



# TEEN BOOK REVIEWS

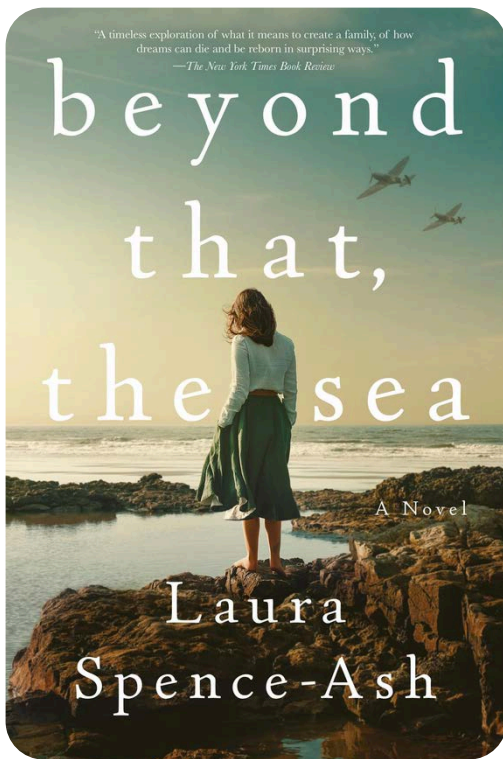
AUGUST 2024

GUIDE

BOOKS IN THE  
YOUNG ADULT  
COLLECTION

BOOKS IN THE  
ADULT  
COLLECTION

BOOKS IN THE  
CHILDREN  
COLLECTION



# BEYOND THAT, THE SEA BY LAURA SPENCE-ASH

CALL #: FIC SPENCE - ASH

COLLECTION: FICTION

RATING:



GENRE: HISTORICAL FICTION

## Book Review:

Beyond That, the Sea is a historical fiction novel about a young British girl named Beatrice who is sent away by her parents to live with an American family, the Gregory's, during World War 2. In America, she grows up alongside the two Gregory brothers, William and Gerald, and begins to see herself as part of their family, all while becoming increasingly more estranged from her parents back in England. When the war finally ends, she leaves her newfound family and reunites with her estranged one, trying to adjust to what now feels like an unfamiliar life. The book follows Bea through snippets of her childhood and adulthood as her story continues to be intertwined with the family she left behind in America.

This book was super enjoyable to read. Despite not having much action or twists, I was gripped the entire time because of the lovable characters and complex relationships. I especially liked the first part of the book, reading about Bea growing up in Maine and watching the Gregory family come to see her as their own. It was super heartwarming, and all of the characters felt so fleshed out and real. The tone definitely gets sadder as the characters grow up, with a lot of bleak moments happening in the middle. Although I thought some chapters dragged a little, I was still rooting for Bea and wanted to see how her future played out. The ending was surprisingly happy, and it was really satisfying and bittersweet to see Bea's story come full circle.

I think this book is definitely worth reading, especially if you're looking for atmospheric, emotional coming-of-age stories. The book is told in short chapters that take place throughout different stages in Bea's life, making it super easy to breeze through. It reminded me a lot of *Anne of Green Gables* because of its beautiful setting and focus on found family. If you love heartwarming, cozy stories like that, you'll love this book!



# THE DO - OVER BY LYNN PAINTER

CALL #: YA FIC PAINTER

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING: ★★★★★

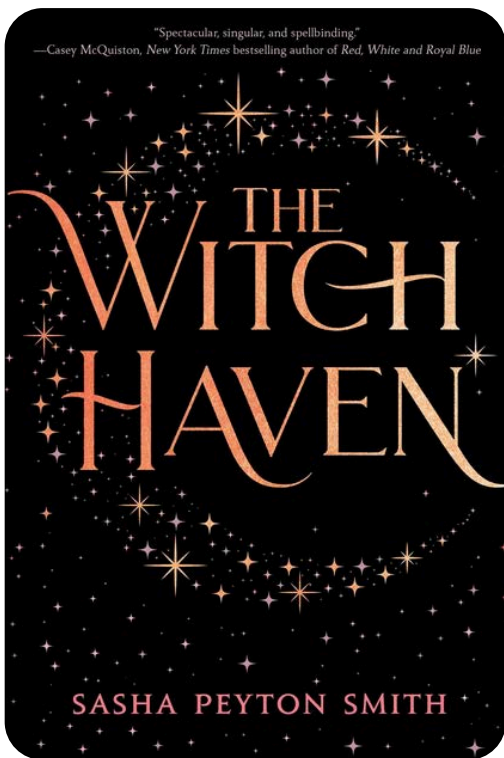
GENRE: CONTEMPORARY ROMANCES

## Book Review:

The Do-Over is about Emilie Hornby and a Valentine's Day that goes up in flames. She's ready to leave this horrid Valentine's Day in the past, but she wakes up the next day, and it's Valentine's Day again. Each day, she continues to relive her worst day ever, and each day, she continues to cross paths with this same boy. Emilie can't seem to avoid him. Through this horrible sequence of events, Emilie learns that pushing out of your comfort zone can have amazing results, and you never know what or who is waiting for you around the corner.

This book was a cross between Groundhog's Day and a perfect, adorable teen romance. I loved how the book focused on Emilie's growth and her dealing with the many challenges life throws at her. I normally don't like universe-bending novels; however, The Do-Over is an exception. It is so well written and so completely true to all driven teenagers. The book evoked so much empathy and second-hand embarrassment for Emilie. She is such an authentic and relatable character. The relationship between her and a secret someone was so sweet and filled with deep emotional moments but balanced out with fun, quirky, love-sick moments as well.

I would recommend this book to all teens who are fans of the YA rom-com genre. It's a fast-paced book that keeps you on your toes. There is something new and interesting happening in each chapter of the book, and it will leave you up all night reading and wanting to know more! In addition, I would recommend this book to fans of Better Than The Movies also by Lynn Painter, Tweet Cute by Emma Lord, and Today Tonight Tomorrow by Rachel Lynn Solomon. (Bonus! There is an extra chapter for this novel online!)



# THE WITCH HAVEN

BY

## SASHA PEYTON SMITH

CALL #: YA FIC PEYTON SMITH

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING: 

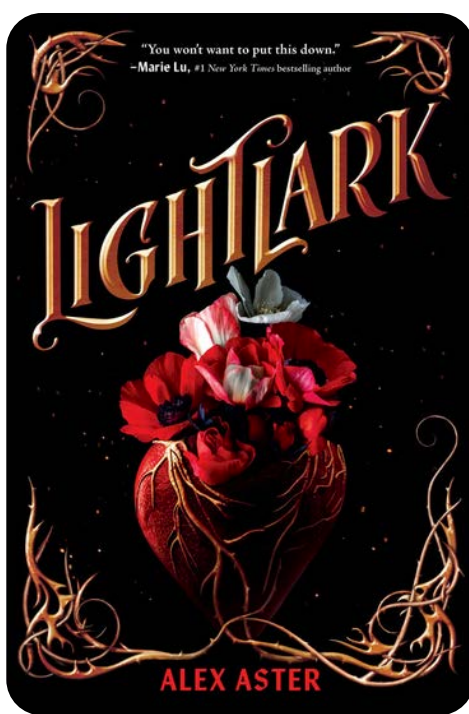
GENRE: HISTORICAL FANTASY

### Book Review:

The Witch Haven by Sasha Peyton Smith is about 17-year-old Frances Hallowell. After the mysterious drowning of her brother, Frances finds a job as a seamstress. When Frances is attacked at her job, suddenly, within a blink of an eye, scissors are in the attacker's neck. Right before the cops can accuse her of being a murderer, nurses tell her she has to go to Haxahaven Sanitarium as she is contagious and ill. Frances finds that Haxahaven is not a sanitarium but a school for witches. She is taught that magic is dangerous and learns how to control it. Secretly, Frances meets Finn, a magical boy who teaches her lessons, which she can only hope will help her find out what happened to her brother.

I really enjoyed the mystery part of Frances' brother's death and the plot twists, but I wish there was more about magic. My favorite character is Frances because of how determined she is to find out what happened to her brother and how caring she is to her friends and the people around her. Toward the end, I was a bit confused about what was happening, but overall, I enjoyed this book.

I would recommend this to people who enjoy the concept of witches and magic and thriller books. This book can be compared to "Harry Potter" because of witches, wizards, and magic, but I think it's much different story-wise. The mystery/thriller was a lot of fun, and I know a lot of people would enjoy it.



# LIGHTLARK BY ALEX ASTER

CALL #

YA FIC ASTER

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

FANTASY

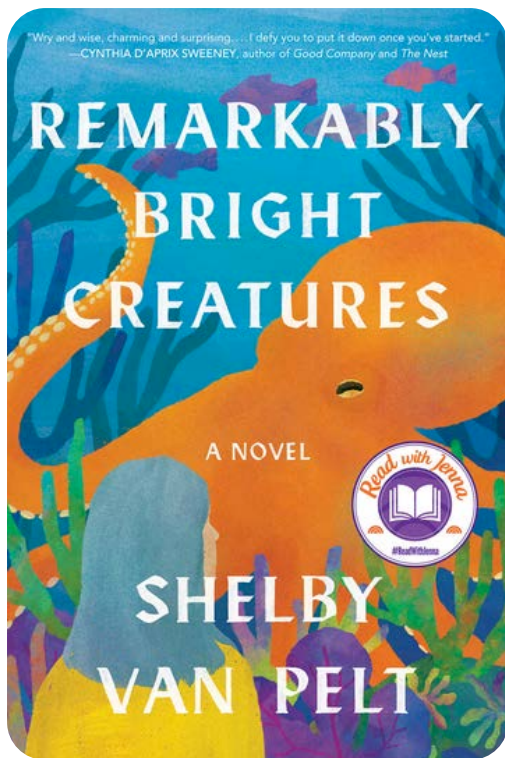
## Book Review:

Lightlark of the “Lightlark Saga” is a YA romantacy adventure novel by #1 New York Times bestselling author Alex Aster. As the first of a series, protagonist Isla Crown must embark on a dangerous journey in the deadly Centennial, a game that takes place every century on the island of Lightlark. In the world of Lightlark, there exists one grand island named Lightlark, but in a war between its six rulers, the island starts to crumble. In its wake, curses were spun that greatly affected each ruler’s kingdom, leading them to flee. The Centennial was created by the six originals for their heirs to one day break the curses by solving the prophecy and gain immeasurable power, and Isla is determined to save her people and possibly herself.

Although I agree the plot is very interesting, I feel that Lightlark’s worldbuilding should have some brushup. The lower rating I gave stems from the idea of Centennial since the whole aspect of it is a deadly “game,” much of the book describes it as nothing like that but more of a gathering to show power.

The six originals, who sacrificed themselves for the new rulers, must solve the prophecy together, yet the prophecy gives only eternal power to the one who solves it first? I feel there would be a better way to describe Centennial than a game. Since each ruler has a kingdom, and every kingdom bears a curse, I think the curses currently placed on each kingdom are unfairly varied. It is clear that some kingdoms have easier curses than others. Take Moonling and Starling curses, for example; the sea becomes deadly hostile to Moonlings during every full moon, and Starlings all die before the age of 25. One curse is easily avoidable, while the other is inevitable. I think the curses should all be the same level of deadly, making the plot more intricate and interesting for the reader. Another point I find confusing is the past of Lightlark. It becomes an underwritten plot hole of the story that I think is crucial to understanding Lightlark as a whole, even if the book focuses on what Lightlark might become in the future.

As a whole, I enjoyed this book, and it wasn’t until I did some deep analysis that I decided to lower its rating. The plot was interesting and complex enough for me to read this all the way through with little stops. To anyone who likes a good romantacy trilogy with a magic system, Lightlark is a good choice. I also think people who like dystopian novels like Red Queen and Hunger Games might also like this pick, though Lightlark is carried on the idea of magic more than anything.



# REMARKABLY BRIGHT CREATURES BY SHELBY VAN PELT

CALL #

FIC VAN PELT

COLLECTION:

FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

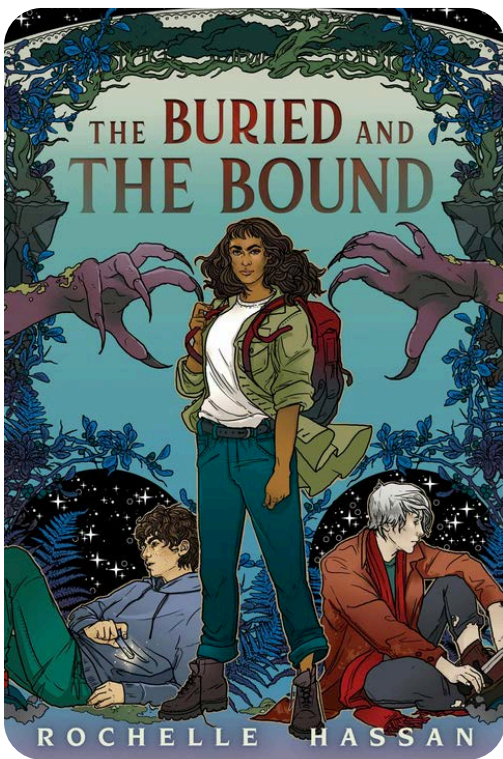
RELATIONSHIP FICTION

## **Book Review:**

Remarkably Bright Creatures, by Shelby Van Pelt is a story about loss and loneliness and the power of connection and observation. The novel follows Tova, a widow who spends her time cleaning at night at the Sowell Bay Aquarium after her 18-year-old son mysteriously disappeared. There, she has become acquainted with Marcellus, the giant Pacific octopus, who is intelligent beyond belief and quite the detective. As Marcellus and Tova grow a bond, she starts to realize that maybe he knows something about the mysteries in her life that she didn't anticipate.

This story is filled with incredible character dynamics and growth. The diverse display of characters ensures that every reader can at least resonate with one character, one situation. The themes throughout, such as the importance of observation and sympathy, are all important to read and discuss. Though some characters are unpleasant and none are perfect, they all felt like people, making the story so much more relatable. But aside from the messages, this book was also a fun read. The unraveling of mysteries and connections was well done, and unlike any other mystery I've read before. Though the reveal was a little predictable, I still thoroughly enjoyed the author's methods.

I'd recommend this book to anybody looking for a good, deep read. Although it reads more like a character study than a mystery, it is still entertaining and captivating. It may take more time than your average beach read, but I think it's worth giving it a shot!



# THE BURIED AND THE BOUND BY ROCHELLE HASSAN

CALL #: YA FIC HASSAN

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

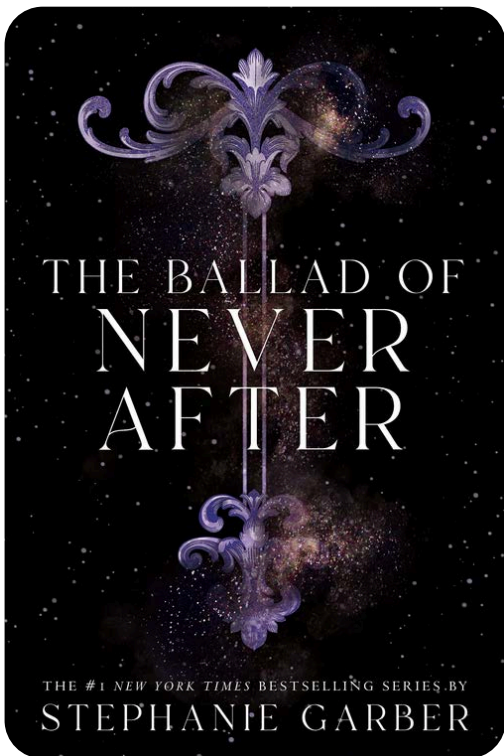
FANTASY

## Book Review:

The Buried and the Bound is about a girl named Aziza, who is a type of witch called a hedgewitch. She protects a town called Blackthorn by closing the boundary between the human world and the fairy world (Elphame). She meets a guy named Leo, who is cursed, and a guy named Tristan, who is bound by a creature called a hag. Aziza and Leo patrol the town every night together to ensure the safety of its residents. This book is part of a trilogy, but only the second book, The Summer Queen, is written as of 2024.

I thought this book was really good. I liked that something was always going on, and it kept me interested and excited to read more. Also, I liked that the book switched perspectives between the three main characters, which was good because it felt like a different perspective on the story every time. I really liked everything about this book. My favorite character was Tristan because he was a necromancer; this meant he could control these big hounds and revive corpses. This book made me feel great.

I would definitely recommend this book. I thought it was great; the characters were well done and had depth to them, and there were layers to the story. I think anyone who likes a story centered around magic and mystery would really enjoy this book, but this story has loads of action, too. I thought this book was really unique and fun; I couldn't think of any other books like this one.



# THE BALLAD OF NEVER AFTER BY STEPHANIE GARBER

CALL #: YA FIC GARBER

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING: 

GENRE: EPIC FANTASY; PARANORMAL ROMANCES

## **Book Review:**

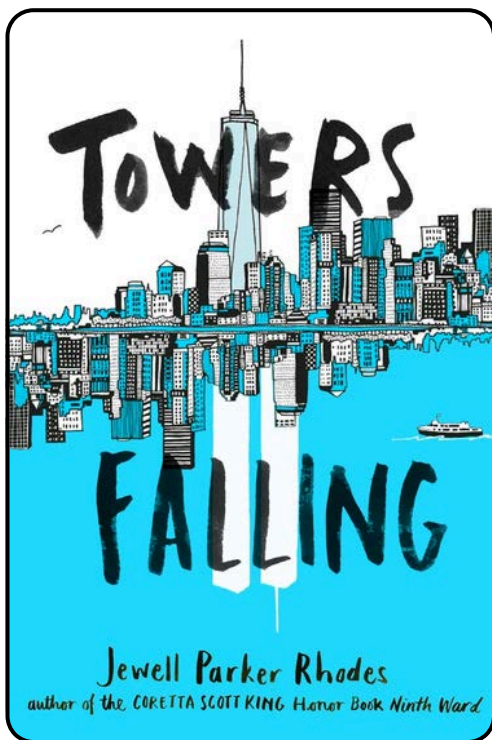
The Ballad of Never After is the second book in the series “Once Upon a Broken Heart” written by author Stephanie Garber. The main character of this series is still the heroine Evangeline, who is still wallowing in pain after being betrayed by her first love.. To escape the pains of the past and heal her deeply damaged heart, Evangeline decides to turn to Jacks. This reunion is not only to save him but also to find peace for herself.

Fate is always the most magical thing; they end up in a common mission, and along the way, Evangeline continues to face betrayal and hurt from the people she trusts the most. This makes her feel lonely and difficult to trust anyone. Jacks is a character with a cold and mysterious appearance, but he always shows up at the right time to help Evangeline. It makes Evangeline feel like Jacks still loves her, but at the same time, it reminds her of past traumas. Although they have feelings for each other, they both try to hide their true feelings because they know that the relationship may not have a good ending, especially due to Jacks’ curse.

The Ballad of Never After delves into Evangeline’s inner self between wanting to trust Jacks and fearing being hurt again. They both face great challenges and have to make difficult decisions emotionally and trustingly. I think this book is much more engaging than the first one. Because of this part, the character lines are developed more deeply. It shows the deeply hurt side of the protagonist, Evangeline. Evangeline became smarter, and her communication with Jacks was much better. The plot is also more complex and engaging, so if you find the first one a bit slow, this one will definitely make up for that.

If you like the Young Adult genre with a touch of romance, I highly recommend reading this story. This book features stressful situations, exciting worlds, and characters that you’ll really be interested in.





# TOWERS FALLING

## BY

### JEWELL PARKER RHODES

CALL #: J FIC RHODES

COLLECTION: J FICTION

RATING: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

GENRE: REALISTIC FICTION

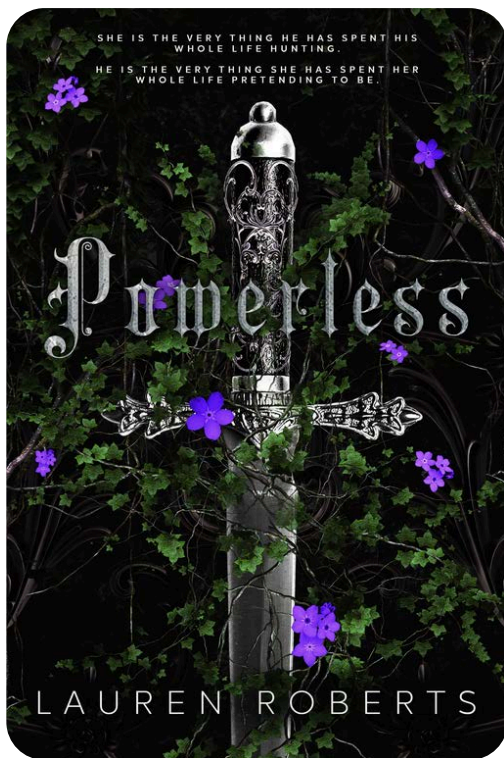
#### Book Review:

The book, Towers Falling, is a historical fiction novel about a 10-year-old girl named Deja. It follows her journey as she learns about the tragic events of 9/11. Starting school in a new neighborhood is already challenging for Deja. When she is given an assignment about the Twin Towers, she sets out on a journey to understand what happened on that day. With her friends, Ben and Sabeen, Deja discovers more about herself, her community, and what it means to be an American. However, the more she learns, the more questions arise. Why does her Pop become so upset when she mentions the Twin Towers? Why is Sabeen so sensitive about the subject?

This book is very informative. You learn about the event of 9/11 along with Deja. It very nicely goes into detail about what happened and how people were affected by the event. The author gives some historical context and personal stories, which add depth to the narrative. The book also causes a variety of emotions in the reader. We feel sadness, empathy, happiness, and surprise throughout the book. It is an emotional rollercoaster. Though it is full of emotion, the storyline of the book is quite dull, and it doesn't have any twists or turns. Some people may find it boring or uneventful. It also drags details in quite a few places, making it less interesting. The book is not for teens who are looking for a fun and exciting read. However, it covers the events of 9/11 wonderfully.

Towers Falling is a well-written and informative book that addresses the sensitive topic of 9/11 through the eyes of a young protagonist. While it may lack the excitement and thrill found in other young adult novels, it succeeds in providing valuable historical context and emotional depth. I would recommend this book to young readers who are interested in learning about historical events straightforwardly, particularly for those within the 9-12 age range. Overall, Towers Falling is a thought-provoking and educational read that explains the impact of historical events on individuals and communities.





# POWERLESS

## BY

# LAUREN ROBERTS

CALL #

YA FIC ROBERTS

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

ROMANTASY

### Book Review:

The book, Powerless, by Lauren Roberts whisks you away to the slums, where an 18-year-old Ordinary girl named Paedyn Gray lives. For the last 5 years living there, she's been acting as a Psychic so that she blends in with the other Elites and doesn't get caught. She lives with her best friend, Adena, and steals food and goods in Loot Alley in order to survive. After she accidentally saves one of the Ilya's princes, she finds herself attending the Trials, where they compete and showcase their Elite powers, which Paedyn lacks. In order to finish the Trials, she must fight and keep up with the Psychic act so that the princes and other people living in the kingdom of Ilya don't discover that she's an Ordinary.

This book was very enjoyable and diverting to read. It had a huge amount of fighting and romantic scenes that made me feel very interested while reading it. It was an easy book to understand, and I liked how they wrote the book, which had a few cliffhangers and made me have to continue reading until the very end. My favorite character would probably be Paedyn since she is brave and confident but also loving when she spends time with her best friend, Adena.

I would recommend this book to all teens. It's amazing and gives you chills when you read it. This book is straightforward and easy to read, so people won't have trouble trying to understand the plot while reading it. Whoever wants to get taken on an adventure, fight to survive, and feel love should take a chance on reading this wonderful book.