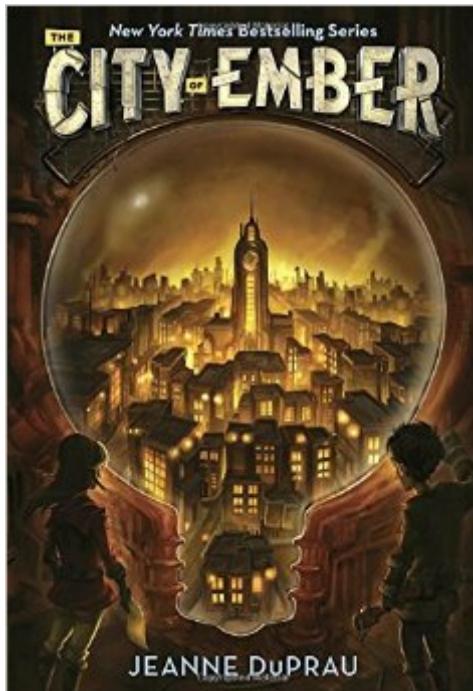


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The City Of Ember (The First Book Of Ember)



Synopsis

A modern-day classic. This highly acclaimed adventure series about two friends desperate to save their doomed city has captivated kids and teachers alike for almost fifteen years and has sold over 3.5 MILLION copies! The city of Ember was built as a last refuge for the human race. Two hundred years later, the great lamps that light the city are beginning to flicker. When Lina finds part of an ancient message, she's sure it holds a secret that will save the city. She and her friend Doon must race to figure out the clues before the lights go out on Ember forever! Nominated to 28 State Award Lists! An American Library Association Notable Children's Book A New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing Selection A Kirkus Reviews Editors' Choice A Child Magazine Best Children's Book A Mark Twain Award Winner A William Allen White Children's Book Award Winner A realistic post-apocalyptic world. DuPrau's book leaves Doon and Lina on the verge of undiscovered country and readers wanting more. "USA Today" "An electric debut." "Publishers Weekly, Starred" "While Ember is colorless and dark, the book itself is rich with description." "VOYA, Starred" "A harrowing journey into the unknown, and cryptic messages for readers to decipher." "Kirkus Reviews, Starred

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 680L (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (1,308 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,015 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Nature #16 in Books > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction #17 in Books > Children's Books > Science, Nature & How It Works

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Plot descriptions have already been done, so I'll offer my commentary. The (barely) three page prologue sets a splendid dramatic tension for the story. We know that something is afoot, that there is more to Ember than Ember, and that empowers us, to a certain extent - like when you're watching a movie and you know something that the characters don't. We see the development of this through the eyes of two twelve year olds, both very different children. Doon has a temper and is rather sullen, and Lina is a bundle of hope and joy. But their depth goes beyond that. These are three-dimensional characters, a rarity in children's books. Also rare is the sturdy, clear writing. It never felt rushed, always felt poised. The only thing that wasn't handled with perfection was humor. I should have laughed when Doon threw a shoe heel and it hit his father in the ear, but I didn't. But that's OK. Eoin Colfer can be funny, and Ms. DuPrau can simply be a better writer. I found a few plot points strained: 1) Lina being the great-great-great whatever of one of the mayor's mentioned in the prologue; 2) Her own grandmother's mad search for something that now, in her dotage, she remembers is of the utmost importance; and 3) Poppy getting her hands on the thing that is important and rendering it nearly indecipherable. But those are minor points. They exist to move the story from one point to another, and the story isn't really about the discovery of the Instructions for Egress, it's about the city of Ember itself, how its inhabitants have adjusted to living in a city where there is no light after nine (because the only light the city has is electricity and it knows nothing of the Sun), deciphering the Instructions for Egress, and the action of egress itself.

The city of Ember is in trouble, but the complacent citizens seem to ignore the food shortages and frequent blackouts. The Builders, when they created the city some 241 years ago, made provisions for its citizens in the form of a note called "The Instructions." Unfortunately, The Instructions were not handed down through the generations as they were supposed to be, and suddenly 12-year old Lina, a city Messenger, has discovered them. After trying to tell her friends and even the Mayor about the discovery of the partially destroyed Instructions, Lina turns to a one-time school friend, Doon, a worker in the underground Pipeworks, whom she believes will understand their importance. But what can two children do with such important information, and who would even believe them? The City of Ember is a clever novel which tells the unique story of two unintentional heroes who fight the status quo in order to bring hope to their city. The descriptions of the world of Ember are fascinating, leaving the reader to appreciate the incredible imagination of first-time novelist Jeanne DuPrau. The narrator thoughtfully informs us of the setting - the unusual and self-contained world of Ember - slowly throughout the novel, and not all at once in the first chapter. It's only in

chapter 8 that we even realize that there are no animals in Ember and the words "heaven" and "boat" have no known meaning. The characters are outstandingly original yet touchingly familiar in their pre-pubescent views of the adult world. The deaths of Lina's parents and then custodial grandmother create a sympathy for her that causes us to, all the more, wish for her triumph.

I read The City of Ember when it first came out, when a 12-year-old neighbor girl told me about it. I read it again aloud to my wife and her son. Then we saw the movie in the theater. Then we saw the DVD. Now I've just finished the graphic novel. I love this story!(spoiler alert) At first I was sad that in the graphic novel there are so many details missing. However, I got hooked into the story. I was only going to read for a little bit but I read the whole book in one evening. And something happened to me. It happened every time I read the book and saw the movie: when Lina and Dune come out of the cave and smell the fresh air for the first time in their lives, I got chills. Then as the light begins, and the sun comes up, the first time they have ever seen the sun, I get tears in my eyes. Even though this is the fifth time I have read or seen the story, it still is magic to me. And now that I think about it, this is simply a retelling of the Allegory of the Cave, from Plato's Republic. In that story, men are trapped in a cave, never having seen natural light. They are chained in a way so that they can only see the back wall of the cave, where projections are shown to them by way of a lamp and puppets behind their backs. They believe the puppet shadows are real, that they are all that is real. But a many may break free of his shackles and go outside the cave, and see real things, with real light. It is a metaphor for a kind of perception or enlightenment. I think Jeanne DuPrau has done a wonderful service to Plato by putting the story in this form, with children being the discoverers. It deepens the metaphor, because they have not yet grown to believe all the things that adults are supposed to believe.

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