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Mechanica



Synopsis

Nicolette's awful stepsisters call her "Mechanica" to demean her, but the nickname fits: she learned to be an inventor at her mother's knee. Her mom is gone now, though, and the Steps have pushed her into a life of dreary servitude. When she discovers a secret workshop in the cellar on her sixteenth birthday and befriends Jules, a tiny magical metal horse, Nicolette starts to imagine a new life for herself. And the timing may be perfect: There's a technological exposition and a royal ball on the horizon. Determined to invent her own happily-ever-after, Mechanica seeks to wow the prince and eager entrepreneurs alike.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

****THIS REVIEW CONTAINS SPOILERS**** Mechanica is a Cinderella retelling with a steampunk element, a heroine that can fix and build all kinds of things, a POC love interest, and an extremely adorable mechanical mini horse as sidekick. Sounds really good, right? And it was, for about 80% of the story, but the last couple of chapters ruined it for me. But let me go back to the positives, I liked the protagonist, Nicolette, from the very start, she's one of those heroines who will never stop to feel sorry for themselves--no matter how bad things are, and I admired her for it. Her determination, her spirit, the fact that she not only hopes for a better life but does something about it, and how she works SO HARD, my goodness, I was exhausted just from reading about it. On top

of all the chores she has to do around the house every single day, plus the errands for her stepmother and stepsisters (the Steps, like Nicolette calls them), she always finds the time for her own outrageous projects, to go sell her stuff at the market, to make friends and plan things with them--truly remarkable. I was also pretty intrigued by the fantasy element in this story, Nicolette's late mother used to build these mechanical creatures out of plain materials--metal, glass--but then somehow they became sentient, to the point that, the people who bought them sometimes treated them as pets, and when Nicolette finds her mother's workshop, she comes across a substance that she believes was her mother's secret "ingredient" for the creatures, and I was so into this, I wanted to know everything about it, where did it come from and how did she get it? What was it exactly? How does it work? And why? I kept waiting for an explanation but it never came. At some point Nicolette even starts using the substance, and still no explanation is given to the reader. Other aspect of this story that I felt like was lacking was everything to do with the Steps--apart from one or two scenes, they're basically not even present, Nicolette certainly talks about them, about the wicked things they say and do, and about the endless list of jobs they demand from her every day, but there are hardly any scenes where one can actually see the Steps being horrible. Plus, we never get to see their reaction to Nicolette's success, because they kind of disappear altogether from the story towards the end. Now, the thing that bothered me the most: the romance. I'm sorry but it was just... so... wrong. Especially for a story that's inspired in a fairy-tale. Truthfully, I don't need fluffy happy ever afters, I don't even need romance in a story (though I prefer that it is there and that it makes me cry and laugh and almost sends my heart into cardiac arrest with joy), but if there is romance, I need it to *at least* have some kind of consistency, to make sense, to not leave me confused and thinking What the hell just happened...? Well, guess what happened with *Mechanica*? -.'The romance is not a strong element to begin with, Nicolette falls for her love interest after seeing him maybe twice, and even though I wasn't entirely happy with this, I kept saying to myself that insta-love happens all the time in fairy-tales, and that the story focuses on Nicolette's journey to be free and independent anyway, but it's hard to keep making excuses when all Nicolette suddenly can think about is this boy and how she's so in love with him. The worst was still to come though, ***and please stop reading this review now if you don't want spoilers, because I can't go on expressing my frustration regarding the romance without spoiling it*** because this love interest barely shows any strong feelings for Nicolette, but still, in what feels like a completely random scene, asks her to marry him, and get this, at that point Nicolette had realized that maybe he loved another girl too, their good friend Caro, and

she asks him about it... and that's when he starts telling this incredibly touching tale of how "there hasn't been a single moment in my life when I haven't loved Caro" and how "I fell in love with her before I could speak, before I could think". WHAAAAAT??... he goes on and on about his love for this other girl, and he wants Nicolette too. IMAGINE MY HORROR. I abhor love triangles of any kind, and this one was particularly offensive to me because 1. it just appeared, suddenly, out of nowhere, without a warning whatsoever, 2. the guy (and Nicolette) thinks it's okay??, and 3. when later Nicolette talks about this whole situation with Caro, Caro is like, Oh it's fine! So what if he likes us both, and we both like him? Maybe one day we will fall in love with someone else, or maybe we'll always love him, doesn't matter! What matters is that we stay bffs forever! The three of us!! kid you not, this is more or less how the thing goes, and I could barely believe my eyes--what happened to the story I was enjoying so much... ? What happened?? I understand that with retellings there's always the need for plot twists, especially with fairy-tales, I mean, we've all heard these stories being retold so many times before, but in this case, in terms of the romance, and how the whole thing comes together in the end, with all its twists and turns, is wide of the mark for me. It's a bizarre ending, to say the least, totally anticlimactic, and like I said before, ruined the book for me.

I'm actually pretty surprised by the lower ratings for this book, but I guess this is the type of book that will win some people over and be a loss for others. You definitely have to like the story of Cinderella and steampunk elements in order to enjoy this one. That being said, I greatly enjoyed this refreshing retelling of Cinderella. It wasn't anything new (it's very similar to the Disney version of Cinderella with a few deviations and steampunk), but I think that's what I enjoyed about it. It read like a classic fairy-tale, and while Ms. Cornwell could have gone off and created a whole new world, I liked that she stuck true to the original story. She added just enough steampunk that fans of the genre would enjoy the story, but it wasn't overwhelming that it distracted from the story. Overall, this can be enjoyed by anyone and everyone, and I think it's worth checking out. The story follows Nicolette, or Nick for short. She is following in her mother's footsteps and is a mechanic, making mechanical animals and gadgets with the aid of magic. Nick, who is later nicknamed Mechanica by her stepsisters, is forced to endure their cruelty, with only the friendship of her mechanical creations to keep her company, that is until 2 unlikely friends enter her life. I think you can guess the rest of the story (or can you?) There are some twists in the story, and I did enjoy the ending, which featured a very drastic deviation from the classic story. Nick was a great main character. She was strong and didn't let her stepsisters or stepmother get her down. Nick kept going and never gave up. She had her goals, and I liked that she stuck to them. I loved all of her mechanical friends, but Jules

was my absolute favorite. I would love to have a Jules of my own! I think Nick's relationship with every character in this book was great and Ms. Cornwell wrote these relationships very well. I don't want to spoil anything with the romance in this book, but while some people didn't like this part of the book, I found it very refreshing and I greatly enjoyed it. I think it took guts to do what Ms. Cornwell did, and it was a risk that paid off in my opinion. It gave the story a more realistic feeling, at least to me. I won't lie, there were some slow parts, and the book could have done without them. But, this was still a great story that is a quick read. For the right person, a Steampunk Cinderella will be the perfect fit. If you're intrigued by the concept, check this one out. I really enjoyed it, and would highly recommend it! Happy reading :)

Very loosely based on Cinderella, *Mechanica* is based on a girl who is very mechanically inclined. She inherited that gift from her mother who was an inventor. Both of her parents have passed away and, as you can guess, *Mechanica* now lives with her evil step mother and step sisters. That story may seem overly familiar to you, but *Mechanica* does have its own story to tell based on science and friendship and fairy lore. The novel takes place in a world where humans, who have oppressed faeries, now fear their magic and differences. This is a story that you have not read before. I enjoyed reading the book, however there were times when the pace lagged or the plot became a bit jagged. I thought the ending came too easy; there was no huge climax between the protagonist and antagonist and the one event that *Mechanica* works so hard for is glossed over. It is clear that there is more to the story than what you are told in this book. Yes, I see a trilogy in *Mechanica's* future. My favorite characters in this story were the supporting ones, especially a particular horse. But I was truly disappointed in two of the characters at the end, not because of the plot twist, but because they were willing to settle for less and were very casual about it. I had come to expect more from them both. It will be interesting to see how this series unfolds. I am most interested in how social justice will come about and how the author defines love and friendship.

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