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The Selection



Synopsis

The first book in the captivating, #1 New York Times bestselling Selection series! Discover a breathless fairy-tale romance with swoon-worthy characters, glittering gowns, fierce intrigue, and a dystopian world that will captivate readers who loved Veronica Roth's *Divergent*, Ally Condie's *Matched*, and Lauren Oliver's *Delirium*. For thirty-five girls, the Selection is the chance of a lifetime. The opportunity to escape a rigid caste system, live in a palace, and compete for the heart of gorgeous Prince Maxon. But for America Singer, being Selected is a nightmare. It means turning her back on her secret love with Aspen, who is a caste below her, and competing for a crown she doesn't want. Then America meets Prince Maxon and realizes that the life she's always dreamed of may not compare to a future she never imagined.

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Customer Reviews

I'm rating this book purely on my enjoyment of it and not on some scale deciding whether it was great literature or not. It's fluff and I loved it. So IF your favorite part of the Hunger Games was the lead-up to the actual Games (the interviews and dresses and stuff), and IF you can forgive superficial world-building (possibly with the promise of something more later in the trilogy), and IF you like stories about matchmaking reality shows (even if you don't like actually watching them), and IF you aren't tired of the trope where the prince falls in love with the girl who makes it clear that she's the only girl around who isn't in love with him and his title (usually by telling him off), THEN you will really like this book. These are all things I like (or forgive in the case of world-building). I

don't know why, but I love reality show stories, even though I'm not a fan of most reality tv beyond the occasional performance show (singers, dancers, etc.). From the sample I had on my Kindle, I totally got the Hunger Games meets The Bachelor vibe (not realizing that that was how the book was marketed, lol). But it's really dystopian-lite. The caste system could be easily replaced by the districts in HG, but that's really all the dystopia there is. That's fine because I don't need heavy dystopia in my dystopia. Instead, as far as the first book goes, the royal family seems perfectly reasonable. There are rebels, and we don't know anything about them except that they're searching the palace for something (I predict it has something to do with the symbol Gavril, the Ryan-Seacrest-of-this-world, was wearing that was mentioned very very briefly). I would assume that eventually they're going to kidnap America and we'll see their side and the actual dystopia, but that doesn't happen here. Instead we have a princely prince and not a corrupt government, and so it's almost more The Bachelor meets Cinderella with a hint of Hunger Games. Some bad things: Some of the names are beyond ridiculous. America Singer, Tuesday Keeper, Tiny, Maxon, Aspen. These are the worst names I've ever seen in a YA. For a younger audience, they might have been fine. We also have some oddly similar names, such as Marlee, Mary, and May (plus Maxon). I also felt some inconsistency with America's character. She's a performer, but she spends the 2nd half of the book complaining about being in the spotlight. When she lashes out at Maxon the first couple times, it didn't ring true to me based on her earlier actions and thoughts. Some good things: The story really grabbed a hold of me and didn't let me go. I read the sample two nights ago, and then wished I had bought it all through work the next day. So I bought it as soon as I got home and read it overnight. The caste system might have sketchy world-building behind it, but it did make for an interesting dynamic between some of the characters (particularly America and the people of lower castes). I actually liked most of the major characters, including both love interests. I see a lot of potential for the rest of the trilogy to bring things in. I think there might have been some things that should have given more weight here, but the book worked well enough without them. The book doesn't finish on a cliffhanger so much, but the competition isn't over yet, and next book will enter a new stage of it. Recommended for people who love: dystopia-lite, the interview/dress-up portion of The Hunger Games, books about matchmaking reality shows, that prince-falls-for-the-girl-who-least-wants-him trope, books with ballgowns on the cover (easy to find these days), a bit of Cinderella, love triangles, crazy names, stuff going on behind the scenes that we'll find out in the next book, unresolved endings.

The cover is pretty but it's actually rather common in YA novels to have female protagonists

wear prom dresses and strike a pose. Despite that, this cover drew me in anyway. Like I said, it's really pretty. The entire time I was reading this book there were a million questions going through my head. My most prominent one was: Why would America give up being a republic democracy to become an absolute monarchy? Not even a constitutional monarchy either (which would still be unbelievable but more believable than an absolute monarchy). As a Brit, we never even had an absolute monarchy, so why would America (the country) have one? It makes no sense. I know this book presents itself as "The Hunger Games meets The Bachelor" but honestly I just have a hard time believing this book. If I have a hard time believing a book, I have a hard time reading it. I admit this book was difficult to read. Here are ten reasons why:

- One "The main character's name. America Singer. I hear groans and see people roll their eyes every time I see or hear the name. Firstly, in this new country named Ilea (formerly USA) why would they allow a child born anywhere to be named after the former regime? In a real dystopian novel, they probably wouldn't. The Hunger Games had ridiculous names too but it was just so far in the unspecified future that nobody really bats an eyelash. She was probably just named America because in one scene she is in the palace reflecting on...stuff and thinks to herself, "there was no freedom here." That's it. No real symbolism. It just kind of felt like forced symbolism.
- Two "Although it presents itself as a dystopian fiction novel, there is no plot about that to speak of. This entire novel revolves around romance. Somehow writers today seem to think that the idea of finding true love constitutes a plot and therefore the absence of a real plot will go unnoticed.
- Three "The war the USA had with China. It's clear the author has no understanding of economics or international relations. China wouldn't go to war with America. The Chinese and Americans depend too much on one another to actually go to war. War is a costly endeavour and I think these two sides would like to avoid that path. If China wants their money back they wouldn't go to war, it costs money.
- Four "The caste system in this book didn't make sense to me. Apparently, people have numbers that determine their rank and everybody is born into that rank. America and her family, the Singers, are fives, which means they are entertainers or musicians. Which probably makes them middle class. Given the status of entertainers in current times, I find it hard to believe this. Why is entertainer even a caste? Talent in music or acting or any performing art isn't hereditary. Also, being an actor or musician is a craft that can be learned, so why is it even a caste? I'm poking holes again. When (seventeen-year-old) America gets "selected" she then becomes a "three". But her family are still fives. It doesn't make sense to me either, but then again this caste system doesn't make sense. It's just so arbitrary. And one can

actually buy their way up the caste system in this book. So the idea of a caste system at all is kind of rendered moot because money would be more important than title. Like in today's society.

Five " If the USA did become a monarchy called Ilea, why would they have a competition to see who would marry the princes? If I learned anything from European history, it's that European monarchs often chose who their children will marry and marriage will always benefit the family or the country. If this book were realistic, then the princes wouldn't have a competition to decide who to marry, their parents would have chosen the brides based on the girls' status and/or her family's wealth. In this book, the Ilea princesses marry foreign princes but the Ilea princes get to choose their brides. Double standard much?

Six " America complains about how ugly she is but everybody actually thinks she's beautiful. This is just so overused in YA novels today that calling it a cliché wouldn't be enough. How about super-cliché? And on top of that, the author goes out of her way to show that America is not in fact ugly. She's the best looking girl around. Because when she goes to the palace, she doesn't need a makeover like all the other girls because she is so naturally beautiful. All the other girls need dye jobs, and waxing, and hair extensions, and whatever but America doesn't because she is so naturally beautiful. *sarcasm*

Seven " Aspen. He is America's love interest in this book. She doesn't want to enter her name in to be selected but when Aspen asks her to do it just because, she does it. Seriously. She doesn't do it for her family or for fun or for money (which any three would have made more sense), she did it because a guy told her to. What a role model. If it were me I would have thought he's just doing it because he wants to get rid of me. Also, Aspen breaks it off with her. (Saying he isn't good enough, but whatever.) I guess she doesn't take the hints because she's all mopey over him. For most of the book. He eventually shows up again...at the palace...as a guard. That's...convenient. (Whatever, I'll ignore that part.) Well, he tells her it was a big mistake to break up with her and he misses her. She falls back into his arms. Really swell role model here, huh? *sarcasm*

Eight " America is kind of a brat (substitute another 'b' word here). First, she doesn't do anything to help her family (remember? she joined the selection because a guy asked her to not because she wanted her family to do better). Secondly, in her first meeting with the prince she physically harms him because he had the audacity to call her my dear. *sarcasm* Okay, I would understand if he was saying it like he was claiming ownership of her and she hurt him but when he approached her he seemed genuinely concerned for her well-being and was just inquiring if she was well. He was just being polite and in my opinion, that adds to America's brattiness.

Eventually, and despite that incident, they develop a friendship and she later gets kind of bratty when he kisses other girls even though she told him she wasn't interested. Brat. I know this is supposed to show that she's actually developing feelings for him but at the same time she keeps wangsting about Aspen (the one who dumped her). She also lacks any of the survival instincts true dystopian YA heroines have (Katniss, Tris, etc.) and everything about her (her personality, her values, her beliefs, her aspirations) are defined by the MEN around her. I think the first time she ever makes a choice is at the end of the novel where she breaks up with Aspen.

Nine
“ In the story, one girl had a breakdown when the rebels attacked the palace. It turns out she was raped. And this backstory is never mentioned again. Like ever. Never. I think rape is one of the worst crimes. I can't imagine what rape survivors go through. I admire their strength and I admire the men and women who catch rapists and put them behind bars. But what really gets me angry here is that rape is used as a backstory and no thought is ever given to it again. It's just some plot device and not even used well. It's really insulting. I wanted to throw the book when I was finished and realised that. It's so shameless the way it's used here.

Ten
“ Very little politics in this dystopian novel. The rebels were a constant threat throughout the novel but not a real threat because the palace is fortified against them for the most part. The first whiff I got of politics is when America and Prince Maxon are discussing the caste system and she basically tells him that poverty equal hunger. So after Maxon hears about this, he decides to raise taxes. A really dumb political move. Obviously not thought out (by the author) political move. Despite it being an absolute monarchy, a prince (and someday king) needs the support of the higher castes or the lower castes or religion. So he needs the backing of the nobles or the people or whatever-religion-is-dominant in this novel. Well, there is no religion and he pretty much just burned his bridges with the nobles and he doesn't even know how the people feel. See? So many flaws in this novel. The politics in this dystopian novel is so poorly thought out. Or rather, not thought out at all.

Bonus
“ Telling, not showing. We are told this is a dystopian novel but nothing much in this novel seems to indicate that. America and her family are said to be poor but they have a servant (of a lower class, but still) and own a working television they eat popcorn while watching it and America even has her own bedroom (not even Katniss had her own bedroom in the first book). It felt like everything in this book was told, not shown. This doesn't sound like a dystopian novel at all. This sounds like some teenage fantasy. It's so superficial and shallow that I weep for the girl who read this and take it to heart. I don't expect every book to be deep but this was all fluff and no meaning. For me, those are the worst kinds of book to read: ones without any meaning. This is the kind of book I would tell my friends to avoid. There was nothing that went

on in this book, so why did it end on a cliffhanger? It's just so boring and so bad. I didn't expect to be wowed by this book, but I also didn't expect to be so disappointed and regretful that I spent time reading this. Time I won't get back. It sounds like I'm harping on all the things wrong with this book but there's just not enough right with it (I don't think there's really anything right about it) for me to actually be okay that I spent time reading it. I bought this at a used bookstore for two dollars. Thank goodness it wasn't more, but I still regret spending money on this. This book lacks any heart and any substance.

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