



The Rithmatist

Brandon Sanderson

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The Rithmatist, Brandon Sanderson's *New York Times* bestselling epic teen adventure is now available in paperback.

More than anything, Joel wants to be a Rithmatist. Rithmatists have the power to infuse life into two-dimensional figures known as Chalklings. Rithmatists are humanity's only defense against the Wild Chalklings. Having nearly overrun the territory of Nebrask, the Wild Chalklings now threaten all of the American Isles.

As the son of a lowly chalkmaker at Armedius Academy, Joel can only watch as Rithmatist students learn the magical art that he would do anything to practice. Then students start disappearing—kidnapped from their rooms at night, leaving trails of blood. Assigned to help the professor who is investigating the crimes, Joel and his friend Melody find themselves on the trail of an unexpected discovery—one that will change Rithmatics—and their world—forever.

A New York Times Book Review Notable Children's Book of 2013

The Rithmatist Details

Date : Published May 1st 2014 by Tor UK (first published May 13th 2013)

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Author : Brandon Sanderson

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From Reader Review The Rithmatist for online ebook

Maureen says

3.5/5 stars

This was a really enjoyable read! The whole concept is so interesting - a really cool take on steampunk without actually being steam punk!

I loved the reimagined US as islands and the whole world in general.

The plot was interesting but (mostly) pretty predictable, Joel was an alright main character - not great though, and the story, while overall interesting, just didn't have enough meat to it. It was a really great concept but the actual story played out had too many pacing issues for me.

Was it an incredible book? Not for me. But was it really fun to read and enjoyable? Absolutely.

TS Chan says

4.5 stars.

One of the reasons why fans of Brandon Sanderson (including yours truly) love him so much - when he gets into a writing funk he sidetracks himself by *writing something completely different* from his main project and it can result in a gem like this book.

MG and YA are not my go-to genre and hence, I'm very selective when it comes to these books. However, I have immense faith in Sanderson as he consistently churns out good, if not amazing, books. I also failed to understand why he had been so regularly critiqued for his characters. Ever since I've read *The Way of Kings* - one of the most character-driven books in epic fantasy - I've come to appreciate how my engagement with such fictional beings drive my enjoyment of the book. I believe that he had invariably delivered in this aspect simply because everytime I pick up a Sanderson book, I am not able to read anything else.

Firstly, this is non-Cosmere book. The world is set in a gearpunk 'alternative' Earth where North America is made up of islands. Secondly, no review of this author is complete without mention about the magic system and I am beginning to risk sounding like a broken record - how does Sanderson even create such fascinating ones? In the *Rithmatist*, the foundation of the magic was built on geometry, trigonometry and chalk. Yes, chalk! "How??" you might ask. Well there are illustrations at the start of each chapter to explain the mechanics of different chalk drawings and how precise geometrical/trigonometrical properties influence its relative strength/power. The power of this author's imagination realised in artform.

The storytelling is solid comprising both a pretty dark mystery component and a school/learning setting. In spite of the young age of the main characters, the narrative was not annoyingly juvenile but was instead engaging and mature enough to appeal to older audiences. I really appreciated how Joel, the main protagonist, did not get an easy way out. You'll need to read the book to understand what I mean by this; no standard YA tropes here. To cap it all off, the ending sequence and the revelations were quite magnificent. There was a "Ooooh, I see what you did there" moment, which I can't allude to further as it might be construed as a potential spoiler.

Ever the planner, Sanderson has just completed the research phase of the 2nd book as he intends to expand the worldbuilding from North America to Meso- and South America.

Hasham Rasool says

Must read 'The Rithmatist' for those who are:

huge fan of Sanderson

huge fan of fantasy books

children (10 years old+)

teenagers

adults

The magics of Rithmatics are very strange because I haven't seen this kind of magic before.

The Rithmatist is an usual book. I haven't read this kind of fantasy book.

This book has mixtured genres: fantasy, crime and mystery.

My favourite characters are Joel and Melody.

Mary ~Ravager of Tomes~ says

deep sigh

So, I've read 14 full-length novels and 2 novellas by Brandon Sanderson, and this is the one that didn't do it for me.

My one glowing positive is that, once again, Sanderson presents his readers with a fascinating magic system. Think *Chalk Zone* with more violence!

Rithmatists are a chosen elite, trained from a young age & charged with protecting civilization by way of breathing life into **mathematically intricate** chalk sketches. These sketches rely on the **precision & intent** of the artist, and I really enjoyed the illustrations in the book that made this system feel that much more real.

Unfortunately, I can't say much for the rest of the book.

Despite the allure of the magic system, I still never found myself putting down roots in this world. It may be because the **complexity** of the chalk magic didn't mesh well with the **simplicity** of the other elements in the story.

Joel is a 16-year-old student at a prestigious academy with a student body that has integrated Rithmatists and regular kids. He is passionate about Rithmatic study, though he has no abilities of his own. Melody is 16-year-old Rithmatist with a quirky personality & seems to be a bit of a redheaded stepchild in the Rithmatist community at the school.

I guess I don't *mind* either of these characters, but something about both of them seems **incredibly derivative**. I just felt as though I'd met them countless times before in other works. The most noteworthy

aspect of their friendship is that it's just that: a *friendship*. It's nice to see a Young Adult story where two main characters of opposite gender can just **exist** without a shoehorned kissing scene, but otherwise, I don't see myself thinking about either of them much past the time it takes me to write this review.

Speaking of the genre, something about this book felt **very Middle Grade**. That's probably not a negative for the general reader, but me? *I'm not really a fan of Middle Grade*.

Joel & Melody could've just as easily fulfilled their roles if they were 12 or 13. In fact, I think I would've enjoyed the story a bit **more** if the protagonists had been younger because the plot felt so much like something out of *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* or *The Children of the Red King*.

I suppose it was the **atmosphere** more than anything else. It was like one of the early *Harry Potter* installments in that the plot wove itself around a mysterious occurrence at a "magical school," which is then solved by children in tandem with a handful of adults who are clearly segregated into "good adults" and "bad adults."

I found myself yawning through most of the book. The story was written with all the skill we can expect from Sanderson, but I did not feel as **compelled** as I normally do to stay engaged with the developments. Long conversations & mostly annoying banter between the MC's had me feeling **utterly bored**.

The last 10% of the story finally shows off the excellent magic system in some great action sequences that held my attention pretty well, but as far as the mystery goes I wasn't surprised by the time I reached the conclusion. I'm not saying I guessed what would happen in specific details, but my reaction was a very weak "*Oh, yea ok. No more fight scenes?*"

What can I say, sometimes you connect with a book & sometimes you don't. I've had excellent luck with Sanderson's other works, but this one just couldn't sweep me off my feet!

aria [dear darling reader] says

LONG STORY SHORT: THIS BOOK IS FUCKING AMAZING! DON'T BE STUPID. PICK THIS BOOK UP.

REACTION AFTER READING THE BOOK

This book was fantastic. Everything about this book oozes with awesomeness! I mean, who would have thought chalk figures could be so menacing and scary?

Who?

Has it ever crossed your mind that chalk drawings could eat you, or worse, kill you?

It hasn't for me. The concept just sounded so farfetched. Too weird.

But this is Sanderson. I shouldn't have doubted his ability to make something as simple as chalk, to

something far more interesting and complex. And he did not disappoint. I finished this book immediately wanting the second book in my hands.

THE GIST

The story followed a boy named Joel who attended Armedius, a prestigious school who not only caters the rich, but also a special set of students chosen to study Rithmatics.

What is Rithmatics anyways, you might ask? Well, these Rithmatist were people who could make chalk drawings come to life. They can also make chalk wards and attacks. **How were they chosen?** You'll find that out soon when you read the book.

Moving on.

Joel wasn't a Rithmatist. His drawings were just ordinary chalk. Everyone knew that, Joel most of all, but the moment somehow broke the spell of his story.

Despite Joel's love for the craft, he wasn't chosen, by this god-like person named the Master, to be a Rithmatist. Fate had a different plan for him.

Shortly before Joel started helping Professor Fitch with his work, something weird was happening on campus. There was someone or something taking the Rithmatist students of Armadeus. Because of these series of events, it was up to Joel, a friend, an inspector, and Professor Fitch to find out what was happening.

That's all I can say about the plot without spoiling the entirety of the book.

THE CHARACTERS

Joel

The thing I liked most about Joel was that he wasn't a special snowflake, like most of the protagonists in YA books nowadays. He was passionate about Rithmatics which is why he got involved in the things that he shouldn't have been involved with.

He was smart, but he wasn't special. He knew a lot about Rithmatics, but he wasn't one of them. He was a flawed character which is one of the things I found endearing about him. He wasn't a very nice person when this book started, he was actually a bit arrogant, to be honest. But I liked that. I liked that Sanderson gave him a little bit of that characteristic in him, so that when the story progress, you see him develop.

You not only get to know him as a person, but his background: who his parents were, why was he studying in that school, what caused him to love Rithmatics. You get all of them. It was all explained so well.

Melody

She was the type of character you warm up to as the story goes along. At first, she was annoying, and you just don't know why she was in the story. But as the story goes, you understood why she was the way she is, and what her part is in the entirety of things.

Another good thing about Melody was that she isn't a love interest, at least, not yet. The second book isn't published yet, so who knows?

Professor Fitch

I wasn't sure what to think of him at first. Professor Fitch is the guy that teaches the Rithmatic class Joel sneaks into to listen. At first you'll think he was just going to be another Dumbledore-like figure in the story, but he wasn't.

He was a brilliant scholar, but he wasn't the best Rithmatist duelist. He compensates his lack of fighting abilities with his knowledge about the techniques and history of Rithmatic system.

Secondary Characters

Aside from the plot and magic system, which I would get to in a second, the characters is where this book shines. I loved how none of them were flat and useless. Each of the characters introduced in this novel had their purpose and role in the story.

One of the more notable characters was **Professor Nalizar**. I would not say why, but his character was so much more complex than what I initially thought.

Inspector Harding is also an interesting character. He is the lead investigator assigned to find out who was taking these student. You'd think he's one of those disposable characters that was placed there just for the sake of it, but he isn't, there is so much more to him that I did not expect.

SETTING/WORLD-BUILDING

I was a bit confused with the setting at first, but after reading further into the book, I realized it was set in the present day, alternative version of the United States. The book has this illustrated map of the new world Sanderson created which I think is called the United Isles? Yes. It's called the United Isles. It's so cool having the names of some of the states of the US being there, only altered a tiny bit.

Brandon Sanderson is a master in creating new and believable worlds. This world, and the world he created in his Mistborn series, is not like anything I have ever read about. It's unique and one of a kind. There are a lot of books right now that almost have the same stuff in it, you'd find Sanderson's books very different from most, which you'll find really refreshing.

The magic system he developed for this series was completely different from the ones he made for his other books. Rithmatics had its own rules and history that was just so intriguing. Like I said earlier, I was just so mindblown with the entire concept of chalk being brought back to life, and they are hurting people.

All I can say is that, everything about this world is amazing! I love it.

PLOT DEVELOPMENT

The plot of this book was so easy to follow. I liked how it kept me at the edge of my seat the entire time. The thing about this book that's different from other books is that, everything is not always as easy as it seems. There is more to it that meets the eye.

This book is both plot and character driven. The more you read the book, the more you learn about the world and its characters.

I think the book was well-paced. Plus, there were no dull moments, even when there weren't any full-blown action happening, you still find the scenes enjoyable and entertaining. You would never get bored!

ROMANCE

I was actually wishing for some sort of romance in this book, because apparently, Brandon Sanderson has a talent for writing romance, believe it or not. He did a fantastic job in writing the romance aspect in *The Final Empire*, that I want to read more about how he would spin romance in all of his books, if it would have.

But this book, doesn't have romance. In a way, I was happy about that, because there was no unnecessary side plot that would deflect out attention from the main plot of the story.

THINGS I LIKED

- The world-building is amazing, as usual. I do not expect anything less from Sanderson.
- The characters were fleshed-out and well realized. There was a purpose to each and every one of them.
- All of the events that occurred in this book were there for a reason. There wasn't any scene that was out of place.
- NO FUCKING ROMANCE! WOOPPEEEEE!
- Brandon Sanderson's writing is nothing short of wonderful, brilliant, and amazing.
- The main villain, of this book at least, was not the one I was expecting. It was such a big WTF moment for me when I realized I got everything wrong.
- The book has illustrations to show you what the chalk defense and attacks look like. I felt it adds so much more to visualize the stuff they are doing with the chalk.
- NO DULL MOMENTS.
- It was pretty short for a Sanderson book. His books usually range between 500-800 pages, I think. I believe it's because this book is geared more towards the younger audience.

THINGS I DIDN'T LIKE

Uhhhh... isn't it obvious that I loved everything about this book?

Okay there was one, but it's not even that annoying really.

This book suffered from one of those missing-parent-scenarios, where the kid just gets to run around on his/her own because either the parent is super busy, or they just don't care at all for their kid. But it wasn't terrible in this book; I kind of really liked his mother, to be honest.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If you guys haven't read anything from Brandon Sanderson, read one of his books. If you aren't ready for full-blown High Fantasy books, start with this one. The Rithmatist is an amazing read; I could not recommend this book enough, to everyone!

THIS BOOK NEEDS MORE HYPE PEOPLE!!! READ IT! READ IT! READ IT!

Lia Bonnibel (pidgey) says

"What good is having friends if they don't put you in mortal peril every once in a while?"

I FLIPPING LOVE THIS BOOK

That's it.

That's the review.

seak says

After reading a bit of the initial commentary on this book, some people mentioned that maybe there was a little too much focus on the magic system. Being a huge Sanderson fan, my thoughts were along the line of: there's no way, his magic is THE reason I love his novels, there's literally NO way.

As it turns out, there does seem to be a way, although only just a bit.

The magic of The Rithmatist is as creative as ever. I've mentioned this before and I'll say it again, Sanderson's magic really takes on a life of its own in any of his books. I love the characters in any given book, but it's the magic that makes me want to live in the world forever. I want to see the magic used in every possible way and situation. And yet he tends to hold it back a bit. The "lashings" in The Way of Kings is only mentioned on a couple pages and I wanted to see the armor more and more. The whispers and colors in It's always so interesting and creative, I never thought I could ever tire of a Sanderson magic system.

Until The Rithmatist. It's not that it isn't as good as any other magic system Sanderson has created, it's more that it's actually overused for once. As I said above, I normally can't get enough, but here the main protagonist, Joel, is obsessed with Rithmatists. So it's all he can talk about. And it's third person limited on Joel, so it's all we hear about. And he lives at a school, half of which is devoted to Rithmatists. So it's all we hear about.

So besides the fact that I started to cringe every time the word "Rithmatist" was used, the plot is pretty

standard and it has the standard YA characters. The mean professor (Snape), the students breaking the rules to save the day (Harry/Hermione/Ron), the uppity magicals versus the non-magicals (muggles), etc.

That is, until all these great mysteries are revealed and hinted at at the very end of the book. I have a feeling the next book will really get things going, but this installment was really just a prelude to set up the magic and the lay of the land with the United Isles archipelago.

Just to reiterate, the magic is excellent. The Rithmatists defend against wild chalklings who are two-dimensional creatures that attack and kill and must be contained at The Tower in Nebrask. Rithmatists use shapes drawn in chalk to both defend and attack by using geometric points of circles that must be drawn with exactitude or they will become weak. It's so well-thought out, it boggles the mind to see all that has gone into this and no wonder it gets mentioned over and over, it takes that long just to understand the different defenses that are used.

Sanderson has a reputation for great magic for a reason and demonstrates yet again why he has earned it. He's also created a vivid world full of technology powered by gears ("gearpunk" as Sanderson mentions in the afterword) and mysteries that abound. The magic is a bit over-explained and the plot is a bit stock in this first installment, but I'm really looking forward for what's to come because what's been hinted at here demands more reading.

3.5 out of 5 Stars (recommended)

Niki Hawkes - The Obsessive Bookseller says

[4.5 stars] I hope no one gets tired of hearing me say "I read another Sanderson, and it was amazing!" because I say it a lot.

The Rithmatist, while not as sophisticated as some of Sanderson's high fantasy (for obvious reasons), is still one of my new favorite works from him. The magic system was particularly fun to read about – Rithmatists who duel one another using chalk drawings (ground wards for defense, animated chalk drawings for offense), and set in a school setting where they learn everything from geometry (for proper ward creation) to complex dueling strategies, to boot! I love when books introduce some sort of competition, especially magic-related. The Rithmatist definitely reminded me of Hermione's role in Harry Potter – very academically inclined and whenever she was around I felt like I learned a lot about magic. Joel fit that roll for me here – he knew so much about the Rithmatists' craft that, by the end of the book, I felt like an expert too. The friendships formed in this book were also reminiscent of HP, and I especially love that Joel and Melody's relationship was organic and atypical – very different from most YA.

The book also had a fun "whodunit" style mystery that did a great job keeping me guessing all the way until the end. If I can't figure out who the culprit is by the halfway point (or better yet, if I'm certain I know who it is and I'm wrong), the author has done a great job weaving together a good mystery – as was the case here. I felt invested in the story because I was constantly trying out different theories of whodunit. With so many things keeping me glued to the pages, it's no surprise I devoured it so quickly.

Overall, The Rithmatist had a great mix of good characters, compelling mystery, and magic infusion. It hit an A+ for me on all accounts and I'd highly recommend it to anyone who likes fantasy. This is one of those titles I find easy to recommend because it has appeal for a wide range of readers. Before diving in, I was

under the impression *The Rithmatist* could essentially function as a stand-alone novel – not the case. I need the next one like, yesterday! According to the author's State of the Sanderson 2016, we should be seeing a sequel "Status: Soooooon."

Other books you might like:

The Waking Fire - Anthony Ryan
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone - J.K. Rowling
A Darker Shade of Magic - V.E. Schwab
The Inventor's Secret - Chad Morris
The Testing - Joelle Charbonneau

Via The Obsessive Bookseller at www.nikihawkes.com

Franco Santos says

Otra gran obra del escritor de *Nacidos de la bruma*. En esta me cautivó nuevamente con un sistema de magia inteligente e innovador excelsamente desarrollado.

La historia comienza con un ritmo rápido pero profundo. De entrada ya sabía que, una vez más, Sanderson me iba quitar horas de sueño. Y no me equivoqué: *El rithmatista* no me dio descanso. Es un relato lleno de misterio y, aunque resulte extraño, un poco de terror.

Siento que Sanderson pudo haber explotado mucho más lo que creó. Podría haber hecho un libro bastante más largo. Espero que en el siguiente aborde temas que quedaron un poco a la deriva en este, porque tiene asuntos muy interesantes por extender.

El final es lo único que no me gustó del libro. Bueno, quizás estoy siendo demasiado radical: más bien me dejó sabor a poco. Esperaba algo más brillante. Sanderson engendró una obra con mucho contenido, entonces confiaba en que iba a concluir con algo más complejo. Sin embargo me sorprendió.

En suma, un muy buen libro. Se lo recomiendo a todo el mundo. Solo les advierto: si llegan a ver un movimiento extraño en las paredes o en el piso, **corrán**.

Mitch says

Brandon Sanderson just made chalk figures scary. Chalk figures. As in these guys:

Ok, admittedly they don't look like much, certainly not like man eating monsters, but after reading this, they are totally creepy. Sanderson's certainly built up a (well deserved) reputation for writing interesting, intelligent, wildly imaginative magic systems - to the point it's pretty much common knowledge in the fantasy community these days, but as *The Rithmatist* proves, those talents still go a long way, especially for his first foray into the young adult genre. I mean, before reading this, I'd have never thought it possible to be

devoured by two dimensional pictographs, but now? I'm not so sure.

“Can I please just pass geometry? I have plans for summer elective. If I can't make them work... well, I'll do calculus or something with you.”

In other words, the obvious highlight of reading a Sanderson book is figuring out yet another of his magic systems - in the case of The Rithmatist, Rithmatics (duh). I've seen Sanderson's newest offering compared to playing a real time strategy game (MineCraft?) with chalk drawings, and it's absolutely spot on. Rithmatics is the magic of bringing to life little chalk figures called chalklings (ostensibly to fight their murderous wild brethren), but as par for the course for a Sanderson book, watching chalklings destroy each other is only a tiny piece of the magic. Sanderson's created a character in Joel whose enthusiasm for explaining the strategy behind Rithmatic duels is just infectious (sure, he can also be described as an annoying know-it-all at first, but it's a redeeming flaw because I liked how he grows as and becomes a more rounded character, particularly once he begins interacting with Melody and Fitch), though it's really because of what Sanderson does above and beyond every other fantasy writer approaching a magic system that makes the real difference. Rithmatics is, really is, a fascinating mix of logic, math, and art (see the wonderful drawings by Ben McSweeney at the beginning of each chapter, basically), and exploring the theory behind Rithmatic combat as Rithmatists use various geometric shapes to direct and protect themselves from the chalklings is an eye opening experience for anyone who appreciates the beauty of simple geometry. That, or unicorns.

“Oh hush, you,” she said. “You'll deal with unicorns - maybe some flower people and a pegasus or two - and you'll like it.”

Magic systems, of course, can't be relied on to carry an entire book. In a way, beyond the magic system, The Rithmatist feels more like a middle grade book than a young adult one. The characters, well, mostly behave like Joel's Rithmatist friend Melody; she's like any other typical cool girl character in that she has some great lines, but she also has that really... interesting affection for unicorns. Other than Joel and Melody, despite the fact this is set at a school, the other characters of note are all adults, Professors Fitch and Nalizar, Inspector Harding - Joel of course interacts with the students but they're all name dropped and don't have roles to speak of, and I guess I did want to see more students who weren't just names and actually interacted significantly with Joel and Melody. The upside of that, though, is I am beyond tired of the relationship drama that seems to be the focus of young adult these days, so a book, heck a great book with an awesome Sanderson magic system, that concentrates on the plot and things that actually interest me rather than who likes whom is absolutely a breath of fresh air. A significant part of my rating, in fact, is simply that I loved unraveling the mystery of the chalklings without having to pause and roll my eyes at yet another male author trying to tackle the young adult romance bandwagon - Sanderson doesn't do that, but instead concentrates his creativity on a plot that's pure suspense and magic.

“So, is there any particular reason why we're spying on Nalizar?” she asked. “Other than the fact that he's cute.”

Joel grimaced. “Cute?”

If there is a part I wasn't too sure about The Rithmatist though, it's that the book gives off some serious too much like Harry Potter vibes. Once again, we have a school that teaches magic (Armedius Academy), a kindly old professor who takes the protagonist under his wing (Fitch), another professor who's confrontational but possibly misunderstood (Nalizar), a spunky girl who joins the group because she's sort of

an outsider among the Rithmatists (Melody), and a plot involving mysterious attacks by wild chalklings on Rithmatist students. In fact, at one point I said to myself, 'If Nalizar turns out to be like Snape, I am seriously hurling this book out a window.' Then again, the flip side is I also said to myself 'If this doesn't end like Harry Potter, I have no problems eating crow and giving five big shiny stars,' and here we are. Lucky for those pedestrians on the sidewalk below, yeah I did eat crow, not only because Sanderson kept me seriously occupied with Rithmatic theory, but also because while there are enough similarities to be distracting, there are also enough differences for The Rithmatist to stand on its own. Among those, Sanderson's best decision is probably to write Joel as whatever the equivalent of a Muggle is - because he can't do magic himself, he's the best perspective for actually explaining the theory, and his desires to actually be a Rithmatist goes through so many twists and turns, but more than that there are many, many noticeable opportunities where Sanderson could've taken the plot in a direction reminiscent of Harry Potter, and every time he surprised me by doing something different, zigged where I thought he'd zag, zagged where I thought he'd zig.

All in all, I'm totally convinced Brandon Sanderson has written something special here. He's made reading about chalk drawings more fun than I can ever imagine, and that's all I'd ever ask for from a great book.

Fun Fact: A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson is a real life memoir of a New England woman taken captive by Native Americans in the seventeenth century. Those who've read The Rithmatist will know what I'm talking about. Those who've read both will notice some intriguing similarities - just as Harry Potter is distinctively British, The Rithmatist is distinctively American.

Patrick says

Listened to this one on audio, vainly hoping beyond hope that I might finally read a Brandon Sanderson book I don't like so I can feel better about myself as an author.

But no. I enjoyed this book as much as any of his. Good worldbuilding, just as you'd expect from Sanderson. And a clever, detailed magic system. Good mystery surrounding the world.

And I really like that things aren't easy for the protagonist. Everything doesn't just fall into his lap. He wants things at the beginning of the book, and at the end of the book, he still wants them. He has some hope now, because he's learned more about the world, but some of his greatest desires are still not just unattainable, but seemingly impossible.

Looking forward to the next one in the series.

Regan says

I loved this book.

The story was solid and the world was AMAZING. So much fun to read, the characters were lovely. This book is technically young adult, but it is so unique and so focused on a beautiful and well thought out world, and not romance that I forgot sometimes while reading.

Iryna (Book and Sword) says

4.5/5 stars

I wasn't going to round up. I mean not every Sanderson's book can be 5 stars, right? Wrong. Because when it came down to the last pages I was tearing up...So I just had to.

?I thought that maybe because this was intended for younger readers (middle to young adult) it will be duller and not as interesting as his other series that I've read so far. I thought that I will read it and just think of it as a nice stand-alone book. I thought that there couldn't have possibly been another new and cool "magic" system.

Wrong. Wrong. wrong.

?Sure, it wasn't nearly as complex and interwoven as say **Mistborn** has been, but it was pretty darn amazing (also I wouldn't recommend comparing one Sanderson book to another - they all are great in their own ways). I will never stop being impressed with his ability to create compelling and dimensional characters, and I will never stop being surprised by twists and turns of his books. Even when I think I know what's coming the book comes out and surprises me anyway. And I love it!

I'm pretty sure that the concept of "chalk drawing infused magic" is far from new. But I haven't read many books that used that type of magic, so for me it was pretty fascinating. Plus it wasn't just chalk drawing - it was chalk drawing duels! And that's always fun.

?If this was any other book I'd found the character of ?**Melody** to be over the top and maybe even annoying. But when Melody was put next to Joel it somehow made perfect sense! She wasn't just funny, she was extremely smart and all of her "odd" remarks held a lot of important truths and I really loved her for that. And most importantly - she was always herself. I think that she actually turned out to be a great role model (in her own unique way).

If I had to compare Melody to any other character in any other book, I'd say she is very much like Luna Lovegood (from Harry Potter series) - as they were both truly and unapologetically themselves.

"It's going to be painful."

"It's a fun tradition."

"So was witch-burning," Melody said. "Unless you were the witch."

If you are not new to Brandon Sanderson's books you know that there is always that one character who loves books more than...well anything really. **Joel** is that character. Joel might be grumpy and stoic at times, but Joel is a true bookworm and you gotta love him for that. I really enjoyed his storyline and how everything turned out for him in the end.

"So much about life was disappointment. He often wondered how humankind endured so long, and if the few moments when things went right really made up for all the rest."

Pre-review

A YA book by Brandon Sanderson?

I'm intrigued, but also ... scared??

I mean, in my mind Sanderson and YA don't go togetherRight? Wrong?

Chantal (Every Word A Doorway) says

I think I should start every Sanderson review with: **Brandon Sanderson does it again!**

There is a reason this guy is one of my favorite authors, he cannot disappoint.

This book is all about expectations. It's Sanderson's first try at YA and he did a great job making fantasy more accessible to a younger audience. For those who are used to Sanderson's other adult works however, this may be a disappointment. The Rithmatist is a lot shorter than his other novels, with only 370 pages, large font and numerous illustrations (as opposed to his 600+ pages works). **There is less worldbuilding, less description and the novel is not as deep and philosophical as his adult fantasies.** Having said that though, I still loved this book. **It's fast-paced, very engaging and just so much fun.**

The worldbuilding, though it takes up less space, is cleverly done and **the magic system is as awesome and creative as always.** I honestly don't know how Sanderson manages to come up with all those imaginative ideas again and again.

The story follows Joel who is studying at Armedius Academy, an elite school that teaches both rich and influential "ordinary" students as well as Rithmatists. Rithmatists are people who are able to perform the art of Rithmatics, the ability to infuse life into chalk drawings. They are chosen each year by the Master in a mysterious inception ceremony and only one in a thousand receive the gift. Joel's biggest dream is to be a Rithmatist but he wasn't chosen so there is no way he can become one. Instead, Joel spends his time trying to sneak into Rithmatic lectures and practices chalk drawing as much as he possibly can, simply because he is fascinated by it.

Then students start disappearing from their rooms at night and as he is assigned to help the professor who is investigating the crime, Joel suddenly finds himself entangled in the mess.

Besides the cool magic system, my favorite thing about this novel was Joel. **Not Joel as a character but rather what he represents.** One of my least favorite tropes is that of the "chosen one" and Joel isn't chosen. Things are difficult for him; he has to fight for what he wants. **I found myself empathizing with him so much because of this, seeing him struggle, worshipping Rithmatists, being obsessed with a power he does not possess.** I've been waiting for a fantasy to do this.

I also really liked **Joel** as a character though. He is certainly flawed, as all of Sanderson's characters are, but I still found him to be very likable. He starts off as a bit of a know-it-all and is quite smug about his own intelligence but goes through considerable character development and I was totally rooting for him all the way.

To my surprise I also really liked **Melody**, even though I wasn't sure I would at the beginning. She is funny, witty and a loyal friend. I really enjoyed the dynamics that developed between her and Joel and liked the fact that Sanderson didn't make their relationship into a romance (at least not yet).

The mystery surrounding the world was interesting and well executed. This first installment gave me

enough answers to be satisfied while still leaving open many questions for further books.

There were also **numerous illustrations** in the novel that really helped me visualize and understand the magic system better.

This book does feel more like Middle Grade than YA. But as long as you know that going into it, it should not be a problem. Some of the things that happened didn't fully convince me (a 16-year-old discovering things the police and professors do not?) but it didn't really bother me while reading.

Overall I really enjoyed *The Rithmatist* and recommend it to those to whom the premise sounds interesting.

Phrynne says

Of course Brandon Sanderson can do no wrong and even his Young Adult books, like this one, are really worth a read. He has this tremendous ability to keep creating new and fascinating worlds with equally fascinating science and magic.

The Rithmatists of the title are people who can use chalk to create magic wards and creatures which can in turn be used for duelling and fighting. Our main characters are Joel who is not a Rithmatist but wants to be and Melody who is one and does not care. Both characters are really likeable and they eventually make a great team.

The story reads like a mystery and, as is the case with the best mysteries, the author convinces us totally that one individual is the guilty party and then right at the end says "Haha, fooled you!"

All in all a very enjoyable book and the only reason that it is a four star instead of five star book for me is that it is very much aimed at a young reader. Dead people do not stay dead and even at its scariest moments there is no real fear that anything totally bad will happen. Still a good read:)

Alicia says

Pre-read reaction, October 2011:

I have only a vague idea what it's about. But it's by Sanderson, so *cue droning robot voice* . . . I will read it. I must read it.

Now:

If an author came to me and said: "I have a great idea for a magic system. These guys called Rithmatists draw in chalk on the ground, and their chalk drawings have power. They can draw chalklings, which can be given instructions. Some chalklings can actually injure people, especially the wild chalklings. Those guys are dangerous!" I would tell this author: "Have you lost your mind? Chalk bad guys? Ooooh scary. I'm shaking in my boots here. Oh wait, I'm actually not. And I'm also not wearing boots—cause it's summer."

And I would be wrong.

Joel, the main character, has always wished he were a Rithmatist, although he knows he can't be. He's studied Rithmatic lines and knows more about them than many Rithmatists. So when a few Rithmatists are kidnapped, Joel inserts himself into the investigation and proves helpful.

The kidnapping mystery, though interesting, wasn't even the best part of the book. And I don't believe there was enough information given to the reader (at least not for *this* reader) to figure out what was going on before everything was revealed toward the end. I would have preferred to have a chance at guessing the ending. But that's fine; I still loved the book. The ending did a good job of tying up all the threads in the story, and introducing a new thread to be explored in a sequel.

Throughout the book, without overwhelming the reader, Sanderson presents Rithmatic principles that help us understand his magic system in better detail. The book includes renderings of some Rithmatic defenses, as well as chalkings drawn by some of the Rithmatist characters. While I imagine some people might flip right past the renderings (which I don't think would make the book any less enjoyable), I examined each one. Sanderson put so much thought and detail into this magic system that I couldn't help being dragged along for the ride.

Even before reading this book, I was a fan of Sanderson's. Now I'm just awed.

Emma says

I don't know how Sanderson does it! To come up with a whole system of Rithmatics was brilliant. I didn't guess who the rogue Rithmatist was and I loved the main character Joel and his friend Melody working together. Looking forward to the sequel when it finally gets released.

Arah-Lynda says

"Description begins in the writer's imagination, but should finish in the reader's."

Brandon Sanderson has hit a home run here in this awesome world of chalk, just sick with possibility. He drops you into this world of chalk drawings that come to life, possess power and threaten the main protagonists, who also duel and defend in chalk.

These protagonists, the people of whom I speak, are interesting; possess a depth that contradicts Sanderson's sparse prose. I found it easy to connect with and care about them.

But they are at risk, under attack from the wild chalkings.

The concept is so simple. The future is wide open and invites complexity.

Ben McSweeney's illustrations are spot on, deftly portraying the rules of battle, bursting with Sanderson's positively plump pace of potential.

The Rithmatist is sure to spark discussion, invite lively, animated debate, especially among those strategic thinkers, those denizens of debauchery.

I love that there are so many excellent options available to our young readers today. They own tomorrow.

You can too, just gather your knowledge; draw your lines of vigour and forbiddance. Get in your circle, imagine well, your chalkings, then plan and maintain your offense.

New rithams are possible.

Scott Hitchcock says

2.5*'s with a rare round up. I just didn't think this was the usual Sanderson quality.

Catriona (LittleBookOwl) says

Rating: **4.5 stars**

This was such an enjoyable and fun read!
