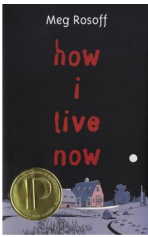


how i live now



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If you are looking for an antidote to the Hunger Games mania, as I was this past week, this less-action-oriented Young Adult dystopia might be worth a read. A 2004 Printz Award and British Guardian Children's Fiction Prize winner, the story is written from the perspective of Daisy, a 15 year-old girl from a not-too-distant future set New York City, who is sent to live with her cousins in the English countryside to get away from her father, her unliked stepmother, and their newborn child. Almost as soon as she is there, the country is invaded and war breaks out, leaving Daisy and her cousins to fend for themselves in what can only be said, without spoiling the plot, to be a truly harrowing experience.

While I had some personal nitpicks with the narrative, I mainly liked this book because it is without any supernatural elements or glossy romantic triangle (though it does include some gruesome descriptions of violence and its effects, as well as a rather disconcerting romantic relationship). The main character is a strongly written one, because she is the 'head we are in' throughout the entirety of the book. It reads as if Daisy is telling us the story conversationally, out loud, with a frequently sarcastic and guarded adolescent tone. The rural setting is a descriptive focus, sometimes presented as a respite from the details of the war being fought nearby (and Daisy's previous city life). Its themes of self-discovery through forced maturity are universally relatable, but of heightened interest by the obvious perils of war. Daisy's view of her pre-war troubles (anorexia and medicated anxiety are hinted at) are reflected on as trivial by comparison, sending a nice post-ironic message of perspective to her YA readers. At just shy of 200 pages, it is a quick read. The newly released, middlingly reviewed, oddly R-rated movie starring Saorise Ronan doesn't seem to be coming to our neck of the woods (thanks, AMC), but it is on video-on-demand already and will probably be out on home video in the Spring (while it follows the basic story, there are, as is to be expected, some significant changes from book to screen).

Though a bit more apocalyptic story-wise, parts of this book reminded me of the more recent The Age of Miracles. For more recommendations, take a look at one of our book lists on Young Adult Dystopian Fiction.

Posted by Brandon R. on December 2, 2013

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