



Impyrium

Henry H. Neff

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In the first book of Henry Neff's new high-stakes middle grade fantasy series, two unlikely allies—the Faeregine princess Hazel and the servant boy Hob—confront a conspiracy that will shake the world of Impyrium to its core.

For over three thousand years, the Faeregine dynasty has ruled Impyrium. But the family's magic has been fading, and with it their power over the empire. Whether it's treachery from a rival house, the demon Lirlanders, or rebel forces, many believe the Faereginese are ripe to fall.

Hazel, the youngest member of the royal family, is happy to leave ruling to her sisters so that she can study her magic. But the Empress has other plans for her granddaughter, dark and dangerous plans to exploit Hazel's talents and rekindle the Faeregine mystique. Hob, a commoner from the outer realms, has been sent to the city to serve the Faeregines—and to spy on them.

One wants to protect the dynasty. The other wants to destroy it. But when Hazel and Hob form an improbable friendship, their bond may save the realm as they know it...or end it for good.

Impyrium Details

Date : Published October 11th 2016 by HarperCollins

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Author : Henry H. Neff

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From Reader Review Impyrium for online ebook

Michelle says

Appropriate for: age 13+

I loved this book so much. I stayed up late 5 nights in a row just so I could finish it. I liked both main characters a lot. The magic had some new, interesting elements to it. The mystery was very compelling. No swear words (yay!) but it has pseudo swear words such as the B word for illegitimate child. I recommend it for older teens because of the violence and the concepts are a bit hard to grasp.

Lara says

I hadn't heard anything about this book, but when it came in at work I noticed the quote on the cover from James Dashner saying, "I haven't read about a world so deep, so purely magical, so well-developed since Harry Potter." Then I turned it over and saw another one from Eoin Colfer saying, "A rare jewel. A new classic in the fantasy genre." Um, well, ok, if you guys insist. I'll bite!

While I definitely don't think this series will ever become another Harry Potter, there's certainly something there. It's like, it has all the depth of Harry Potter, if not more, but without the humor, maybe, or that sense of wonder. But more maturity. I dunno, but whatever it was, it worked for me!

It took awhile for me to start really feeling attached to the characters, but man, I kind of love them now, and even the great HP took three whole books to get me to that point. But then, this book is almost 600 pages long, so it gives you plenty of time to get immersed in the world (*our* world, a thousand or so years from now-ish, with magic and dragons and demons and a major ban on technology--but not in a preachy kind of way at all). It's a slower, less action-packed sort of fantasy novel, but it's just the kind of slow-burn story I find super satisfying, because it *is* so well-developed. Neff apparently has another series set in this same world earlier in time that I haven't yet read, but I will obviously be getting around to that soon!

There *are* a few things that bugged me, and there's one secret bad guy that I kind of knew was a secret bad guy for pretty much the whole book, and a villain-confessional-monologue bit at the end (omg, why can't villains just ever keep their bragging to themselves???), so this book is not quite perfect, but...I *really* enjoyed it and am TOTALLY looking forward to book 2 in what already feels like too long from now.

Anyway, don't go into it expecting it to blow good ole-Harry P. out of the water or anything, but if nothing else it's FOR SURE a great read-alike for those kids that have read all the other HP read-alikes already (I have several of those at my library, and have already told one of them that he probably needs to read this ASAP).

Evangeline says

Okay so I DNF-ed this after a couple chapters.

I think that if I had continued, I might have really enjoyed it (that's why I'm putting it at 2 stars instead of just 1. I'M SO SORRY), but it felt like the author was trying to cram in too much world-building at once for it to be all comprehensible.

...It's also just a really big book and I wasn't in the mood for that.

Really this is a "it's not you, it's me" thing.

Hannie Han Han says

I had to keep checking my brain for examples of twelve-year-olds and thirteen-year-olds every time I wanted to give side-eye to some depictions that I thought were probably too mature for that age. But then I reminded myself that this is a middle school fantasy, and once I let myself suspend that reality, then I was totally sucked in. An entertaining young adult read for those who like magic. A well-crafted story with a strongly developed magical world. Way better than the Magicians.

Courtney says

I didn't get into this book right away -- I often get thrown off by fantasy worlds that take place in "our" future, and drop in hints of our world. I'm getting invested in this fantasy-infused society and then suddenly the characters are watching an old Disney movie? But these details ultimately are woven into the fabric of a whole lot of intricate worldbuilding. Impyrium feels like a fully fleshed out world, full of sniffing hags (don't ask), secret revolutions, catty noble families, ancient dragons, underwater demon cities, sassy homonculi...and so much more.

The plot moves along at a brisk pace and contains lots of action and surprises along the way. I guessed some character's motivations right away but later on I would start to doubt myself; the narrative plays with the complicated issues of right and wrong and who to trust, and the characters and readers are often in the same place. Hob has pretty strong convictions about what he'd like the world to be, but the answer of how it should be done (and who should do it) remains a twisty mystery. I thought this level of nuance added complexity to the world and plot, and there's some interesting discussion of economics and social dynamics and inequality. There's much more to explore in sequels.

The main characters were compelling, and their growing friendship builds in a sweet and realistic way. Hazel took a little longer to grow on me; at the beginning, she's fairly lazy and hard to connect with. But she quickly shifted into an engaging, bright character, and as she comes across truths about herself and her world, her growth is great to watch. Hob is a smart and vibrant character, and his quips and antics even in situations like dramatic duels made me chuckle. Even the side characters who seem like they're going to be one-note -- the stoic assassin, the grumpy governess -- end up being multifaceted.

A fast-paced but nuanced adventure through a detailed, magical world.

Erin Pauley says

I was nervous about a book relating to the tapestry series because I love it so much and did not want it to be ruined. I was pleasantly surprised by how much I liked this book! At first I was sort of upset by how far into the future this book goes and by how different the world seems but it definitely won me over. I will be sure to read the next book in this series.

Elisha says

IMPYRIUM by Henry H. Neff is the first book in a brand new fantasy series sure to knock your socks off! This YA novel boasts a hefty 585 pages of pure excitement and adventure. Neff creates a very complex world, and as a result, the story starts out slow. At first, all the characters, the land's history, and the new vocabulary can be confusing. However, eventually it starts to click and as a result, pacing begins to pick up. It is then that the book starts to become a lot of fun.

I genuinely love Hob, one of the lead characters. I deeply care for him and really hope that he will somehow end up in a good situation. He is crafty, intelligent, loving, and not to mention has great self-preservation skills. His relationship with Hazel is really special and genuinely believable as it unfolds in an innocent and natural way. In fact, the last few lines of the novel, shared between these characters, is perhaps the best way to button up the first book in the series. I honestly cannot wait for the second installment to see how this partnership develops and where their stories go next.

In fact, all the characters in this novel have distinctive traits and virtues. The three Faeregine triplets themselves could not be more different from one another. Consequently, this creates conflict as each have their own opinions and views about the world, which makes the story that much more similar to competing personalities in real life situations. The author's effort to ground these characters helps readers share an emotional understanding with them, despite the fantastical elements of the book.

However, the Faeregine sisters, Violet, Isabel, and Hazel, as well as Hob, do feel much older than their ages of twelve and thirteen. Of course these characters have had more experience in their short lives than many have had in longer ones, but they still read as more mature teenagers on the cusp of adulthood. This problem could have been solved by making them seventeen. With this, the novel still would be appropriate for young audiences and still would convey the same ideas and themes.

Despite the age issue, IMPYRIUM on a whole, is a wonderful book. It is the first high fantasy series I have begun that has not been so clinical in the descriptions that it lost the thrill and adventure. It is a story that creates a roller coaster of a ride with unexpected twists and turns that will leave the audience wanting more.

Originally posted here: <http://www.yabookscentral.com/yaficti...>

Dorine White says

Welcome to Impyrium, the world that remains after a great cataclysm happened on Earth. For over three thousand years, the Faeregine dynasty has ruled Impyrium. Now, twelve year-old Hazel, the youngest of royal triplets, is set to inherit the power of her ancient family. Enter servant boy, Hobs. A young man who

has been recruited by The Fellowship, a rebel group opposed to the Faeregine's and all magical families of the upper class.

Hob's works his way into Hazel's life, becoming her friend and tutor, only to realize that she is not the evil that he has been told about. Hazel believes in her friend Hob's and trusts him with her life. Together, they confront the lies and conspiracies that confront the world of Impyrium. However, Hob's is bond to The Fellowship by dark magic, and in the final confrontation he might have no control. Who will win the day?

My Thoughts-

Loved it! Beware though, this is a hefty read of almost 600 pages. I gobbled it down :) From the get go I was drawn into this magical world that remained from what was left of our own world. The book starts out with the discovery of the ancient city of Vancouver and then expands into a royal dynasty that has existed for thousands of years. The old world is unknown, thought to be a myth by most.

Hazel is an albino and carries Old Magic within her. She is thought to be the rebirth of an ancient queen, The Reaper, a power hungry sorceress who razed the world, but also kept it safe from demons. The Fellowship believe that they must kill Hazel to prevent another tyrant. Here in lies our twisty plot and amped up tension. The reader falls in love with Hazel, the protected princess whose eyes are slowly opened to the injustice around her. We know what is coming, betrayal, but we just have to wait to see how it plays out.

The author weaves a magical world full of history into Hazel's background, and Hob's, as her tutor, teaches her all about the outside world. There are plots to unfoil, people to reveal, and royalty to betray. It is just a great big bunch of fun to read. I loved the characters, each one with their own deep stories and desires. But most of all, I loved Hazel, the girl who holds her own and creates her own destiny. I'm giving this one 5 stars!

Heidi says

At 500+ pages, Impyrium is truly the beginning of an epic fantasy series. Neff has done an amazing job of creating a dystopian world from top to bottom. The amount of detail given is amazing, it's clear that the author has thought through his world very thoroughly (see account above). But it's Hazel and Hob that kept me reading the book. Hazel is a sweet girl, who through no fault of her own, happens to be one of the granddaughters of the Divine Empress, the last of the Faeregine dynasty. She also happens to be the only one with any magical ability, which makes her priceless to her grandmother who is seeking for ways to keep the empire firmly under Faeregine control. But Hazel has no interest in any of this, she's glad not to be the heiress and seeks only to enjoy time to herself to read and study magic. Hob on the other hand lives a continent away from Hazel, deep in the Muirlands where he works deep in a mine to support his mother and sister. What a mysterious man named Mr. Burke offers him a chance to find out more about his father and work against the Empire for a substantial amount of money, he can't bring himself to decline. Neither Hazel or Hob however has any idea of the challenges and shocking events that await them. When the two meet and become friends things change for both of them, both find their ideas of world changing more rapidly than they are prepared to handle. And unfortunately, Hazel and Hob find themselves in the center of a plot to overthrow the empire.

I found it fascinating to follow along on the journeys that both Hazel and Hob find themselves on, as they work to make sense of what they are learning, and deciding what it is they really want to be and what they really care about. I love this kind of fantasy because it has so much depth to it. The characters, including both Hazel and Hob themselves, come across as real because they have both strengths and weaknesses, and sadly, that means they both face deception and betrayal. This new series with its intricacies and details provides not only a fascinating story but a thematic portrayal of friendship under the most difficult of circumstances.

colleen the convivial curmudgeon says

3.5

Overall, I enjoyed this story. It reads like a sort of MG High Fantasy, and I liked the world building and how it didn't seem, to be, to be overly info-dumpy. Things were gradually laid out as they became relevant, and I liked the different perspectives we got to see through the two main characters eyes.

Really, I think the characters were a highlight for me. They were written so well - so believable and relatable, and they came from very different backgrounds with very different perspectives, so it was nice to see the world through their eyes and also to watch their growing friendship.

It was also nice to see characters slightly out of the norm. Hazel is a young albino girl and Hob is part First Nations - not demographics we often see portrayed in positive lights. (I recall reading something once about how almost all albino characters in books and movies are evil, and here we have not just a non-evil albino character, but a main character as well.)

One of the best things about the story, for me, was that it wasn't entirely straight forward. People's loyalties were questioned and tested, and while I didn't fall for the obvious red herring, I did find myself turning pages eagerly to find out exactly what was going on and who was betraying who.

The said - while I enjoyed the story as I was reading it, I can't say it left all that strong of an impression on me. I do want to continue the series - assuming the series does get continued - but I could also see myself sort of forgetting about it after a few months, let alone years.

ETA: One thing I had wanted to mention that I forgot to was the seeming ages of the girls.

The three sisters are triplets, all around 12; however, Hazel was the only one who actually seemed to be roughly 12 - perhaps slightly younger. Isabel read closer to 15 and Violet around 18, which made Hazel seem very immature by comparison. It was a bit jarring and I had to keep reminding myself that the girls are actually all meant to be the same age.

I think it actually would've worked better if all the girls were a bit older - like if they were all meant to be 15. Especially because of the things that are expected of them in this story.

Hob also seemed a bit older than his given age, but he had a rough life and was forced to take care of his family early on, so it made a little more sense in his case.

mills♥ says

[Hazel and Hob crossed paths (hide spoiler)]

Iliana Simeonova says

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Online Eccentric Librarian says

More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>

Some books don't resonate with a reader and unfortunately this one never really caught my interest. The writing is strong and there is good worldbuilding. But I also felt that I had read this story before; an amalgamation of dystopian and fantasy middle grade books that failed to engage. So I write this review with my thoughts but also the caveat that I am likely one of a very few who did not enjoy the book. Likely, that opinion has something to do with not having read the other books in this universe (though I am told that you don't need to in order to understand Impyrium).

Story: Hazel is the youngest princess in the imperial Faeregrine family. An albino and outcast, she may just be the most powerful magic user in generations. Hob is a commoner who is about to find out that there was a lot more to his father than he was ever told. Royal and rebel both have reasons to distrust and hate the Faeregrines. When their paths meet, a dynasty may fall.

The story is told from two viewpoints: inside the imperial palace with Hazel and traveling/learning to be a rebel with Hob. The premise is a post apocalyptic world where technology has been carefully suppressed and doled out sparingly by the Faeregrines. They also control the magic relics that keep them in power. In this post apocalyptic world, we get cities such as Vancouver that have been completely destroyed/buried and then explored for artifacts.

For me, the characters felt a bit flat despite the very interesting world building. Hazel and Hob felt like every other middle grade hero/heroine - eager young puppy and privileged princess who each have to learn a new way of life with lives depending on them. Of course, they will have to deal with different situations (Hazel with the politics and Hob with the physical dangers) and triumph or very bad things happen.

The worldbuilding is solid but there were several cliches in there. E.g., learning about the world through sitting through Hazel or Hob's school lessons (who wants to sit through someone else's lesson?) . As well, we

have the bog standard overheard secret, special snowflake, father with a mysterious past, and mysterious stranger who inducts our hero. Let's not get into the special friends who help and are put in danger for it. The book is very earnest - perhaps a bit too much for my taste. It can get dense in there.

As noted earlier, I am likely very atypical in being underwhelmed. In no way are there any major flaws and the writing is well done. I just didn't get into it as I hoped I would. Reviewed from an advance reader copy provided by the publisher.

Britt says

In which I finally read a middle grade book that I like (that's not a sequel). WHEE!

3000 years ago (aka present day), the earth suffered from "the Cataclysm" - a apocalyptic event that changed the literal shape of the earth (because earthquakes) as well as all of it's political structures. In this 3000 years fast forwarded version of earth, technology has been all but outlawed, and magical folks are treated in a vastly superior way to those without magic. Hob Smythe is a non-magical miner living in the Dusk (outside of present-day Vancouver) who is recruited by a secret society called The Fellowship that wants non-magic folks to have the same rights as magic folks. He is quickly whisked away to the capital (Impyrium) where he is to spy on Hazel Faeregrine - the princess third in line to the throne that the Fellowship suspects is massively powerful. Meanwhile, Hazel is trying to learn how to wield her great magical power, while maneuvering and investigating interesting goings on in the palace.

As you can probably tell from that description, there is a lot of world-building that happens in this book. As a result, the beginning is a little slow, but after a few chapters, I found myself engrossed. Neff creates a dynamic world full of magic, demons, and dragons. The characters themselves are intelligent, likable (if a little gullible), and independent. If you like your heroes with pluck, you'll love Hazel and Hob. The story, once it gets going, is fairly complex, but in a really great way. There's a lot of plotting and conspiracies and it's really fun to try to figure out what is happening along with Hazel and Hob. A lot of little threads are introduced, and many plot points are tied up in the end while paving the way for the next installment in the story. Additionally, there is fun social commentary in terms of non-magic vs. magic folks and their respective treatments.

I liked this enough that I immediately put the author's companion series, which is called The Tapestry tells about the events of the Cataclysm, on hold. Recommended for fantasy readers of all ages. 4 stars.

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