



Whitechapel Gods

S.M. Peters

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A thrilling new Steampunk fantasy from a talented debut author

TWO GODS-ONE CHANCE FOR MANKIND

In Victorian London, the Whitechapel section is a mechanized, steam-driven hell, cut off and ruled by two mysterious, mechanical gods-Mama Engine and Grandfather Clock. Some years have passed since the Great Uprising, when humans rose up to fight against the machines, but a few brave veterans of the Uprising have formed their own Resistance-and are gathering for another attack. For now they have a secret weapon that may finally free them-or kill them all...

Whitechapel Gods Details

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From Reader Review Whitechapel Gods for online ebook

Rebecca says

Inventive (if very dark) steampunk rather ruined by raging misogyny. Took the lessons of The Difference Engine rather too close to heart. There are three female characters. One's an irrational whore with no impulse control, full of fluttery, dangerous womanly weakness. Another's an evil madame. The third is a goddess...who's easily overpowered and secretly glories in being raped by a totally normal guy who takes some drugs that apparently elevates him to her level because really, uppity women just need to be smacked around a little and properly subjugated. Umm, no.

Rolf says

"I don't know art, but I know what I like." That's a cliché heard all too often, but sometimes it can be useful, especially if you take the inverse of that statement. I do know art (well...to a limited degree) and on that level I can appreciate this book a whole lot more than in the "what I like" scheme of things. Peters has created a fascinating world, but the relatively slow pace made this book a bit more "work" to get through that what I normally prefer -- but I recognize that that is a personal preference. That I got through it at all, however, says a lot. The Peters' world is intriguing, the characters are well done, and the story is inventive...very inventive. And that was enough to keep me going and enough to convince me that for those who find this style of writing appealing, this would be a good book to try.

Michael says

I honestly picked this book up because of the cool cover. It got my attention. It didn't take me long, though, to realize that the cover was all this book had going for it. The first thirty pages felt like a commercial break-fifteen to thirty second bits of sound and flashing images that are completely unrelated to each other. The book lacks any sort of focus. In those thirty pages I hadn't encountered a single image or character to grab my attention. There was a lot of disorienting movement and action done by shell-like characters, but nothing that I cared about. So, I stopped reading after page thirty. And to anyone who might want to protest that it gets better later on, I will say, "There are too many good books out there to waste my time on this one."

Felicia says

This book's concept was really interesting, although in practice, I wasn't hooked as much as I wanted to be. I'm not really familiar with/a fan of this genre though, so I don't want to judge it too harshly. There were some interesting characters, the violence was brutal and kind of thrilling ;). I wouldn't recommend it to everyone, but if you like cyber/steam punk it's worth a pick up.

In Peters' version of Whitechapel two Gods, Momma Engine and Grandfather Clock, are vying for control. Having cut off Whitechapel from the rest of London with an imposing wall these Gods keep their humans in check using their mechanical police force. However, a group of rebels are making efforts towards freedom and the destruction of these Gods, while another man seeks to obtain the power and become a God himself.

Peters' world is not your traditional victorian steampunk adventure, he successfully removes the beauty of the traditional idea and turns his world into a boiling furnace of mechanical hell from which no man will find eternal reset. His world is full of evil deeds, power struggles and the control of humanity.

There were many things to like about this novel. The industrial victorian landscape and the expansive world that was created above the ruins of Whitechapel. The mechanical henchmen, the Chimney, and the Clacks, a horrible clockwork disease that transforms people into part machinery removing humanity and any hope of a peaceful death.

It was difficult to get 'hooked' on this story, Peters' has a definitive writing style that takes a few hundred pages or so to get your bearings. Additionally the plot and main protagonist were a bit slow to reveal. Once the story picked up it was still not fast moving due it is slow plot building and lack of explanation for the reader. Part of the momentum issues were due to the impressive number of influential characters and the way the story moved between the point of view of each. The 'dream' sequences were odd especially without explanation, and when the consciousness of Aaron started running around as a pet clickrat an explanation was too far overdue to insert one.

This novel was a good start for Peters'. It struggles with pacing, transitions, and the sheer number of characters. It left me too split to invest myself fully, each character was undeveloped in my opinion and ultimately my favorite was not the protagonist. Peters' essentially throws the reader into the clockwork infested waters without a clear investment into world building. The last thing that I felt was not executed well was the only female character. She was introduced as a very tormented young lady with potential however she is quickly written into the roll of the love interest of the protagonist.

Overall I give this 3 out of 5 stars.

Claudia says

I usually don't leave reviews but I gave 1 star to this one without even finishing it and I wanted to explain.

I wanted to like this book. I really did. I was so eager to read it (mostly because of the cover, which is awesome) but it was a huge disappointment.

Let's start with the names. I understand that you don't want to be repetitive and start all the sentences with "John did whatever", but if you are going to call him by his first name in the first sentence and in the next you are going to call him by his surname at least let me know that it is the same person. If not I will think there are more people in one scene than there actually are. It was kind of annoying.

The scene jumps were also confusing. I didn't know what to pay attention to. When a scene was finally making sense the story changed to another point of view, with a completely different setting and new characters I knew nothing about. As I said, confusing.

Speaking of change of point of view, once it was changed I was dropped in the middle of the action. I don't

mean this in a good way, like when right from the start exciting things start to happen, but in the way that I had the feeling I had opened the book randomly and started reading the first page that popped up. I didn't know what was going on. Who are these new characters? Why are they doing what they're doing? What do they want to achieve? **Why should I want them to win?**

Part of the blame of not knowing what was going on is the lack of descriptions. This is a fantasy book, which means that some stuff doesn't exist. Some things are just in the author's imagination and it's his job to let me know what they are, what they look like, what they do. At one point there's a doctor that cuts a patient with a scalpel and instead of bleeding, the cut oozes oil. And then they move on to the next action without even blinking... WTF!!? Why is that dude bleeding oil? What is going on? Why is he half machine? Is this normal in this world? Well, the book has zero fucks to give about your confusion as it moves on to the next point of view and story.

The few pages I read left me thinking that there was maybe a prequel I knew nothing about and that's why I didn't know these people. Kind of like when you hang out with a group of friends that are not your own and they have all these secret jokes they are not letting you in on. I don't like that feeling. Maybe this book works for some people, but not for me.

Brian says

First off I love the cover, but after that there really wasn't anymore love. For my first foray into a steampunk novel I am greatly disappointed. Not so much with the setting, though it was a bit limited and at times only sketchily described, but with the character description, development and the complete lack of forthright explanation.

You are introduced to characters with little or no description of what they look like or their motivation. As most readers would do, I think, you begin to picture a somewhat generic Victorian man or woman only to find out two chapters later that they look nothing like what you pictured. Case in point--Hews, I saw as a thin elegantly dressed man with sideburns and neat hair; the reality was he was fat with mutton-chops (which I think all of the characters had) nicely dressed and always wearing a hat. I am still not sure what Oliver, who is the protagonist of the novel, even really looks like other than tall. In my head he was older and had a trim beard. Again a few chapters later this was disproved. There is also a disease infecting people of Whitechapel, though not all, called the clacks. Tom has clacks, but I am not sure what it looks like or how it really was so bad for him. A lack of detail on the clacks.

The characters knew way more than the reader and yet none of them took the time to really explain their present situation. Was there a prequel and I missed it? I felt like I was to accept the reality and not to question how it really came to be only. Eventually you learn about Hume, Mama Engine, Grandfather Clock and the "child" how all it all began around the last third of the novel. A little too late, but if I knew how they came to be or what they were before that point I would probably have stopped reading. Each chapter begins with a quote from a book, completely out of order if you believe the numbering system attached to each quote, at first it was hard to tell if this was an actual book being quoted or not. Adding to the confusion is that actual authors are quoted at divisions within the novel. It is until later that you are made aware of Hume's book *Summa Machina* and realize these are quotes from it. Another thing that bothered me is that the events in the book happen over a short frame of time like three days. It is the *DaVinci Code* of steampunk fantasy.

Disappointed. But love the cover still.

Terence says

Quick review: A nice, little, self-contained novel. I haven't read much in the urban fantasy/steampunk genres but Peters' *Whitechapel* reminds me of Mieville's *New Crobuzon* in its atmosphere and in its half-human/half-machine inhabitants. Peters' work isn't as mind-twisting as Mieville's but it's reasonably inventive and fresh, and the characters are not simple, one-dimensional caricatures. In fact, the most evil and dangerous character is the *human* John Scared, not the putative enemies Grandfather Clock and Mama Engine.

I gather from trolling this site that Peters has published a second novel set in the same world - *Ghost Ocean* (though, like Jeffrey Barlough's *Western Lights* books, you don't need to read the current novel as prelude), which I would be interested in reading.

As to this one: Recommended to steampunk aficionados, and people who just like a well told, standalone tale.

Corielle Riddell says

First, let me say that I wanted to love this book. From its awesome cover art and the summary on Amazon, it looked interesting enough. Authored by S.M. Peters, this debut is a Steampunk-themed story where two mechanical gods, Mama Engine and Grandfather Clock, rule London. You follow the rebels of an uprising who live in this dirty, dystopian city and who only want to free themselves from these mechanical monsters and their murderous henchmen.

It took two months for me to read *Whitechapel Gods*, and I struggled the entire way, mostly out of disinterest. The prose was easy enough, but the storyline switches gears so many times, it was really hard to follow. I lost interest, forcing my way slowly, until about 2/3 of the way through when it seemed like the characters were actually about to do something important.

The characters seem very interesting, but their individual lives seem to overtake the book, making the plot lose its momentum. Have I mentioned just how many players there are in this drama? There's Oliver (the protagonist), and Missy, Tom, Aaron, Scared, Penny, Bergen, Heckler, Bailey, etc. Delving into so many lives, it's no wonder I got lost. Their abstract dream and drug sequences proves nothing but to confuse more than reveal anything plot-worthy.

In saying all that, though, I believe that my favorite characters are Tom, half man and half machine, and his pet clickrat Jeremy Longshore (who we later find out is embodied by Aaron). Tom is a large man-machine who, yes, takes a licking and keeps on ticking, but his demeanor is gentle and that of a small child. His pet Jeremy is very faithful and turns out to be pretty useful. He convinces metal hounds, through a series of clicks and nods, that his friends are not a threat. Their relationship shows us more humanity than the real human beings in the story do, which might be a point the author is trying to make, but it gets lost in the muddle.

By the end of the story, I was left very unsatisfied. The underwhelming finale and odd change of personality

for two of the characters seems a little forced for a “happy ending.” Maybe I can give it another read in a year or so to see how I feel about it. Until then, I don’t think I can offer any mind-blowing review. It is not a bad book, by any means. It just needs to be more reader-friendly.

Heidi says

It was hard to get into. The e-book jumped around between narrators with no indication of change which made it difficult to follow, especially at first. Overall, I liked it but I didn't love it.

Brooke says

Like the other steampunk novels I've read, Whitechapel Gods tends to get a little abstract at times, especially towards the end. However, it was a really entertaining read, and the world that S.M. Peters created is a very well developed one. I was completely immersed in the steel-and-smog Whitechapel ruled by Industrial Age gods, and I thought the steam guns and the Chimney (where all the "parts" that "don't work" are sent) were especially creepy. I look forward to Peters' sophomore effort.

Misti says

This was our book club pick for November. I tried to read it I really did, but it’s just not my thing. Thank you, next.

Dan Schwent says

Whitechapel has been cut off from the rest of London and is ruled by two mechanical alien gods, for the lack of a better description, Grandfather Clock and Mama Engine. John Scared schemes to usurp Grandfather Clock's power while Oliver Sumner and other revolutionaries look to overthrow both gods. Who will reign supreme?

First of all, there were lots of things to like about this book. The hyper-industrialized pseudo-Victorian hell Whitechapel has become under the rule of Grandfather Clock and Mama Engine is a well-described place. The Boilermen and the Cloaks are both interesting antagonists, as are John Scared and Giselle. The clacks, a disease that causes people to slowly grow gears and wiring beneath their skin, is also quite innovative. The story had a lot of twists and turns.

Things I don't like? I hate to admit that few of the characters really grabbed me. It took me forever to figure out that Oliver was the central character in the story. Too much was made of events that little to nothing was revealed about, such as the rise of Baron Hume and the creation of Grandfather Clock and Mama Engine. In my opinion, the story would have been better had it focused more on Oliver and revealed more backstory.

That's not to say I didn't enjoy Whitechapel Gods. I'd recommend it to new weird, steampunk and horror fans. Officially, I'm giving this 3.5 stars. It might be upgraded to a 4 on a re-read.

Later: Actually, I've read a bit of steampunk since *Whitechapel Gods*. Not only will I not be upgrading it to four stars, I'd say it's barely a 3.

Sarah says

3.5 stars. This was a very dark steampunk fantasy with shades of something like *Gangs of New York*, although not precisely that.

We have a small band of people who are fighting for Whitechapel as well as queen and country while going up against Mama Engine and Grandfather Clock, who have set themselves up as gods. These gods were *fascinating*. In addition to creating a rather unique pair of gods, this allowed for people who were allied to each god. Some of these had clockwork mechanisms and some had furnaces but they all had started out as people. And then there were the humans. And they wanted Whitechapel back.

So there are battles galore, along with a whole lot of death and destruction. And the word "irregardless"... I tried not to get too hung up on that because this really was a fascinating book. I would love to read the author again.
