fight among youths echoes the plot of some other popular books, Michael Thies does a good job of making this a different sort of competition. Sure, there are a few deaths - not all of them accidental, but by and large, the majority of this novel is about getting to know the characters and seeing them deal with this immense pressure. A reader learns about their pasts, their strengths and weaknesses, their reasons for competing, and their unique abilities, which run the gamut from elemental magic to physical strength to mental dexterity. They exhibit perseverance and courage as well as unbridled ambition. They form alliances against one another, wage internal feuds, and form friendships that some of them are more than willing to discard if necessary to further their drive toward becoming the Guardian's apprentice.

As the story progresses, a reader is left to twist as to who is going to ultimately win this contest. Will it be one of the royals, who have been groomed their whole life to be Guardian? Or will one of the brainiacs ultimately triumphs? How about the offspring of a famous warrior, who is desperate to exit his father's immense shadow? Or will the underdog commoner, who possess no great skills but is in the contest nonetheless, find a way to rise above his less-than-stellar origins and become the ruler of the imperium?

On the whole, *The Trials of the Core* had the makings of an interesting story. It had immense worlds to explore, different viewpoints, "flawed" characters who are as individually compelling as they are repugnant, and unique magic/technology. However, there were a few issues that detracted from my enjoying of this novel.

1) After reading the book, I still have no idea what the Guardian of the Core is. All I know is that it is very

important and has immense powers that come along with it. Other than that, I have no idea. After a whole novel, I should vaguely understand why all these people are willing to die to obtain this position

2) There needs to be an appendix with maps, family genealogies, and other important information. While I muddled through everything, I prefer some reference material if the story has lots of world building and numerous characters. This could be just me being picky however.

In summation, if you are a fan of genre bending novels, this unique and unconventional book might be just what you are looking for. Michael Thies writes in a clear and concise voice, and the story moves along rapidly, shifting seamlessly between its various viewpoints as you experience these gifted youths fighting for the right to be the ruler of their worlds. While it is definitely young adult fare, I could envision more mature people liking this one as well.

Netgalley provided this book to me for free in return for an honest review. The review above was not paid for or influenced in any way by any person, entity or organization, but is my own personal opinions.

Bames says

I received a copy of this book through NetGalley in exchange for an unbiased and honest review.

I have to admit that, after reading the first few pages of the book, I felt like I will not like it. However, it grew on me and pretty soon I got caught up in it.

The story revolves around 6 contestants that have been selected by The Guardian. The Guardian's name is Edwyrd Eska and he is approaching the end of his 200 year term as Guardian of the Gladonus universe and he lives in the Core. Before the end of his term, he needs to find an apprentice.

Being Guardian is no easy task and choosing an apprentice is not as simple as it seems either. The 6 contestants have to pass 4 tests. Prince Hydro Paen of the planet of Acquava, Prince Cain, Cadmar, Gabrielle, Eirek and Zain are the contestants that have been chosen out of the many that had applied for the apprenticeship.

Some contestants have deep secrets. Prince Hydro Paen wants to win at all costs in order to make his mother and his kingdom proud -- plus the fact that he does not want to become King of Acquava and be trapped with all those duties and responsibilities. Zain wants to bring his dead girlfriend back to life and believes that being Guardian will give him the power to do so but he pushed his best friend Zakk (who was also chosen) off the ship that was picking up contestants and watched as Zakk plummeted down into a lake.

The story is being told by each of three characters -- Zain, Hydro, and Eirek. The reader is able now to "see" or perceive what is happening through the eyes of the "storyteller." For example, when Hydro is the character telling the story, the reader will tend to feel so sorry for him because his mother blames him for his sister's death and he craves his mother's love and attention. However, when the other two characters tell the story, the reader will see Hydro as a self-centered, arrogant, prince who believes he is better than everyone else because he is a royal.

As there will only be one apprentice, only the contestant who wins the most tests will win. But who will the winner be? Will it be one of the two Prince's as they have been trained and groomed all their lives? Will it be

Zain or Gabrielle who are both among the best students of their elite academies? Will it be Cadmar whose father is an elite warrior? Or will it be Eirek who is a commoner and possess no great fighting skill nor magic?

The story builds and readers will soon become caught up in the tests and the characters. There are lots of unexpected twists and turns which will surely keep readers hooked until the very last page. I love the way the story is told by different characters because it allows me to see things from different points of view. I hope the other books in the series will be as exciting or even more so.

Tony "eichy" says

If fans of science-fiction or fantasy are looking for something unique and unconventional, *The Trials of the Core* blends the two genres in a way that is simple yet elegant. Michael Thies creates a universe that is sort of a cross between *Harry Potter* and *Game of Thrones*. Written unpretentiously and with clear character voices, this is the first installment of a series that has potential to speak to both young and mature audiences alike.

In a faraway solar system known as Gladonus, five distinctive planets (and twelve nations) – each with its own culture of inhabitants – form an intergalactic kingdom. Presiding over this collection of nations is Edwyrd Eska, a “Guardian” who protects and rules his republic with stoicism and gumption. Underneath Eska’s firm exterior, bits of softness shine through as he searches for an Apprentice who will ultimately become his successor. Six young warriors compete in a series of trials to prove who is worthiest of accompanying Eska during the twilight years of his reign.

Among them is Eirek Mourse, the “everyman” who rises from the mundane life of a pauper to embark upon a journey that leads him to seek out a greater purpose for his existence. Although Eirek is far from robust in the brawn department, he compensates for it with compassion toward others and brainy resourcefulness. Unlike the typical hero, Eirek’s path meanders in several unexpected directions as he attempts to reconcile his long-term desires, lack of self-confidence, and abandonment issues in the absence of his uncle and onetime mentor, Angal. Battling his competitors as well as natural elements, Eirek – who has been unable to cast Power – finds that his inner demons are his greatest adversary as his quest concludes in a surprising manner.

Eirek’s main adversary – as well as a common foe to many of the other characters – is Prince Hydro Paen. The son of a royal lord in the nation of Acquava, Hydro brings an entirely new spin to the concept of the “antihero” as his delusions of grandeur impede the genuine affection he harbors toward his fellow countrymen and his family’s legacy. As he intends to stop at nothing to seize the reward of becoming Eska’s Apprentice, Hydro loses sight of some of the greatest qualities that a leader should exemplify; yet, he remains a strong contender for the coveted title even as a final showdown ensues. The prize Hydro eventually captures proves to be alternately filled with both promise and darkness, leading the reader to ponder what it could mean for the future of Gladonus as a whole.

A third finalist in the trials, Zain Berrese, exemplifies some of the deepest character complexities imaginable. Saddled with guilt for failing to save his former lover, Ava, from death, Zain struggles with his role in the apparent demise of his best friend, Zakk – a fellow gladiator who was also slated to compete in Eska’s trials. Haunted by visions of the comrade he fears he has killed, Zain finds himself distracted throughout the trials by the sexual wiles of a female warrior, Gabrielle, along with a battle of egos against

several of their male rivals. It's often tricky to get inside Zain's head, but that only goes to show how immensely conflicted he remains over what qualities Gladonus will require from its next generation of leadership.

In addition to the seductive and cheeky Gabrielle, numerous secondary characters pepper this saga of Guardian Eska's grueling competition. Cain, a suave-yet-cerebral prince who vies with Zain for Gabrielle's affections; Cadmar, the beefy and often-bullheaded Garian soldier who craves the apprenticeship as a matter of honor; Tundra, a wise but outspoken elder who serves as one of Eska's closest advisors; and Senator Numos, the portly, seemingly jovial politician who observes the trials with tight lips and keen interest. Each of these characters has a perspective to share, causing the astute reader to theorize what role they might individually – or collectively – play in later editions of the series.

The author oscillates between fast-moving action and slower moments of rich character development, never truly revealing his hand in terms of which character is destined to come out on top by the end of the trials. These young competitors display a nice balance of elemental magic, physical strength, and mental prowess to battle the various creatures thrown in their paths as they strive to prove their merit to an enigmatic ruler. A variety of supernatural creatures come into play throughout Eska's trials, my personal favorite being the fairy-like Windies. Other antagonistic species – reminiscent of ogres and centaurs – create life-threatening obstacles that turn our young warriors inside-out to show what they are truly made of.

A common quality linking all of these diverse characters is their perseverance; the six ambitious personalities jockeying for Eska's favor individually value either wisdom, honor, compassion, power – or some combination thereof. Their interactions result in a compelling series of alliances, feuds, friendships, and grudges. One cannot help but anticipate that their future paths may become continuously intertwined even after Eska's newly-minted Apprentice finally assumes his or her mantle of power.

Michael Thies has created a colorful and action-packed world that taunts the genre-lover into delving beneath the surface of what a character initially appears to be. While several mysteries embedded within the plot are left dangling, the story concludes with the implication that this battle was only the beginning for Gladonus – and that more ominous, and much more complicated days await its future.

I highly recommend *The Trials of the Core* as an introduction to a cosmic saga that challenges adventurous readers to leave one's assumptions and expectations at the door. This nebulous narrative dares you to pick a side, reinforcing the menace of how no character is safe from confronting an untarnished destiny.

Dianne says

In a time honored tradition, it is time for the Guardian of Gladonus to step down, but first, an apprentice must be chosen through a series of trials designed to test character, honor, loyalty, and inner strength and convictions. Only a handful of contestants are deemed worthy and as they come together to face the unknown, each contestant, win or lose, will hopefully go away having been enriched by the experience. The contestants range from Royalty to commoners, male or female, and each is there with their own personal agenda in mind, be it selfish or selfless. Can these teens learn to trust in others, to see with more than their eyes and to give of themselves without expecting anything in return?

The Trials of the Core book one of the Guardian of the Core series by Michael Thies digs down deep into

the minds and hearts of its characters, as the trials continues and each contestant passes or fails, their inner turmoil for past mistakes or future dreams push them on. Wonderfully written, taut and edgy at times, the scenes play out in vivid color! The smells, the sounds, the creatures and the terrain are all there, like a mental movie! Michael Thies has made some bold strokes as he marks out his twisted path to the finish, the final resolution will not be right around the corner, nor was it easy to puzzle out ahead of time! Surprises along the way, right up to the end were perfectly timed, perfectly presented in this journey to inner enlightenment and the choosing of a new future Guardian.

A little Sci-fi, a lot "action and adventure," **The Trials of the Core** is filled with strong characters working against the odds to excel!

I received this copy from Writer's Block Press in exchange for my honest review.

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