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Maddie lives in a world where everything is done on the computer. Whether it's to go to school or on a date, people don't venture out of their home. There's really no need. For the most part, Maddie's okay with the solitary, digital life—until she meets Justin. Justin likes being with people. He enjoys the physical closeness of face-to-face interactions. People aren't meant to be alone, he tells her.

Suddenly, Maddie feels something awakening inside her—a feeling that maybe there is a different, better way to live. But with society and her parents telling her otherwise, Maddie is going to have to learn to stand up for herself if she wants to change the path her life is taking.

In this not-so-brave new world, two young people struggle to carve out their own space.

Awaken Details

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From Reader Review Awaken for online ebook

Morgan F says

17 yr old Maddie lives in the year 2060, where everything, from dating, schooling, and going to the movies, is done online. Ever since her disastrous rebellion two years before nearly caused her and her father to go to jail, Maddie has lived compliantly with this life, never complaining or yearning for actual physical contact. One day Maddie meets a boy online in school chatroom, and he invites her to actual go to a *real* tutor session. Maddie agrees and that is how Justin enters her life. Justin is wild and unpredictable, being here for one minute and leaving the next. He hates everything about society nowadays, and embraces actual social interactions. Justin shows Maddie that the best things in life aren't behind the computer screen. Maddie can feel herself falling in love with Justin, even though her father, the founder of Digital School, forbids it. Maddie is torn between doing what is right for her family, and doing what might be right for the world.

This was a good piece of YA dystopian fiction. The world-building was excellent, probably because it is not too hard to imagine a world like Maddie's, seeing as society seems to be heading there anyways. I know I am lazy. I know I depend too much on my cell phone and my laptop. I know that's bad for me. But unfortunately, one of things I disliked about this book is it preachiness. I felt I was getting beamed on the head with my Mac. COMPUTERS BAD. PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES GOOD. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I get it. At least I've seen fire and live music and I have real trees unlike Maddie SO THERE. It's kind of ironic though, because I was reading this book online.....

Maddie was a good narrator. She actually had some hutzpah and wasn't some passive, dependent troll. She actually proved she was intelligent instead of just reading *Wuthering Heights* for the four billionth time, like that means anything. I liked Maddie. Justin.....eh. Yeah, he was hot, I guess, but most of the preachiness came from him. If he goes on a rant *one more time*....I also didn't like that he had "I will be aloof to the woman I love because I am not good enough for her" syndrome. Dude, come on. Have some respect. I don't like it when protag love interests think that they know what is better for the protagonist more than the protagonist does.

I really liked the first half of the book, but something threw me off about the second half. It's like someone poured cold water on the book and yelled WAAIIITTT. I think the sexual tension between Maddie and Justin was drawn out too long. Every time they walked away kiss-less from each other, I let out a frustrated sigh. The second half of the book was mostly on Justin/Maddie romance, and that was Maddie pining for Justin most of the time. The final action scene also felt really contrived.

And guess what! There was a character named Clare that I didn't hate! I'm improving!

Overall, a decent YA dystopian fiction. I wanna know what happens next realz bad.

Sandy says

The premise for Katie Kacvinsky's *Awaken* is very timely with today's technology-minded culture: Imagine a world in the future so technology-obsessed and fearful that people no longer leave their homes. How would

people interact? How would they learn, live, and love? I admit that I love dystopian romance, and *Awaken* has some beautiful passages and quotes that I wanted to immediately write down. However, the world in *Awaken* lacked consistency in its design, which overshadowed other positive aspects.

The whole premise of *Awaken* is that the world got so bad, so violent that a safe life became a digital life led mostly from the isolated comfort of your home. This premise has so much promise--I love it. However, the novel begins with Maddie riding a train to play real soccer with a friend. If the world has become such a scary place, why does Maddie later also ride a public train by herself at night (something I won't do even in 2011)? The novel says the world is so awful that everyone lives a digital life and shuns face-to-face interaction, but then it contradicts itself throughout with parties, benefits, and public appearances. It felt very incongruous at times.

And what supposedly lead to the downfall of society? Online school. Seriously? School violence became so bad that Digital School became mandatory, and somehow that lead to the destruction of personal interaction. I just was not buying that this is how we got there. The protestors (or terrorists) all want to bring down Digital School, but I failed to make the connection of how Digital School is responsible for the supposed woes of the world. Yes, everyone seems a little too obsessed with their computer, but is free online school really responsible for all of this? Will bombing Digital School really make it all better?

And then there are the main characters, one of whom I like (Maddie) and the other, not so much (Justin). I liked seeing Maddie awaken to a "real" life again. She was intelligent and caring. I wished the author had explored more about Maddie being a super hacker to give her a little more depth, but overall, she was likeable and didn't automatically cave to the demands of the "good guys."

Justin, on the other hand, has emotionally barricaded himself, which I guess is supposed to be a necessary part of the love story to explain why he and Maddie can't be together. However, writing a character to be emotionally distanced does just that--not only is he distant from Maddie most of the time, he's distant from the readers, too. How can I make a connection and care about a character who's so detached and aloof? He keeps telling Maddie to trust him, but it's obvious he's using her. He claims he was waiting to tell her about his ulterior motives until she trusted him, but why should she trust him? It's obvious from the first few chapters why he's interested in her, and it's to further his cause (that felt very terroristic at times). His recruiting efforts verged on creepy at times.

However, there were some moments of really beautiful writing in *Awaken*. I could pull out a dozen quotes from *Awaken* that I genuinely found moving. The pacing was good and I definitely kept reading past midnight. I especially appreciated the slow build of the romance.

The premise of *Awaken* is full of promise and should be explored, but the lack of consistency in this dystopian world drew me out of the story too many times. However, it was a well-paced novel with some thoughtful quotes, and I loved that it made me think about where our technology-obsessed world may be heading. (After a few of Justin's preachy speeches, I felt bad that I was reading this book on my iPad!)

Book.Journalism says

Obwohl es ein Re-read war, finde ich die Idee dahinter immer noch krass. Wie viel musste dafür recherchiert werden ?!

Maddie ist zu Beginn wirklich ein langweiliger Charakter. Bis sie Justin trifft. Die Verwandlung mit anzusehen ist toll. Als würde sie lernen zu leben.

Mari says

The year is 2060 and everything is digital. People do everything - hang out with friends, study, work, shop, even go on dates - on the computer. Online, everything is safe, easy and controllable. Seventeen year old Maddie has grown used to this life but she often feels something is missing. Then she meets Justin who prefers face-to-face interaction and she starts to question if this "digital" life is as perfect as some people make it to be.

I liked the premise of this novel. In these modern times, it's not too hard to imagine a scenario where everything is done over the computer. I for one, spend a huge chunk of my day in front of a computer. It was very disconcerting reading *Awaken* because it hit too close to home. It makes you realize that this could probably well be what would happen in the not-so-distant future.

The protag, Maddie, was clearly torn between two worlds. I liked that she was brave and open to discovering new things. Justin, on the other hand, I couldn't quite relate to at first. I felt he was too stiff and self-righteous but I understood his outlook as the story progressed. I thought their love-tug-o'-war was interesting although it got repetitive at times.

One thing I didn't like about this book is that there were parts that are too preachy. For example, the whole "digital" vs. "unplugged" dilemma is already a huge issue and when you add environmental propaganda on top, it starts to feel like one big sermon. It's not that I don't appreciate the message, it's just that in the story's context, it feels like overkill.

That being said, what I loved most is that the characters are not one-sided - those supporting the digital life and those against it. It's not all black and white, good vs. evil. You are given the history of why everything went "digitalized", you understand why it was a necessity given the circumstances and yet you also know that those opposing it have a very strong point of contention. Emphasis was made on balance and I'm dying to know how everything will play out.

Very thought-provoking!

3.5 stars

Laura Kreitzer says

The first thing that attracted me to *Awaken* was the cover—as it is for me with most books. The more I stare at this cover, the more I understand what it represents. You can't jar nature; you can't put plants or animals in a box and expect them to live. Really, that's not living at all, now is it? But that's exactly what's happening in *Awaken*. Maddie, the lead character, is used to being inside, going to school via the internet, holing away and being someone she's not online. She's an avatar. A picture. Anything she wants to be—and

everything she's not. She yearns for something different and attempts to achieve it when she betrays her family at a young age. Now she's restricted and left to live in her technological world, play her technological games, and communicate through—you guessed it—technology. *Awaken*, to me, represents what our world will become when people start to fear leaving their houses and decide to stay indoors. In this remarkable novel we might actually see our own lives jump off the pages. Is this what we're becoming? To not truly know what it is to feel someone else, to let someone hold you, or for you to hold another? It's almost scary.

Let me explain *Awaken* to you quickly, because I'm pretty sure all of my blog readers will be interested in this. Since I'm a full time author, I find the majority of my time glued to the computer for one reason or the other. This book actually made me feel incredibly guilty that I'm not living my life outside of it. It's not completely true, but as Justin, the male lead character who convinces Maddie it's okay to go outside her house and see other people, talk to them face to face, touch them, be with them, I feel that I too must spend more time in "reality." Maddie's father is a powerful man. Famous, beloved, the creator of Digital School. So imagine how he feels when he finds that his daughter is seeking a connection outside of his carefully constructed online world? He eventually becomes fed up with his daughter who's spending too much time with "that boy Justin" who teaches her the opposite of how he lives his whole life. So, as any clueless father, he sends her away. Fortunately, Justin intercepts her and now Maddie must go "off the grid." No technology. No email. No phone. No traveling. But then she soon learns that she didn't need any of that now that she's been awakened. Or maybe it's just Justin's soft lips?

Oh yes. On top of an intense storyline, we have a romance to remember. Justin and Maddie's relationship is slow going—only because they are both so caught up in their own world they miss the point of what Justin—and soon Maddie's—preaching is all about: connecting. But when both of them (mainly Justin) finally gives in, I swear I swooned, almost falling off the couch and gripping my Nook like it was really Justin. It was freakin' . . . fantastical. Magical. Stunning. Brilliant. I saw stars, fireworks, rainbows exploding from my Nook. I don't know how Katie did it, but she had me. Almost as if she super-glued my eyeballs to the screen.

Katie is a very talented and gifted author. Her way with words, thoughts, and dialog all make this book much more than a twisted tale of what the future might hold. She's spun this world as if weaving a golden plot—intricately, and masterfully, crafting this story with such dazzling radiance I thought sparks would shoot from my body when I got excited! *Awaken* is shiny in its simplistic nature—though each word seems to be deliberately placed, like setting up your chess pieces before you call out "check mate." Her characters, Maddie and Justin, pop off the pages. Or maybe it was I who had been sucked into the book? Either way, I couldn't stop reading once I started. I devoured this book and was actually disappointed to find out the release date is in May and it's only December. Now I'll only have to wait that much longer to find out what happens next.

Kristi says

Unique and captivating, *Awaken* is sure to seize your attention and send your mind reeling!

I wasn't sure what to expect after reading the summary, *Awakened* sounded interesting enough, but it wasn't something I was dying to read. Until I started reading it.... and then I was dying to know what was going to happen. This book was not at all what I was anticipating.

I really connected with the idea of the novel.... the whole "digital life" I could totally see that happening.

Some of the reasons that it does happen in the novel, are eerily realistic and incredible sad. I also really empathized with the characters, with Maddie and Justin especially. I admired them both so much. I truly hope that I get to read more of their story.

And there was a little bit of a love story between Maddie and Justin and it was the frustrating kind of love, where you just want to yell at the characters... so much tension... I mean I did yell at Justin... would you kiss the girl already! But I loved that. I watched these two characters from this different world, work through these obstacles and in the process come to care very deeply for each other. That's my kind of love story.

Katie does a great job keeping your attention throughout the entire novel, I can't wait to read more of her stories.

Read this one people! You won't regret it!

Krystle says

Okay, so I'm not sure if I can give this a very accurate review because I think my ARC had the ending cut out (on accident) or maybe that's really the ending. Anyway, on to the review.

I really wanted to read this book because it had a fabulous premise. I mean, how can you not salivate over the idea of technology/digital world overtaking our lives? It is certainly an issue in our society today, so I like how this story attempted to pose the 'what if' scenario on us. But despite my expectations, this book failed to live up to them.

One of the main reasons why I couldn't really get behind any of the messages behind this book was because neither of the sides seemed viable or realistic. Both sides had a very "all or nothing" kind of gung ho motto about them. The non-digital side was practically bashed into my brain and they were so radical about that they felt more like an unyielding fanatical cult that refused to see any perspectives from the other side. The digital side had the same aggressive atmosphere as well.

Why is this being marketed as a dystopian novel? It isn't much of that to be honest. It's simply a poor cover for a very slight sci-fi influence. Obviously if a novel is going to place in the future (2060), technology is going to be quite a bit different than it is now, but it was a very poorly developed society. I'm quite sure technology by then would have evolved past fancy digital screens and elaborate gadgets that really don't do anything spectacular than change form. Look at how fast technology moves in our society now! In what was it? Fifteen years? We have the ultimate in blinged out cell phones (Japan I'm talking to you. Please unlock your phones so I can use them. Thank you.) and crazy computers. I'm sure this world of Awaken can do a lot better.

If the whole struggle between the opposing sides had been developed a lot more, than I would have given this a lot better grade but halfway through the book, everything set up in the premise was tossed out the window for a very lackluster romance. Maddie falls head over heels for Justin so fast, it's enough to make you get whiplash of epic proportions. I also really hate it when a girl makes their whole life revolve around a guy. Come on! And she gets into some uber mopey omg he's not with me 24/7 sulkiness which is really annoying. Then she develops some sort of fatalistic attitude concerning him, like I can't live without him and if I do, I'll die for him! WTH?! No. Just no. Woman, get a hold of yourself!

And I know how much people hate this comparison but it really did feel like Twilight. In the sense that their whole relationship revolves around the "I love you, but I'm BAD for you!" sort of back and forth. Ugh! I am not joking with this, man. And then he's doing the whole "YOU DESERVE SOMEONE BETTAH! I AM TOO FOR MY CAUSE TO CARE ABOUT YOU!" Key words here! Get over him, asap! He's not that into you! If I had to read a faux seduction sexy times one more time, ima tell that boy to get some real balls, dammit!

Maddie, you are such an indecisive, naïve, stupid, and ridiculous main character. I cannot understand your motives besides the OMG, HOT BOY PAYS ATTENTION TO ME need. Can you please shut up? And let's not go over the how she's the awkward, outcast girl but SOMEHOW is a really uber blazing hot chick. Ha ha ha.

I am not pleased.

Heidi McLaughlin says

Believe me when I tell you, I read a lot of books. It isn't often that I get a book that makes me take a step back and say ... huh? Author Katie Kacvinsky, does just that with AWAKEN.

Set in the year 2060, AWAKEN follows Maddie Freeman, your average teen. She goes to school, out on dates, enjoys the outdoors and loves meeting her friends for coffee. The only thing is she does this from the comfort of her own home. In fact, Maddie never has to leave the house if she doesn't want to. Thanks in part to her father who created Digital School.

One word can sum up Maddie's life...digital. Everyone in Maddie's life is "connected". People don't leave home without their phone, flipscreen and mindreader. For Maddie, this is normal. That is, until she meets Justin.

Justin is old fashioned for the year 2060. Justin prefers pen and paper to a flipscreen. He wants a face-to-face conversation, no hiding behind a computer. Justin is rogue, he doesn't conform to the standards set by the government and he's determined to change Maddie.

AWAKEN is the most realistic dystopian novel I've read - it is sad to think this is the way we are heading. Everyone is glued to their phones, instant messaging and email. One thing that really caught my attention: Kacvinsky focused on books. Books no longer exist as everything is digital and to think we are already there with all the e-readers.

I encourage everyone to order AWAKEN and picture yourself in this book. Then ask yourself, are you Maddie or Justin?

oliviasbooks says

**** includes some "light" spoilinger ****

I was very excited when my request to read an ARC of Katie Kacvinsky's debut *Awaken* was approved of. It is young adult dystopia, it has a gorgeous cover that stands out, it contains some kind of a boy-girl-story and

it deals with a possible negative outcome of our present trend of living part of our lives connected to the web, of working as teleworkers straight from home or from far away of our employers.

My excitement deflated in stages until I had read about 130 pages. That is when I stopped reading. My friends know that I am a pretty picky reader, so my not-finishing a book is nothing to be alarmed about, if you do not share my view of the points which peeved me and which will be explained in the following.

The setting (idea and execution)

Awaken is set in a non-post-apocalyptic America about 50 years from now. I agree with the author: Not every possibility of a future necessarily has to involve a war, the end of democracy or the death of whole nations because of the changing climate, outbreaks of multiple diseases and over-population. But the rather vaguely pictured life in Ms Kacvinsky's 2060's strikes me as not really futuristic (I come to that in a second) and downright pinkish positive in general.

The the hometown of Maddie does not have birds living in it. But that is because trees as we know them exist only outside of cities and even there are too rare and precious to produce paper from them. (I asked myself immediately where the oxygen comes from that Maddie is inhaling.) Nobody really misses those trees, though, because – same as paper for those who like to read the old fashioned way – back- and frontyard trees in all sizes are made out of plastic. It is not explained where the future Americans miraculously found that huge reservoir of oil, though, although it is generally expected now that by 2060 earth should be run out of the estimated rest. The only hint until page 130 concerning the energy question is that Maddie's parents' house's roof is decked with solar panels, which wouldn't really suffice, since the portrayed society seems to need a lot of energy.

People do not own their private vehicles, but use different means of public transport. Apart from wondering „What is wrong with bikes?“ I thought „How wonderful!“. Apparently that is not the message which was meant be conveyed, since the heroine complains about how very dangerous the streets have become for kids since the increase of train and tram use (highly illogical - especially with so many people not leaving their houses at all) and – and this annoyed me very much – the hero, who is the one to fight the system and to remind the heroine of vital aspects missing in her digitalized life, owns a sports car (a model already known today which runs on gasoline) and displays it as a symbol of freedom and rebellion against the wrong turns society had taken. The heroine almost instantly feels alive after fastening her seat belt.

On to the futuristic or non-futuristic (out)look: We speak of a society five decades from now. Look back and recollect how much has changed during the past decades, Ms Kacvinsky. People in *Awaken* carry pretty normal looking mobile phones they have to type into, they have computers at home which they use for school and work and recreation. School and the internet seem to be non-virtual - kind of community-based where you do not see each other, but connect via the written word. TV *has* become a little more interactive; there are programs like virtual mountain climbing and dancing with virtual partners, machines that read and transfer your thoughts. And people tend to carry around e-book readers called bookbags and "flipscreens", which are basically today's iPads in shoulder-bags (like this, maybe:

<http://www.modulrcase.com/store/shoul...>). Apart from changing the school system from real classroom lessons to net-based classrooms, which would take up administrative time, *Awaken* could happen tomorrow or even today as far as technology is concerned, which disappointed me. If somebody invests her imagination to transport me forward in time, I want to *notice* the difference.

As to the book's warning to us that we shouldn't give up real contacts and real sports and real touch and real experience in favour of shifting it all to our online-existence, I believe that the concern is partly valid, but partly unnecessary: In *Awaken* people eat healthy, pre-prepared food instead of frequenting restaurants or

cooking themselves. They have stopped going out to meet their friends for a coffee. I think that people love to eat and eat in company too much to forget what arouses their taste buds (Look at all the cook books and cooking shows). People fly across the globe to handle a deal, because they know how important a face-to-face communication really is. Besides, I am sure the economy would collapse if people didn't have friends and neighbors to show off their newly acquired gadgets and clothes to.

The characters (and the story)

At the beginning of the book I liked Maddie pretty much: An intelligent, soccer-playing girl who has to stay home most of the time because of her control-freak father, who follows her every step (even online) and even is the founder of the compulsory Digital School system, which in turn is responsible for Maddie's isolated life. Good for Maddie, that she still has her mother on her side, who has to be essentially a good person, because she owns a shelf full of old-time paperbacks. That is what I assumed.

Later on I could understand the father a little – despicable as he is in his self-proclaimed glory. For Maddie turned out to be a pretty unreasonable and unreliable heroine. Her case is a special one. Not every kid is as closely monitored as she is. When she was 14 she broke the law, just because she felt a little rebellious. Now she is on probation until graduation, which in my book beats juvenile detention every day. Maddie sees that differently. She wants her father to instantly forgive her and to trust her not to do something as stupid again. But on the other hand indignant Maggie leaves a charity event and does not return as early as she had promised her mother, and she goes off with Justin on one of his rebellious law-breaking sprees without insisting on an explanation of what she got herself into. She just feels alive and basks in her sickly obsession of good-looking, charismatic Justin, who she doesn't really know much about.

B.t.w., Justin. I couldn't stand Justin. At all. Justin doesn't deserve to be a hero in my eyes. It becomes obvious pretty early, that Justin singled Maddie out for reasons serving "the common good", namely his terroristic cause. He gets nervous when she touches him, He tells Maddie at their first date that he won't be much in town and wants to introduce her to his friends who will contact (and influence) her in the meantime. He and his friend marvel about how much of his precious time Justin sets aside on Maddie. Usually, when he "trains" someone, the meetings do not get that personal:

"I can guarantee he's singled you out for a reason. He doesn't waste his time on people. I know that much about him. His time's way too valuable. [...] Justin never pays too much attention to one person. It's like people all blend into him."

Well, hurray, Maddie. Here's your designated love interest. Justin's behavior reminded me strongly of recruiters of religious sects and of pimps who invest a certain amount of money and charm and intimacy into a new member of their congregation or "staff". And I felt the bile rising in my throat when Justin took along the unsuspecting Maddie as his criminal sidekick demanding her to do as he said and when he said, because she trusted him, didn't she? When she nodded helplessly I wanted to scream: "How can you trust someone who risked your life by racing his car on the train tracks, girl?" Instead I turned off my e-reader – which is *not* worse for the eyes than a printed book, Ms Kacvinsky – and stopped reading.

Another person that annoyed me considerably was Maddie's mom. She embraces all things old-fashioned like hand-writing, reading paperbacks and talking face-to-face, but she lives a weak life in her husband's shadow, reminding her daughter to comply to his wishes and avoiding confrontation. She points out possibilities without even considering the notion to act upon them. If the future will as bright as *Awaken* depicts it, I wish women like Maddie's mom will have died out by then.

This review has gotten much longer than I planned it to be. But I have to add something concerning the writing. The writing is good. Not exceptionally so, but enjoyable. So if you are unfazed by the aspects that

bugged me, please buy and read the book. There are definitely worse books around.

Thank you for letting me read and review *Awaken*, Houghton Mifflin. I am very grateful and I have not lost my faith in your ability to spot good books. Your program is predominantly awesome.

Janina says

Katie Kacvinsky's debut novel, **Awaken**, takes the reader to the year 2060, when every aspect of life has become digitalized. People hardly go out anymore; they have confined themselves to their homes after tragic incidents in the past and live through their computer, socializing only in online communities. Young people even go to school online. Madeline is one of them, yet different. Since a rebellion and betrayal against her father, the founder of digital school, Maddie has been kept under constant supervision. Now she has left her past behind, concentrating on schoolwork and her future. But that changes when she meets Justin - a boy who challenges her views and introduces her to a completely new and different way of life. Maddie is torn: Should she follow Justin and betray her father again for what she believes in? Or should she continue to play the role of the obedient daughter for her family's sake?

This premise sounded extremely intriguing to me and – combined with the gorgeous cover (yeah, I know, please don't judge me) – made me look forward to reading the book. Now I'm very sorry to say that I didn't enjoy it as much as I expected to and was actually not far from putting it away unfinished two or three times.

Positive things first, though: Kacvinsky's writing definitely had a great flow (I've learned that this isn't to be taken for granted) and there were some beautiful quotes I wrote down to remember.

At the beginning I liked Madeline, the main character, a lot, too. She is intelligent and not afraid to take matters in her own hands or take risks. I liked how she wasn't waiting for her crush, Justin, to make the first move but actually approached him on her own. Later on, though, he became the absolute centre of her world and her moping around got on my nerves. Additionally, Maddie often only seemed to be the pawn in someone else's plan, and was too passive to really be considered the book's heroine.

I found the idea of the world Kacvinsky takes the reader to fascinating. I can really imagine that a world like this might be our near future, but – sadly – the details and explanations were extremely fuzzy, especially on the technical level. Also, the view of the future seemed almost too optimistic for me in some ways. Not once did the situation feel threatening to me. (Just an example: All nuclear weapons have been put down, weapons with bullets are illegal and the police only use tranquilizers.) Also, some of the things that were labelled "bad" actually weren't in my opinion. Digital school, for instance: I agree that it is important that pupils have the possibility to interact personally, but to present it as a huge threat to personal freedom? Altogether, not convincing.

In the end, though, what I liked least about the novel was strongly connected with Justin, the love interest: First of all, I couldn't really feel any chemistry between him and Maddie, or understand why she was attracted to him in the first place. And secondly, he was so preachy. Seriously, every time he and Maddie met, he only talked about the dangers of computers, about how bad it was that people lived only through those devices and how society had become too dependent on them. His ramblings actually made him unattractive to me. I only thought: Okay now, I got it, you don't have to beat me over the head with your views, I'm not totally dumb! To make things worse, he also had this *'I'm-not-good-enough-and-too-dangerous-for-you'* attitude – and combined with *'You-are-too-precious-and-important-to-take-part-in-*

anything-dangerous' he really annoyed me.

All in all, this book just wasn't anything to be excited about. It focuses a lot on romance, and this romance fell flat for me because I didn't like Justin. I also would have loved to see more development in Maddie's relationship with her family, but that aspect was almost completely abandoned after the first half.

Additionally, the world building lacked the vivid details I look for in this genre.

As there are a lot of dystopian YA books coming out at the moment, I certainly would not recommend **Awaken** first.

Thanks a lot to Netgalley and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for giving me the opportunity to read this early version.

Jessica says

Awaken is set in 2060, a future not too far away. Interpersonal relationships have been reduced to a minimum due to the fact that almost everything can be done online. Kids attend digital school, so they don't have to leave the house for that anymore, people don't meet their friends the old-fashioned way by going out, they only meet up virtually in chat rooms. People's understanding of going to the movies together is actually only watching a movie on their PCs while simultaneously chatting with their friends. Cars are rarely to be seen because everybody's using public transportation and ordinary paper isn't used anymore due to the fact that there are almost no trees left. This is only a partial description of the worldbuilding and opinions on the realism of this scenario may vary but for me the basic idea is definitely probable.

Just think about how much time you spend each day in front of your computer. In my case it's 8-10 hours at work plus at least 2 or 3 hours at home, meaning I spend the majority of my waking hours glued to my screen. Everybody knows about online games like World of Warcraft (it is an online game, right?) or phenomena's like Second Life. How many people create fake identities on the internet in order to find approval which they can't seem to find in real life? Just look at all the information that can be found on the internet about all of us. I think it's scary with which carelessness some people reveal information about their private lives on platforms like Facebook for example. The internet doesn't forget information. Once uploaded it's extremely hard to remove it again.

In the present case the scenario might be a bit overdrawn in places and one can argue about the probability of some aspects of the worldbuilding but as I already said, the basic idea is realistic. As you can see, this book really got me thinking and that's what I liked about it.

Enough about the worldbuilding. I enjoyed reading this very much, I got quickly hooked, I thought the plot was gripping and I liked all the characters. Sure, Justin is a little heavy on the preaching part (COMPUTERS ARE EVIL!) and his attitude towards relationships was a little annoying, what with him thinking he doesn't deserve Maddie's love, but to be honest, I wasn't bothered much by this. I guess I sound like a broken record by now but I have to say it again: I just love when the relationship develops slowly. I enjoy pining away for the love interest together with the heroine.

I was torn between a 4 and a 5 stars rating but settled for 5 stars eventually because Awaken meets all of my personal criteria in order to qualify as a 5 star read.

Do I want to re-read this sometime? --> Yes.

Did I re-read single passages while reading because I thought they were so good? --> Yes.
Did the romance make me swoon and root for the heroine and the love interest to get together? --> Yes.
Didn't I want to stop reading or did I try to read slowly in order to savor the story? --> Yes.
Did I think about the book even when I was not reading (at work for example)? --> Yes.
Did I think about the story even after I had finished the book? --> Yes.

The above are probably not all of my criteria but it was enough for me to rate this 5 stars.

Thanks to netGalley and Houghton Mifflin for the opportunity to enjoy Awaken already now.

Karin Falkner says

Spannend, kurzweilig, tolle Story!

Jenny says

Die Geschichte, rund um Maddie, spielt im Jahre 2060.

Das Leben hat sich insofern verändert, dass es sich fast ausschließlich in einer virtuellen Realität abspielt. So trifft man sich z.B. nicht mehr in der Stadt mit seinen Freunden um einen Kaffee zu trinken, sondern schafft sich von zu Hause ein virtuelles Kaffee in dem man sich dann mit seinen Onlinekontakten treffen kann.

Generell verlässt man fast gar nicht mehr das Haus.

Auslöser für diese drastische Veränderung ist dabei nicht nur die technische Weiterentwicklung, die dies erst möglich gemacht hat, sondern vor allem auch die Angst der Menschen, Opfer eines Terroranschlags zu werden, wie es Jahre zuvor geschehen ist, als man noch normal die Schule besuchte etc.

Maddie ist die Tochter des Leiters der Digital School, die für alle Kinder zur Pflicht geworden ist, nachdem die normalen Schulen zu unsicher geworden sind.

Jedoch gefällt Maddie dieses online-Leben nicht wirklich gut und so beginnt die Rebellion.

Ich habe dieses Buch als Hörbuch gehört, was ziemlich angenehm war.

Da von einem relativ leichten Wortschatz Gebrauch gemacht wird und es auch sonst keine wirklich harte Kost ist, war es auch kein Problem mal ein paar Minuten nicht so genau hinzuhören.

Was mich an dem Buch am meisten gestört hat war die Tatsache, dass ich den Eindruck hatte, dass die Rebellion immer weiter in den Hintergrund gerückt ist und stattdessen der Fokus eher auf der Liebesgeschichte zwischen Maddie und Justin lag.

Das schlägt sich dann leider auch auf die Bewertung nieder, obwohl ich die grundsätzliche Thematik richtig spannend fand, da ich es auch nicht so abwegig finde, dass wir uns in eine solche Richtung des Onlinelebens entwickeln könnten.

Kim says

I often wonder what life will be like in 10, 15 years from now. If I look in the past, it seems like nothing has really changed, besides the fact that I grew up. But when I look more closely, I see technology evolved in ways I didn't think were possible. 15 years ago I would have laughed if somebody would have told me people would be online, constantly. Computers, laptops, phones,... The possibilities become more and more endless, the opportunities become bigger and bigger, the future is looking so bright it hurts my eyes. Things just only get better, right?

This book is set in a world where technology is used to control people's lives, not to enrich it. We already feel slightly threatened when people ask you for your email address in a random store, so imagine what it would be like if everything you did left a trace somewhere. From when you wake up, to stores where you buy your clothes to the conversations you have with people.

Face to face interaction is nearly extinct in Maddie's world. You can do everything while sitting in front of your computer screen: going to school, walks on the beach, workouts, anything. When we meet Maddie, she's perfectly okay with the way she's living her life. The only downside is the way her father treats her. A few years ago she went through a rebellious period and because of that, her father nearly went to prison. Ever since, his leash on her has been extremely short, keeping a close eye on her every digital movement. He is the inventor of the most influential program in history called Digital School, which makes it possible for people to study at home. The amount of power he has is almost endless.

Things suddenly change when Maddie meets Justin Solvi online, who convinces her to come to a real life tutor session. He puts her world upside down while trying to convince her people shouldn't be shut off from the real world, but live in it. Everything Maddie believes in gets questioned. I liked the interaction between Maddie and Justin, but his motives for not wanting to get close to Maddie are a bit on the hollow side. He has his own parents to show how it can work, if you put some effort into it. There is no way he can keep on doing this without having somebody to be close to. I hope he realizes this soon.

I really liked this book, it has a good flow and the buildup is well written. A lot of the characters are interesting and likable. This story makes you think about the direction we are headed in and wonder if it's the good one. I can't wait to find out what happens next.

Reynje says

Conceptually, I liked this book. The subject matter is topical, and I feel that the arguments presented are valid and worth discussion. The issues Kacvinsky conflates to build her future world will resonate with anyone who has even half a finger on the current technological pulse, or an interest in social anthropology in general.

In execution, however, this novel left me with fairly lukewarm feelings.

Fast forward to 2060, when escalating violence and rapid advancements in technology have caused the lives of US citizens to invert. Education and social interaction take place largely online. Private transport is uncommon. Writing longhand and paper books are practically obsolete (*gasp!*) And almost everybody is "plugged in", armed to the teeth with phones, "flipscreens", even "MindReaders". There's no longer just "an

app for that”, there’s a device that will do it for you.

We meet Maddie, daughter of the founder of Digital School, suffering the consequences of a past rebellion and living her life mostly within the confines of her home. Enter Justin, a mysterious online study group contact, who extends the unusual invitation to meet in person, and offers Maddie a glimpse of another kind of life.

This is not a subtle book. You do not have to read between the lines, because the lines essentially leap off the page and hit you in the face. Whether through the internal musings of Maddie herself, or via Justin’s eloquent speeches – he occasionally sounds more like a travelling sage than a (view spoiler) year old guy – the evils of technology gone too far are expounded loud and clear. I’d go so far as to say there isn’t really subtext here. Just text. To wit: as life becomes increasingly tied to technology and thus devoid of physical and emotional connection, it tears away at the foundation of what it is to be human, and the intrinsic value of relationships.

I don’t disagree with many of the sentiments that the characters / the story express. And Kacvinsky’s writing is clear with some nice, expressive turns and genuinely profound lines. Maddie is not an entirely unsympathetic protagonist and it’s pleasing to see that she takes some of her choices into her own hands. So perhaps I should simply chalk this one up to not being to my particular taste.

While my interest was piqued by the beginning, I felt that the mid section of the narrative was somewhat flaccid. It paints an accurate picture of the boredom of Maddie’s restricted, virtual life – but my attention waned considerably. The pacing increases throughout the latter chapters, but I felt here that the story relied heavily on the reader’s investment in the Maddie/Justin will they/won’t they relationship to pull them through the plot, as opposed to Maddie’s actual predicament. I’ll admit that for me, the chemistry between the characters fell flat. There are "swoony" moments between them – but the constant expository, didactic dialogue was a little frustrating.

In terms of the climax, it was well-paced, but relied heavily on convenient twists and pulled together rather too neatly for me to completely buy into. And while the ending leaves threads loose to be picked up in the sequel, I can’t help but feel that maybe it would be a stronger book if it stood alone. The hopeful, yet slightly melancholic note of the final pages might have reinforced the impact of the story, lingered more, had I not know that they would be picked back up and extended later. I may be alone in this opinion – I’m sure that there are plenty of readers who are eager to get reacquainted with these characters and follow their story.

Awaken is well-written (view spoiler) and poses some interesting, albeit very blunt, questions. I can see that the speculative nature of the story and the character’s relationships will be appealing to some – however the style in which the themes were delivered made this not really my kind of book.
