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Jump to ratings and reviewsTwelve-year-old Sophie Foster has a secret. Shes a Telepathsomeone who hears the thoughts of everyone around her. Its a talent shes never known how to explain.Everything changes the day she meets Fitz, a mysterious boy who appears out of nowhere and also reads minds. She discovers theres a place she does belong, and that staying with her family will place her in grave danger. In the blink of an eye, Sophie is forced to leave behind everything and start a new life in a place that is vastly different from anything she has ever known.Sophie has new rules to learn and new skills to master, and not everyone is thrilled that she has come home. There are secrets buried deep in Sophies memorysecrets about who she really is and why she was hidden among humansthat other people desperately want. Would even kill for.In this page-turning debut, Shannon Messenger creates a riveting story where one girl must figure out why she is the key to her brand-new world, before the wrong person finds the answer first.GenresFantasyMiddle GradeYoung AdultFictionAdventureChildrensMagic 5424 people are currently reading90184 people want to readHi! I'm the NYT and USA today bestselling author of the KEEPER OF THE LOST CITIES series and the SKY FALL series! And yes, I DO accept friend requests here--BUT! Please note: I *never* check my private messages here, so if you send me one, you won't get a reply. My real contact information is on my website: shannonmessenger.comDisplaying 1 - 30 of 9,736 reviewsOctober 12, 2012Original review posted on The Book SmugglersTheas Take:There are two ends of the CG animated movie spectrum. On the one side, there are gems like Wall-E and Up and Toy Story. On the other, there are the lamentable films like Fly Me to the Moon, or Robots, or Shark Tale. Granted, many kids like all of these films and there is some entertainment value to find in each of them but theres a huge difference in storytelling skill and in quality.Unfortunately, Keeper of the Lost Cities falls deep on the Shark Tale end of the MG/YA spectrum. A poor mans Harry Potter, featuring a super special snowflake of a heroine, Keeper of the Lost Cities is a sadly disappointing and frequently laughable dud.But lets start at the beginning, shall we? From the synopsis, this novel seems like it would be about a telepathic twelve year old girl that discovers secrets about her family, her true birthright, and her abilities. Right? What Keeper of the Lost Cities delivers instead is a story about ultra-beautiful, ultra-intelligent, ultra-magical elves (yes, elves), whose existence is secret from disgusting humans. It then morphs into Harry Potter knock-off land, complete with a prestigious, secret and ultra selective academy for young prodigious elves, with classes in specialized areas like alchemy and telepathy. Oh yeah, and it turns out that Sophie Foster, our protagonist, is not only superduper desirable (a humble twelve year old, but already commanding the attentions of fifteen year olds) but possesses unparalleled power and is The One who can Save them All.I could go on and on, so let me just focus on the three areas that bothered me the most regarding Keeper of the Lost Cities: the blase treatment/combo of science and magic, Sophies super specialness (and unconvincing nature as a character), and the unabashed Harry Potter ripoffs.Lets start with Science and Magic. When its done well, I love a speculative fiction book that blends fantasy elements with sci fi, magic with hard science. This is, I suspect, what Shannon Messenger attempted to accomplish in this novel. Unfortunately, it just doesnt work. From very early on in the book, we learn that even the slowest elf can still trump a human and that elves, apparently, know ALL the things about genetics and DNA and relative physics, but say this isnt science OR magic. As heartthrob elf Fitz tells our heroine Sophie:This ismagic? Fitz laughed a full body laugh, like it was the funniest thing hed ever heard [...] No, he said when hed regained control. Magic is a stupid idea humans came up with to try to explain things they couldnt understand.But in the next breath, when Fitz starts to describe the impossible apparating speed-of-light travel, he tells Sophie that elves light leap:He held the pathfinder up to the sun, casting a ray of light onto his hand. Light leaping. We hitched a ride on a beam of light that was headed straight here. Thats impossible [...] You need infinite energy for light travel. Havent you heard of the theory of relativity? She thought she had him stumped with that one, but he just laughed again. Thats the dumbest thing Ive ever heard.No further explanation, until a few pages later, when Fitz tells Sophie:This is how the world really works. Its not magic. Its just how it is.Well THAT explains everything, then. In this type of setting, magic would be completely acceptable as an explanation for feathered dinosaur pets, catching lightning in a bottle, using elderberries to transmutate iron, and so on. But instead, Keeper of the Lost Cities insists on not-science science, not-magic magic, and the end result is, well, ridiculous.Which brings me to my next gripe: Sophie, the Special Snowflake. When we first meet Sophie, we learn that she is twelve years old, telepathic, possessing a photographic memory, and a high school senior that has been accepted at Yale University. We also learn that she is the prettiest girl in school, that she is an unprecedentedly powerful telepath, sickeningly sweet and good, and everyone rushes to her aid at slightest provocation. And I just want to include this quote, because Ana and I both had a good laugh when we read it:Her family couldnt be her family. She took a deep breath and let the reality settle in. The strange thing was, in some ways it made sense. It explained why she always felt so out of place around them the slender blonde among her chubby brunette family.Oh WOE! WOE! The life of a slender blonde in a chubby brunette family.And then, finally, theres the big whopping Harry Potter Ripoff problem. Ill make this easy: as soon as Sophie gets to Elfland, she hears that she has been invited to attend a prestigious academy for aspiring young witches and wizards elves called Hogwarts Foxfire. The school is presided over by a benevolent headmaster Dumbledore Dame Alina, who also gets to pick the constantly changing sweet treat password sweet treat tasting flavor that unlocks every students locker (on day one, the flavor is Fizzing Whizbees Mallowmelt). Harry Sophie quickly makes friends with Hermione and Ron Marella and Dex, and Dex happens to be a mudblood bad match byproduct, meaning that his parents were muggles non-noble elves. While at school, Sophie excels and is a natural at almost all of her subjects, except for potions alchemy (Professor Snape Lady Galvin seems to really have it out for Sophie for some reason).And on and on the list goes. Ill stop here, though. While Im certain there are many people out there that will enjoy Keeper of the Lost Cities, this book failed to work for me on any level.Anas Take:Yes, to all that. Thea covered basically everything I wanted to say and I dont have a lot more to add but here is my two cents. Keeper of the Lost Cities is a ridiculous book and I wish I could just make fun of it, disregard it simply as a bad book experience and think no more of it. But this is such a blatant, poor imitation of Harry Potter with the addition of extremely uncomfortable Racefail that I must look at it from a serious perspective.I do not have anything to add to Theas assessment of Sophie but I have a couple of things to add to her other areas of concern the Magic x Science conundrum and the Harry Potter Ripoffs.With regards to the former, my main problem with the ridiculous not-science science and not-magic magic is that it results in a complete lack of internal logic and that is a way too big a flaw in the very construction of the story. The idea that the elves dont know a lot about the human world is reinforced throughout the story elves often wonder what a dollar is or what is France. They also insist that what they do is not science. And yet the very human scientific concept of DNA and genetics research is at the very centre of this story.Regarding the clear Harry Potter Ripoff, I can add a lot more to Theas breakdown:All wizards elves perform spells have gifts and Harry Sophie soon learns that there are three Unforgivable Curses gifts that are frowned upon: the deadly Killing Curse, the Cruciatus Curse and the Imperius Curse the deadly Pyrokineticsm, Infliction and Mermerizing. She also learns to play the wizards elven game of Quidditch Catch and that there are other people who dont really like her like the snobby Lucius Cassius.I wish I was kidding.And that brings me to my last point the brown-skinned Gnomes who work for the Elves as their gardeners.This is a world in which the vast majority of elves are described as impossibly beautiful with fair skin (there is the odd olive skinned elf) and shiny blue/teal eyes. And where, even though everybody works, they do so because they want to because elves are rich and dont really need money. But basically the elves have important jobs but the Gnomes tend their gardens. And those are the only creatures within the novel described as brown-skinned. Then Sophia asks those Gnomes are servants and is promptly told off because of course the elves do not keep servants. The gnomes CHOOSE to live with the elves for their own protection and help them with their gardens because they enjoy it.The obliviousness to the real-life, historical and racial implication of this point is completely mind-blowing and what made me enraged rather than potentially amused by the book.In fairness, it is very possible that this might be addressed at some point in the series (after all, didnt Hermione Granger address the problem of the House-Elves in the Harry Potter series?) and some readers will probably not care about the similarities to HP or even appreciate it as homage of sorts I am not one of them. Finding the similarities between this and the Harry Potter books might actually have been fun if it wasnt so awkward plus the characterisation here is nowhere near as good as Rowlings endearing creations and this means that characters here are flat, thin, poorly constructed imitations.Ultimately this is what it boils down to: Keeper of the Lost Cities is not one of the worst books I have ever read but it is certainly one of the most laughable ones. And it made me despair that books like these even get to see the light of day. December 28, 2018Misericordia June 18, 2018Ridiculously good! I love it. And I imagine I would have been even more head-over-the-heels, had I gotten this one to read as a kid. Still, even for an adult, this is an immensely entertaining read. Complete with a new world, tidy loose endings wrapped up, likable protagonists, Harry-Potteresque schools... And Telepaths, Mesmers, Inflicters, Washers, Descryers, Atlantis, Exilium, Eternalia, Foxfire, prodigies, talent-based nobility, Dames and Sirs, society that had no death (almost!), Slurps and Burps (!), Moonlarks or suldreen), meganeuras, dwarves and knomes, and, of course, elves... Gosh!There are some influences and analogues ... and I love it. Duh! I loved HP books and a lot of the other analogues that could be traced and I'm positively enamoured with the KLC series. Q:Youre saying Im... an alien? Fitz erupted into laugher. Im saying youre an elf. (c)Q:They werent exactly fans of their resident child prodigy. They called her Curvebuster. (c)Q:Garwin was still bitter Yale had offered her a full scholarship. His rejection letter had arrived a few weeks before.Not that Sophie was allowed to go. (c)Q:Is that your magic wand? she couldnt resist asking.He rolled his eyes. Actually, its a pathfinder. (c)Q:Places this beautiful werent supposed to exist, much less appear out of thin air. (c)Q:It was so quiet there, just the gentle breeze brushing her face and the soft murmur of the river. No traffic, no chatter, no hammering, unspoken thoughts. She could get very used to the silence. But it felt strange, too. Like something was missing. (c)Q:Laws are rarely broken.Well, that was different. Humans broke the law all the time. (c)Q: Havent you heard of the theory of relativity? Thats the dumbest thing Ive ever heard. Who came up with that? (c)Q:Humans do the best they canbut their minds cant begin to comprehend the complexities of reality. (c)Q:Other babies learned to walk. You learned to pace. (c)Q:How long do elves live? ...We dont know, No ones died of old age yet. (c)Q:You seriously expect me to jump?I can push you if youd prefer. (c)Q:Humans are always doing crazy, dangerous things. If theyre not lighting something on fire, theyre spilling oil in the ocean or blowing something up. (c)Q:You can see my cells?Of course. Did you think I was wearing these glasses because they make me look dashing? (c)Q:Grady and Edaline train the animals to be vegetarians by feeding them gnomish produce; that way they wont hunt one another once theyre moved to the Sanctuary.Another roar interrupted their conversation. Whatever it was sounded like it wasnt happy about its new diet plan. (c)Q:Sophie cringed, hoping she wasnt about to watch her new guardian become lizard food. (c)Q:A gnome ran in during breakfast and yelled something about a manticore stinging a stegosaurus, and they both ran off.And people say my parents are weird. (c)Q:If she was good for them, maybe theyd want to keep her. (c)Q:If you werent so obviously alive, I would assume I was probing a dead mind. (c)Q:Dont mind Bullhorn, Elwin said as Sophie backed against the door. Hes harmless.Bullhorn looked like a demented ferret with beady purple eyes. What is he?A banshee. Adorable, isnt he? (c)Q:Lady Anwen told her in multispeciesial studies that she hadnt laughed so hard in 324 years. (c)Q:Your concentration controls how you use the energywhere you send it, how much you send. But the actual energy and strength comes from your core. Dont you feel the pull in your gut when you draw on it? ()Q:Potential is nothing if its never lived up to, now is it? (c)Q:Dex had been nagging her for months to try an elixir he invented called Nogginease, which contained limbium, a rare mineral that could supposedly clear her mind. Shed resisted, since she couldnt use it during the exams, but maybe it was like learning to ride a bike. She needed training wheels to start. (c)Q:It was hard to resist the urge to crawl under a rock and disappear for a decade or two. (c)best-ever favorites featured July 30, 2012Alright, I will start this off by saying that this book was written by my little sister....and for you to fully understand what this means I must explain a few things to you. Shannon has always been the over achiever in the family, she's younger than me, yet managed to graduate a couple days before me, 4.0 and valedictorian no less! She graduated college, which I never even went to, and she always manages to do things like change the lightbulbs, wear accessories and eyeliner, and bring a jacket (whereas I am hopeless in all these departments!=)) So when Shannon FINALLY let me read her book, I knew it would be good.....There was a tiny part of me though that didn't want to like it.....because...COME ON, she can't really be good at everything can she?? Well any hope I had of not liking it was gone by around page 50.....I was hooked, so hooked in fact that my noisy animals distracting me from my reading proved to be too much! So I got in my car and drove to the beach and spent all day sitting on the sand until I finished all 400 plus pages of it. It was good, really good. I won't go into the story, because it's hard to explain it, but it is really genuinely beautiful. It's witty and sharp and obviously extremely engrossing. The world that my sister has created here is pretty much, for lack of a better word (see I told you she is the smart one!) awesome. I can see why there is so much buzz building up for the release of this one! So all I have to say to everyone else is that you should pick up a copy just as soon as you can.....and to Shannon I can only tip my imaginary hat (I'm not nearly good enough with accessories to have a real hat!) and say good job little sister, you are clearly going to be a big success! PS....remember the little people when you do become a success.....Like when you are doing casting for the male actors in the movie that will undoubtably be made from this.....remember me....and my excellent spectating skills!=)March 12, 2024March 12, 2024Sophie & Edaline's relationship has my whole heart and Dex is my truest and strongest soldier for not being able to loosen his dislike towards Fitz. Never change, my boy. I'll always back you up.February 16, 2020This is the beautiful beginning of a new obsession. I just wanted to read a fun middle grade book, but I got something that totally blew my mind. I already orderd the next one when I was only halfway through, but I won't be able to calm down until it arrives!The characters are everything, although I don't trust anyone except my baby Dex. And when I say this book has the best found family (with parents), I don't lie. That is my favourite part of the whole story. Buddy read with Rue.April 19, 20222019: 5 gwiazdek2022: 4 gwiazdkiPrzez t ksik leci si z prdkoci wiata!December 31, 2019Rating: Though I nearly DNFed in the beginning (they're ELVES?! She's HARRY FREAKING POTTER?! THEY'RE ELVES?!?!), ultimately I was charmed by this middle grade fantasy.The cover: 99% of the reason I wanted this. LOOOOK at it! And at Sophie's oh-so-glorious middle grade hair. Let's pretend I looked like that at age 12.The story: I came so close to giving up on this one. I thought the beginning was a MESS. Normal-but-not-normal preteen girl suddenly discovers she is part of a magical world she never knew existed. Yeah, we've all read it before, but it's possible to pull this conceit off in a pretty original matter. Instead, for most of the beginning, I was rolling my eyes and saying, "Harry Potter. Ooh, that was Twilight-esque. OH MY GOD, THEY ARE *NOT* GOING TO A MAGICAL SHOPPING STREET AND INTO A MAGICAL POTIONS STORE CALLED SLURPS AND BURPS."Sophie is your average twelve-year-old high school senior who can read minds (bwahahahahaha). One day, on a school field trip, a hot fourteen-year-old boy comes up and tells her she doesn't belong in the human world. Sophie begs and begs to know why, and eventually Fitz, hottie extraordinaire despite the fact that he is named Fitz, tells her: she is an elf. Nope... Not quite... YEP THAT'S THE ONE I don't know why I snickered every time the world "elf" was on the page, but I did. It was so silly. Anyway, the world-building from this point on isn't bad, though it is, again, a little silly. The elves sequestered themselves away from the doomed, dirty humans a couple thousand years ago, retreating into the "lost" cities of Atlantis, Shangri-La, etcetera. Elves kind of suck for this. Anyway, Fitz shows up to find Sophie in the human world, and he's all:Because it turns out Sophie is the specialest little snowflake that you ever did see. Anything an elf can do, Sophie can do better. No, best. Sophie can do it backwards and upside down and with her eyes closed and when she was a fetus. It was quite exahausting to spend the whole beginning of the book discovering all ninety-thousand of Sophie's mystical gifts. "No elf in a thousand years has had THAT ability! No elf has ever had BROWN eyes! No elf has EVER made me want to commit suicide before!" Oops, I angered the pretty. Aw, I kid, Legolas, really. It wasn't that bad. I was just feeling grumpy, and the book wasn't working for me. We spend a LOT of time establishing the world and Sophie's awesomeness. Messenger actually broke my heart when Sophie had to say goodbye to her human family forever... but then she skips right past it, and Sophie, while thinking of her family every now and then, never feels that pain again. But then, things get better. Things pick up once Sophie finds a tentative, surrogate family, makes it past the Wizengamot elf council (which features one council memeber whose entire life mission is, inexplicably, to get Sophie exiled) and goes off to elfing school. "Elfing school? REALLY?" Yeah. Really, Legolas. But still, this is the point where the book gains a really delightful sense of humor. Sophie becomes less of an assortment of cool abilities and more of a sweet, earnest person, desperate to fit in somewhere and desperate to have a family. The friends she makes are what really sold the book for me. Dex the best friend is absolutely wonderful, even if he is one of 654323 male characters in love with Sophie. Keefe, who could be a Weasley triplet, is hilarious, and Fitz is pretty swoony for a pre-pubescent elf. "DAMN STRAIGHT. WE ELVES BE FINE" Never doubted it for a second, Legolas. And even though some Harry Potter parallels remain (oh, so you're known for getting sent to the hospital wing a lot, are you, Sophie?), the book becomes its own by the time big things are going down. All lot of the magical world-building feels dense and original and plausible. You learn WHY Sophie is the best elf in the history of elves, and it actually makes sense. There was a twist I didn't see coming at all. And the mystery is pretty engrossing.Mostly, this book overcame it's rocky start by winning my heart (that sounds like a country song). Everything in the latter half of the book was completely adorable. Sophie gets a cute little animal sidekick, bonds with the bitchy mean girl, and has a couple really sad moments with her foster parents. Suddenly, I found myself caring. Also, jokes! This book makes funnies! I like funnies.I really want to read the sequel so I can find out if all my inappropriate ships come to light. This book was such a bizarre journey for me, from open disgust to total adoration. HOW DID YOU DO THIS, BOOK? I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS WITCHCRAFT ELFCRAFT. You win this one, adorable little elf-people. You win. Stop looking so smug, you gorgeous creature. ETA: I forgot about Sophie's habit of PULLING OUT HER EYELASHES when she's nervous! Who does that? That is horrifying. That better be significant later on, because as a personality quirk, it is DISTURBING.but-i-am-the-chosen-one fantasy liked-this-more-than-i-should-have October 15, 2012ALL KINDS OF AWESOME. Seriously am in love with this book/series and its characters. KEEPER OF THE LOST CITIES is a fantasy mystery of epic proportions--and it's captivating from page one.While it's perfectly fitted for middle grade readers (even reluctant readers will burn through this and beg for more!) I have to be honest and say that I don't read very much middle grade. But I'm 31, and this book is still one of my all-time favorites. The reach of KEEPER OF THE LOST CITIES extends from those middle grade readers all the way to adults of any age. Try it, you'll see what I mean.The characters are each fully developed and completely lovable--even (especially) the troublemakers. The pages are full of intrigue and twists and mystery--all while Sophie Foster (the main character) struggles to find her place in her new world. The setting is lush, the creatures are awesome--and just as lovable as the characters, and the bad guys are pretty freaking scary.If you only read one book for the rest of the year, MAKE IT THIS ONE!!! You'll be thanking me after.absolute-faves read-in-2010 read-in-2011March 11, 2021This was cute! It definitely had those common tropes that can get kind of boring and repetitive like the chosen one, or the whole shes not like other girls thing, but if you can get past that then its a cute middle grade story! Theres definitely a lot left unanswered and since theres literally been like 9 other books published since this one released, Im assuming Ill get answers there lolMarch 21, 2021Honestly? I hated this book and I was expecting so much more. This is a pretty disgusting book, especially with someone like Sophie for the main character. I generally don't like Mary Sue characters and this is the perfect stereotype for it. She is so annoyingly speshul. She so "smart," but in reality, she's literally an idiot. I've read several books in this series, and all Sophie does for at least 80% of the book is go "hMMMMMMMMMmmmmm i wOndEr wHy?" The "romance" in this is messed up. She meets a random guy elf, and you know, they all have to be good-looking and pErFecT because they're elves. So naturally, she has a crush on every single one around her age, and they all like her back. Wonderful, isn't it? The last thing is I'd say all of the characters would be better if they were more diverse. The dwarves, the people who do work for the elves, just to happen to have dark skin. But no, they're not sErVanTs, they willingly help them! I don't like that, and I wish there were some more major characters that are diverse. Occasionally there's a minor character that has a slightly darker skin tone, but not enough to make this book any less stereotypical than it already is. 1.5/5 stars, rounded down to 1.buddy-reads cheap-plot failed-ending November 9, 2018Oh my God... I bought the boxset of this series.... how could I have done this??Ugh... I mean it's not like I haven't done this before. I bought the City Trilogy by Darren Shan all at once for around the same price and I ended up hating those books too. But at least with the first book of the City Trilogy I could see the promise in the series and could enjoy the unique vibes it gave.With this though... I really can't see any promise for this series. At all. It just failed on every level. I just can't imagine it getting any better, because this was a relatively long book for a 9-12 age demographic and I gave it plenty of chances to improve, and it just kept on making me shake my head, scoff, laugh derisively, and rub my forehead in irritation from the headaches the sheer awfulness of this book was giving me (I would have facepalmed if I hadn't been wearing glasses). I wish I'd recorded down every thought I'd had while reading this book because I feel like it is my duty to point out every single flaw this book has, sentence by sentence, so that other readers like me - people who care about originality, character development, complex writing and well-paced plotting, rather than people who are happy with whatever they are given so long as they've got enough characters to ship - will spare themselves from even giving this series a thought. I obviously can't stop everyone from reading because, well, people can enjoy what they want and because they clearly already have: just look at all those five-star ratings. But I wish I'd trusted my instincts and believed the one-star reviews I'd read prior to buying this. My only excuse was that I was desperate to like this series, because I have been without a new fantasy series to obsess over for far too long (heck it's been awhile since I've read any new book I immediately wanted to give a five-star rating). Also the fact that there was only one bookstore I knew that even had this series (and only as a boxset) made me a bit more confident in it, since books I absolutely refuse to read like The Mortal Instruments or anything by John Green are everywhere while books I think are masterpieces are pushed out of sight. In other words, I was expecting a hidden gem.I don't know whether my pickyness has to do with me getting too old and tastes changing - I'll have to wait for my 13-year-old sister's opinion on this book once she gets around to reading it - but I honestly feel like fantasy/adventure novels of this generation in general are a completely lost cause. Because I still enjoy books I read eight years ago, and I kept bringing up these books in my mind to compare with while I was reading, and seeing exactly why they were better.For instance - Sophie having to leave her family. She's given the choice to either erase her family's memory of her ever existing and thereby sparing them the pain of her disappearing forever, or of having them believe her dead. Sophie, of course being the selfless paradigm, chooses the former option, and we're treated to a very rushed scene of her tearfully saying goodbye to them before charging out of the house, in order to start her new life as a magical elf. This entire setup put me in mind of the Cirque du Freak series, also by Darren Shan, where Darren (the protagonist, not the author), after accepting his doomed life as a half-vampire is forced to stage his own death in order to run away from his own family. But the difference between Darren and Sophie's cases are 1) Darren had been blackmailed into becoming a half-vampire in the first place and had no desire to give up his old life, 2) he had actually tried his best to stay with his family prior to agreeing to fake his death, until coming to the realization that that would be impossible without putting them in danger, 3) there was a good long while before this development in which we actually got to see what Darren's life was like as a normal kid, getting to know a bit about his friends and his sister and parents, making the separation much more impactful, and 4) we were treated to an entire heart-wrenching chapter where Darren got to make sure his last day with his family was a good one, as well as his funeral.Putting aside the fact for a minute that, unlike Harry Potter - whose life with the Dursley's was one anyone would have wanted to escape as soon as given the chance - Sophie didn't really have much of a reason to leave her family behind after only two days of discovering she was an elf (aside from feeling out of place at her school, where she's a genius, which you know, of course makes everyone treat her like a freak because smart people are weird), Sophie's situation is not nearly as relatable as Darren's because from the first chapter the plot was already falling into a familiar pattern: "Hey you, you're not a normal human, you're magical! And in fact you're special even among the other magical people! Here's proof of magic and here's the place you're going to to train once you've left your family behind! Hurry it up, the real juicy stuff happens at the magic school, can't waste time establishing how painful leaving your dull uninteresting life behind must be for you!"Now to be fair, Darren had an entire single 270+ page book dedicated to his life-style change, but that was precisely what made it good - it took the time to let you care about the MC and sympathize with his predicament. With Sophie it's just a sort of mark at the top of a long checklist - not to mention that the author's establishment of Sophie's oh-so-specialness right from the first chapter before we know anything else about her contrarily backfired and immediately made me dislike her: "Garwin was still bitter Yale had offered her a full scholarship". Oh please.Now the story of her settling in with her new adoptive family might have been a strong subplot, if it weren't for the fact that not once throughout the book did it feel like the new parents, Grady and Edaline, were even making an attempt to connect with their foster (pun intended) daughter. I don't know what made Alden think a reclusive, depressed couple that has obviously not gotten over the death of their real daughter would make good parents to a girl with Sophie's special background. We don't really see any bonding scenes between them, just this constantly somber and awkward atmosphere. By the end of the book I was really rooting for Sophie to stay with the Vackers instead because at least they were more cheerful and we got to know them to some extent and, more importantly, they would have done a better job at keeping Sophie under wraps (my God but does this girl get into trouble... more on that in a bit.)Next we have the magical world that Sophie is whisked away to, the world of elves! And... dinosaurs. Ughhh.Okay so I'm not one of those people who read Harry Potter in their young adult life and zeroed in on the whimsical silliness that predominated the first book, which I guess most of us missed the first time we read it back when we were beginners to the fantasy genre. But you know, at least when Rowling was introducing her fantasy world, it actually had a certain amount of consistency and made sense: when you've got a world of witches and wizards, it's not strange that they use flying broomsticks in a sports game, owls to deliver messages, cauldrens to brew potions, and wands to cast magic. These are all things we already associate with witches and wizards. After she had these set into the foundation of the world we took it in stride when Rowling started introducing more unique and sometimes even ridiculous scenarios such as travelling via fireplace (Santa Claus was a wizard...?) or even entering a building through a toilet bowl, possibly the pinnacle of weird, random, and somewhat stupid that was reached in the Harry Potter series.When I think of elves, however, there's not much that comes to mind outside of Tolkien's immortal beauties other than pointy hats and shoes and a mystical forest. So Messenger made her elves all impossibly gorgeous vegetarians (except they've got plants that taste like hamburgers and pizza.... I'm freaking serious), and have long life-spans. But they also travel by light beams, and have extra-sensory perception like telekinesis and telepathy and truth detecting and... talking to machines even though it seems like technology is a human thing that amuses them... And apparently they take care of dinosaurs, like the T-Rex, even though it looks nothing like the human image of a T-Rex and therefore can't even really be said to be a T-Rex since humans were the ones who studied dinosaurs and gave them their names (unless they somehow assembled the bones all wrong... I don't know it wasn't made very clear). Elves, unlike humans, are all morally perfect beings with higher IQ's who do not discriminate based on wealth, since they all have the same amount of money (a lot), but, for some reason, still have social statuses. They know nothing of murder, kidnapping, arson, slavery, or any of the other evil activities humans like to partake in. Oh yeah, and students who attend Foxfire (the Hogwarts of the story) have to lick a panel next to their locker for it to open. Apparently it's for DNA matching... I guess fingerprint scanning was beyond the brilliant minds of the elf scientists (or, magicians, or... I don't know, they don't believe in science, but they don't call it magic either, so I'm lost).So there's two major things that bugged me about Messenger's take on elves slash the way she set up her fantasy world, one being that there was absolutely no reason to call them elves in the first place. They're ESPers that live a long time. Nothing about them is particularly elvish (except, get this, that instead of becoming white-haired and wrinkly their ears turn pointy when they get older... *snorts down laughter*), so all it looked like to me was that Messenger was trying to find a new gimmick no one else had used yet, without actually caring about the lore behind it or at least attempting to make it sound plausible. Basically she did with elves what Stephenie Meyer did with vampires - whatever the hell she wanted.The second thing that irked me was the humans-are-inferior factor that usually predominates fantasy fiction like this; where the race of magical being our protagonist discovers they're a part of either look down on humans as weak and pathetic, see them as evil irredeemable creatures that destroy the planet, or laughably know little to next to nothing about humans despite living in a world populated by them. Keeper of the Lost Cities sits comfortably between the second and third camps, and it is just as irritating here whenever you run across a sentence along the lines of "because humans polluted the planet" or "that's a human idea" as it was in Meyer's The Host. However, given that the elves hid their cities and forbade citizens from crossing over to the 'Forbidden Cities', as the human world is called, I'm more forgiving towards elf characters reacting toward human devices and customs as though they belonged to an alien race from another planet, and it never went as extreme as in Harry Potter, where it made even less sense given that wizards interacting with muggles seemed much more common.It's just, I much rather prefer a fantasy series that either makes the world entirely fictional, like Septimus Heap, or is set in the real world where the magical beings live like ordinary people, using mobile phones and driving cars, but use their magic in secret like in Skulduggery Pleasant. It makes things so much less complicated and contrived.Now let's turn to the cast of characters, and I'm going to stop the Harry Potter comparisons right here because other people have already called this an HP ripoff, even though, try as I did not to nitpick, I couldn't escape some of the scene-for-scene copy-pasting (like meeting the resident Draco Malfoy character in a shop while getting school supplies). I will however continue bringing up Stephenie Meyer's Twilight as a prime example of a terrible book, because it dawned on me half-way through reading that this was actually the book Keeper of the Lost Cities resembled, whether intentionally or not, and I felt very pleased with myself. Introducing the vampires of ForksFire high school: Dex, the guy who immediately sticks to our female lead as her first guy friend who crushes on her, i.e. Mike Newton; Marella, the girl who immediately sticks to our female lead as her first girl friend, who's gossipy and doesn't seem to actually care about the new girl other than trying to get in on the attention, i.e. Jessica; Stina, the girl who takes an immediate dislike towards the MC for no real reason other than that she's getting all the attention, a bully complete with two nameless goons (who appear for one page and have no lines), i.e. that one girl who I think was supposed to be the bully in Twilight except all she did was glare from a distance and I couldn't care less what her name was; Keefe, the jokester best friend of the resident hot guy who keeps poking fun at the new girl, i.e. Emmet Cullen; and Fitz, who to his credit is nowhere near as creepy or disgustingly 'perfect' as Edward but who doesn't really have much else going for him other than that he's hot and talented and generally a nice guy and our MC's got a crush on him (which she of course denies). Throw in a whole host of teachers (not nearly enough for one-on-one classes for an entire student body in my opinion), of which the only stand-outs are Sir Tiergan and Lady Galvin, whom it is not fair to call the 'Severus Snape' of the series just because she teaches the subject our MC is worst at, because Snape was a legitimate scumbag teacher and Lady Galvin is actually within her rights of being a little annoyed with Sophie given that the girl blows up her office almost every lesson and tried to cheat on her exam, and is completely justified in failing Sophie when no one else would because she's the exception. You've got Fitz's sister whose name I've forgotten for the moment (I really hate made-up names...), another character who outright hates Sophie at the beginning for no reason because with a protag like this, every other character has to either love or hate her, (although it turns out this character does have a reason, somewhat, and eventually comes around to the MC's side after extended interaction). What looks like was going to be an animal companion character, an imp, is also introduced, but the first time we see it it's unconscious and we're not told exactly when it wakes up or if it does anything special and the next time we see it it's kind of just hanging out in the bedroom, not doing anything a dog wouldn't do. You've got a council of elders, or whatever, one of whom, Bronte, after just one scene with Sophie is made out to have this irrational prejudice against her, so that every time a sentence along the lines of "she hoped Bronte wouldn't use this as an excuse to get her exiled" popped up I'd just sit there thinking "I know he gave you a bad impression but exactly why do you think this guy's got it in for you this much?", until the end where we see him again and apparently yes, he does just have this irrational prejudice against Sophie because, again, she's that kind of protagonist.And finally we have Sophie. Again, to her credit, not as awful as Bella, but still serving essentially the same purpose - just to be the protagonist that everyone is obsessed with and to whom things happen to. I really can't stand these types of MC's anymore; the kind with the most basic of personalities, that aside from filling the role of MC might as well not be in the story, because she does little to forward the plot under her own volition aside from simply existing. Most of the time I'm pretty neutral when it comes to passive characters like this, but my patience with Sophie grew thinner and thinner with each action she did take. For example, (and this is going to tie in to my complaint on the inconsistency of the world), it is made clear to Sophie fairly early on that reading another person's mind without their permission is a serious crime punishable by exile. But Sophie seems to deem it fit to go and peek into her teacher's mind in order to see what will be on an upcoming test - yes, she breaks what was established as a very firm law to cheat on a test. Because she's a good girl though, she goes and turns herself in (which doesn't redeem her in my eyes, because if she was going to feel guilty enough to confess she wouldn't have done it in the first place), and after needless deliberation she's punished with detention. Detention. For breaking a major law. And in one of these detentions she forced to ballroom dance... what?I mean it's incredible how fast Messenger managed to break my trust in her ability to uphold her own rules. When Sophie breaks the law again (this time without realizing it) I wasn't under any doubt that she'd walk away unpunished again. Ditto the third time she breaks the law (this time doing expressly what she was told not to do, albeit this time to protect people). At that point I could have laughed out loud, if I weren't so annoyed. I was actually hoping, during this second tribunal, that the book would end with her being exiled (as the title of the second book suggested), but instead I was treated to this honestly nauseating scene where all her teachers aside from Lady Galvin pass her with 100% marks on the spot (the actual punishment for her crime was treated as already served due to prior events *facepalm*).The plot, for the most part, was practically the only thing that kept me reading. The mysteries behind Sophie's specialness are somewhat answered, and they make sense (still doesn't excuse her having no personality and having to be rescued from situations where she can't use her plot armor), but all the hints and clues are scattered in between what essentially comes to a normal high school story of a girl making friends and trying to pass exams. Foxfire isn't even at all interesting, and we hardly see enough of Sophie's classes to feel invested in her wanting to stay - we learn about channeling on one page, an ability that lets you concentrate your strength in an area of your body, and this isn't mentioned or used again until the (underwhelming) climax, by which time I'd almost forgotten what the hell channeling was supposed to be; there's a class for bottling weather formations and I have no idea why; physical education is telekinesis, something apparently all elves can do and is the exact opposite of physical activity; and splotching is a sport that is pretty much just a game of toss you play with said telekinetic powers. I mean for God's sake, if you're going to write yourself into literary suicide by having your character go to magic school, at least make it a school that is unique and worth wanting to stay in! Literally the only ideas I thought were even a little bit creative were the candy that changed taste according to your mood and the banshee (that doesn't look like a banshee...) that slept close to people who were dying. Aside from that, it felt like the author was filling in a paint-by-numbers on how to write a popular fantasy series without actually caring about common sense or creativity.If I have any reason at all for reading the next two books (aside from that I spent money on them, unfortunately), its to further educate myself on what not to do when writing a fantasy series or any book really and also to remind me why I love all those other series I mentioned above so much. Goodbye first one-star book of 2016, its been hilarious.disappointing fantasy gave-away January 14, 2022So um,,,I have no idea why this series is well-loved. This book is a basic mix of HP and every YA that was popular at the time this was released, and its not good. At ALL. Theres a circle in my personal hell for middle grade books that think their readers stupid, and Im shoving Keeper of the Lost Cities right in. No regrets. This book did a 180 for me one third in. The beginning isnt all bad, it introduces the main character, the light-leaping magic and the elven cities made of crystals. That world building kind of charmed me. Sure, the writing felt rushed and chunky from the very first page, as if descriptions and part of the narration were missing, but I was able to push that in the back of my mind and enjoy what I had. Until more things started to show up. First of all, as soon as Sophie sees a cute boy she immediately thinks hes handsome, she develops an instant crush and tries to impress him. It happens with Fitz before they have even exchanged a couple of words, it happens with Keefe, it happens with others. But she denies it. On the other side, every boy at school is also in love with her and only her. Shes not like other girls. The school teenagey drama was already as cliche as it could be without these stupid crushes and I would have loved it if the author had focused her energies on making a better plot and world for the book instead of putting the drama in the foreground.The plot is laughable, like many of the details of the world building after that first shiny impact. Its all over the place and it kind of starts only near the end when you dont care about it anymore. Plus, it was sooo convenient. Meet Sophie, the most special of the special snowflakes! All the unusual powers are hers, and she wants you to think shes worried that the other elves will think her a freak because of them. Oh, cut the crap. She loves the attention and you can see that miles away. She knows the right stuff at the right moment just because, she can teleport with amazing concentration no one has, she has the best telepathy talent and no one can read her mind, she has super psychokinetic powers and shes better than elves who have studied at the school for years. Shes also modest and kind and cant cheat at school without her self-sabotaging and telling the teacher. Oh, what a special elf she is.I cant believe I didnt even get to experience the classes at school. Whats the point of a book about a kid going to a magic school if it doesnt show what shes studying? Honestly, this was the proof I needed to confirm that the world building sits on top of a shaking ladder. The author took part of the HP world and made it quirkier, but didnt think of making rules for it to make it believable. Quirkier is key word: if you want an example of what Im talking about, the kids at school have to lick a panel next to their locker to open it because it needs their DNA. What the actual... LOL.The author didnt even try to hide the fact that she was taking stuff from Harry Potter. Cases in which its very noticeable include: - the alchemy teacher (Snape), whos the one every kid hates and the one teacher who hates Sophie because she cant do alchemy- Stina (Draco Malfoy), a girl with two goons who hates Sophie and wants her to fail at everything- the different collectible pins kids get from a specific type of candy (chocolate frogs). I cant deny I thought I hit jackpot with this book at the beginning. My plan was to binge a good middle grade series, but Im going to have to look somewhere else.Tina Rafii lives in FandomsJanuary 7, 20213.5 Silver Starswith Golden SparksI actually was very afraid to start this book, thinking of it same as the Mortal Engines (I guess same cover vibes,

In a middleschool book? Gdi), how the dialogues felt stiff and once again, not credible. I am not impressed. At all.booooring failed-character-development give-me-a-big-red-pen July 26, 2024spoiler free review credits to elly for the inspiration for the layout of this review! i love her reviews sm "dex smiled flashing deep dimples. 'i like strange.'" there are no words to describe how much i love this series! i made this review after rereading this book and i think i still love it the same amount as i did back then. (which is saying a lot)*plot keeper of the lost cities begins with the main character, a girl named sophie foster. while at a school trip to a museum, she meets a mysterious boy, named fitz. fitz whisks her to a beautiful and seemingly magical place, and tells sophie the truth about herself. sophie is forced to leave her home and her family to go live in the lost cities, a glittering place with elves, trolls goblins, ogres, and other strange creatures she never even knew existed. as she struggles to fit in, she discovers passing midterms at foxfire (a prestigious school in the lost cities) and keeping her hidden talent of telepathy a secret is the least of her worries as she finds about more about her mysterious past and her daunting enemies that threaten her future*characters sophie: honestly, i never really liked sophie that much throughout pretty much the whole series. i dont really know why, but she just bugs me sometimes for no apparent reason. i feel like shannon made her seem super perfect and selfless, to make us root for her more, but it mostly makes me annoyed. also, i hate how much she blushes throughout the whole book. she must have blushed, like, at least thirty times. even though i say all that, i dont hate her. she definitely is a good character, just sometimes she makes me really annoyed. dex: i actually like dex a lot. hes been with sophie since the very beginning of this series and is loyal, really nice and funny, and while he isnt my favorite character, he definitely is up there. fitz: ive pretty much hated fitz every since the beginning. he was always made so perfect, and that annoyed a lot for some reason. also, later in the series, he does end up having some fatal flaws. (spoiler alert) keefe: keefe is the absolute best character in the series, and although he wasnt involved as much in this book, he will be in the other books, and if you read the next books, youll see why i like him so much. hes just so funny and nice. (not to mention cute) biana: at the start biana was a total pain, but as the book continued she started to get better grady and edaline: both grady and edaline are so sweet and loyal and i love them sm alden and della: alden and della were nice, but i dont really have much to say abt them marrella: i think marrella is nice but i wish she was more involved in this books and the other books*my thoughts i really liked this book, (and the whole series) but at some points i wish it was more interesting. pretty much she first half of these book is sophie getting accustomed to the lost cities, and for me it was kinda boring, since i already knew most of the stuff from the lost cities by reading the other books before, but thats just my opinion. other than that, i enjoyed this book a lot and i definitely recommend it!*quotesall sound vanished and her whole body shook with a frenzy she didnt understand- sophie unlocking her (no spoilers)the warmth painted across her mind and she sank into it, a world of blinding rainbow sparkle. no cares or worries. just rushing air and freedom.- sophie, when she almost edaline covered her trembling lips and raced to sophie, crawling into the bed to hold her so tight it was almost hard to breathe. grady dropped to his knees on the floor beside them, squeezing sophies arm.- when sophie from almost thank you for reading this review! this was the first one ive ever written so i hope you enjoy it as much as i enjoyed this book! TEAM FOSTER-KEEFE FOREVER Lindsey (Books for Christian Girls)November 10, 20243.5 stars, personally. This was a really interesting concept! I've been hearing about these books for a while and thought I would try at least the first book out once the last book releases as I was expecting cliffhangers galore, but you see how well that worked out. I really liked Sophie and how the Choice One trope played into this plot. I'm honestly shocked to say that because I had low hopes, but I really did like her. (I also wanted to give her a hug many times, the poor thing. A couple parts even bought tears to my emotionally-drained eyes.) She handled everything that was thrown at her very well and I honestly think the Council was too much of a stick-in-the-mud because I understood her reasoning every time. I really wanted answers about Sophie's past/beginnings, but the book ended with much more information than I was expecting. Not a lot, but more than I was hoping. I do think this series is going to drag out answers, which makes me less than excited to continue on, but I do plan to continue it, regardless. I know there's a big debate in this fandom about Fitz and Keefe. I don't have an opinion yet, personally. I'll keep y'all updated when I do. I would consider this to be upper Middle-Grade as there is a lot about crushes and boys and such. Overall? You know, it wasn't bad. I see why so many love it, though I'm concerned about this series being ten books as I'm not sure how much can happen (I feel like those who have read all the books out are laughing at me saying that) but I'll try out a couple more to see. Main ContentChildren (including our main character) are drugged, kidnapped, threatened with harm and death, tased, held hostage, & nearly suffocated (by adults, up to semi-detailed); An Allergic reaction, Pain, Injuries, Passing out, & Throwing up (up to semi-detailed); Almost being hit by a car (up to semi-detailed).No cussing, minor Middle-Grade language such as 'stupid', 'wimp', 'dumb', 'idiots', 'pain-in-the-butt'/'kick butt', are used somewhat frequently; Eye rolling & Sarcasm; A few mentions of curses (that are just said and not actually written out); Sophie lies & breaks a promise; Sophie is called a freak by her school mates and calls herself a freak as well; Dealing with a mean girl at school & her comments (and other snide/prejudice comments); Accidentally stealing from an ATM. When Sophie finds out that the parents that raised her aren't her biological parents, she is crushed but thinks that it doesn't change anything even though she's never belong with them (*Spoiler* When she has to live permanently in the elf world, the elves in charge of her plan to make it look like she died (to them), but she can't put them through that so she asks for their memories of her to be erased, which involves her doing sleeping gas in the room they are in and she's distraught doing that as she loves them); She has a few other moments of hurt based on what happened with her parents; Sophie listens to a playlist titled "angry" with screaming when upset. Death isn't common in the elf world, but there have been freak accidents that caused deaths (some who have not experienced the loss of a loved one across as flippant and Sophie doesn't like their attitude); Mentions of grief & the families missing their loved one greatly (including for parents & a couple for their daughter); Mentions of fires, deaths, people being displaced because of them, and a possible arsonist; Mentions of wars & humans betraying the elves; A few mentions of a couple being called a "bad match" (which is an insult and means that the couple was ruled to be genetically incompatible and that usually means their kids will be inferior); Mentions of cheating (Sophie reads a teacher's mind to get the answers to a test, but feels very guilty and confesses); Mentions of nightmares (including of a family being trapped in a fire, barely-above-not-detailed); A few mentions of some elves' minds being shattered for the elf council to be able to get secrets out of them; A couple mentions of suicides (one in regards to someone's social life and another in a plan to kidnap a kid); A couple mentions of wine (drank by adults). Mentions of terrible smells & dead animals (barely-above-not-detailed); Mentions of animal dung and pee being used for wounds; A couple mentions of farts; A couple mentions of burps; A mention of an alien.Noticing cute guys (Sophie gets flustered, blushes, & her heart flutters); Some nerdy/weird guys drool over Sophie (mainly because girls don't interact with them); Keefe kind of jokes about a teacher having a crush on him (Sophie is 90 percent sure he's joking); A young man shares that he has three girlfriends (his mother is horrified and Keefe says it's awesome and that he's his hero; Many mentions of boys, boyfriends, crushes, who likes who, etc.Someone tells Sophie that he's not sure if she has biological parents in the conventional sense, he says "Your human parents had trouble getting pregnant, so they saw a fertility doctor. I believe that doctor was a member of [a group]--posing as a human--and that he implanted your mother with your embryo to keep us from knowing about [you]".Magic wise, it's said that what elves can do is not magic, Fits explains that "magic is a stupid idea humans came up with to try to explain things they couldn't understand"; There are special abilities like Telepath, Telekinesis, Inflicting (make someone feel certain things), & Mesmer (who can put someone in a trance) to name a few; By a certain age, the children elves are expected to "manifest" their special ability; There are Goblins, orges, imps, banshees, dinosaurs/tyrannosaurus, saber-tooth tigers, mammoths, and other hybrid odd animals (but no mentions of evolution) (all of the animals are trained to be vegetarian); A mention of someone being like a Titan god.(See my reviews with content details of the rest of this series: Book #1, Book #2, Book #3, Book #4, Book #5, Book #6, Book #7, Book #8, Book #8.5, Book #9, Book #9.5, Book #10, Graphic Novel)clean-fiction own-other read-secular-mainstreamJanuary 14, 2021Noa (fosterkeefe version)(semi ia) September 27, 2024Guys ok I loved it again this time around and I wrote a review but I put a lot of time and effort into this one so please tell me if it's good. Ready?? Ok, here goes:KEEFE KEEFE KEEFE