

this world we live in susan beth pfeffer

This World We Live In is a compelling young adult novel by Susan Beth Pfeffer, which serves as a sequel to her earlier work, "Life As We Knew It." This book continues to explore the themes of survival, family, and resilience in the face of catastrophic events. Set against the backdrop of a world drastically altered by a meteor strike that has caused significant climate changes, "This World We Live In" delves deeper into the psychological and physical challenges faced by its characters. In this article, we will explore the plot, characters, themes, and critical reception of this thought-provoking novel.

Plot Summary

"This World We Live In" picks up approximately a year after the events of "Life As We Knew It." The story is narrated by Miranda, a teenage girl whose life has been irrevocably changed by the catastrophic events resulting from the meteor strike. The book opens with Miranda and her family attempting to adapt to a world where resources are scarce, and survival is a daily challenge.

Setting the Stage

The world has transformed dramatically since the meteor struck the moon, which led to disastrous consequences on Earth, including severe climate changes. The once-familiar landscapes are now fraught with danger, and societal structures have collapsed. The narrative takes place primarily in Pennsylvania, where Miranda's family struggles to make sense of their new reality.

Miranda's Journey

Miranda, who has grown up amidst the chaos, finds herself grappling with not only the physical challenges of survival but also the emotional turmoil of what has been lost. As she navigates through her changed world, she faces:

- The scarcity of food and clean water
- The constant threat of illness and injury
- The emotional burden of watching loved ones suffer
- The challenge of maintaining hope in a bleak situation

Through her eyes, readers witness the struggle to find normalcy in an

abnormal world. Miranda's perspective allows us to explore the nuances of teenage life under extraordinary circumstances, including her relationships with family and friends.

Character Development

Susan Beth Pfeffer has crafted a rich tapestry of characters who embody the struggles and triumphs of the human spirit in the face of adversity. The main characters include:

- Miranda: The protagonist, whose growth throughout the story is a focal point. She evolves from a passive observer of her circumstances to an active participant in her family's survival.
- Laura: Miranda's mother, who becomes a pillar of strength for the family. Her resilience and determination are crucial as she navigates the challenges of motherhood in a crisis.
- Peter: Miranda's brother, who brings a sense of levity and hope to the narrative, often providing comic relief amidst the tension.
- Alex: A childhood friend who reappears in Miranda's life, adding complexity to her relationships and illustrating the importance of social bonds in difficult times.
- Other characters: The story introduces various individuals who impact Miranda's journey, underscoring the interconnectedness of human experiences, even during catastrophic events.

The Role of Family

Family dynamics play a significant role in "This World We Live In." The novel emphasizes the importance of familial bonds when faced with adversity. Readers see how the characters support each other emotionally and physically, often making sacrifices for the well-being of the family unit. The struggles they endure together highlight the resilience of familial love, even when survival seems uncertain.

Themes

"This World We Live In" is rich with themes that resonate with readers on multiple levels. Some of the most prominent include:

Survival and Resilience

Survival is a central theme, encapsulating both physical survival and emotional endurance. The characters face a myriad of challenges, from

securing food to coping with loss. Their resilience is a testament to the human spirit, showcasing how people can adapt and persevere even in dire circumstances.

Hope and Despair

The novel oscillates between hope and despair, illustrating the delicate balance between the two. Characters often find themselves on the brink of hopelessness, yet moments of connection and love remind them of the reasons to keep fighting. This theme is particularly poignant in Miranda's journey as she grapples with her internal struggles.

Impact of Climate Change

Pfeffer addresses the urgent issue of climate change, using the catastrophic events in the story as a cautionary tale. The novel encourages readers to reflect on their relationship with the environment and the consequences of neglecting it. This theme serves as a wake-up call, emphasizing the need for awareness and action regarding climate issues.

Coming of Age

Miranda's journey is also one of coming of age. As she faces the realities of her changed world, she learns valuable life lessons about responsibility, love, and the importance of human connections. Her character development resonates with readers, particularly young adults navigating their own paths toward maturity.

Critical Reception

"This World We Live In" has garnered positive reviews for its thoughtful exploration of complex themes and relatable characters. Critics have praised Pfeffer's ability to create a sense of urgency and realism, making the story both engaging and thought-provoking. The novel is often recommended for its emotional depth and its capacity to spark conversations about survival, family, and environmental issues.

Audience and Impact

Targeted primarily at young adult readers, the novel has found a broader audience among adults who appreciate its nuanced portrayal of resilience in

the face of adversity. Educators and librarians often include it in curriculum discussions about climate change and survival literature, recognizing its relevance in today's world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, "This World We Live In" by Susan Beth Pfeffer is more than just a survival story; it is a profound exploration of the human condition when faced with extraordinary challenges. Through the eyes of Miranda and her family, readers are invited to reflect on their own lives, the importance of family, and the urgent need to address environmental issues. The novel serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience of the human spirit, encouraging us to confront our fears and maintain hope in a world that is constantly changing. As we navigate our own realities, Pfeffer's work remains a relevant and impactful addition to young adult literature, with messages that resonate deeply across generations.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main themes explored in 'This World We Live In' by Susan Beth Pfeffer?

The main themes include survival, family dynamics, and the impact of environmental disasters on society. The story delves into how individuals cope with catastrophic changes and the moral dilemmas they face.

How does 'This World We Live In' connect to the previous books in the Last Survivors series?

'This World We Live In' is the third book in the Last Survivors series and continues the story of the characters introduced in 'Life As We Knew It' and 'The Dead and the Gone', expanding on their struggles and experiences in a post-apocalyptic world.

What challenges do the characters face in 'This World We Live In'?

The characters face numerous challenges including food and water shortages, the threat of violence from other survivors, and the emotional toll of loss and isolation as they navigate a drastically changed world.

How does Susan Beth Pfeffer portray the concept of

hope in 'This World We Live In'?

Pfeffer portrays hope as a fragile yet essential element of survival. Despite the dire circumstances, characters find small moments of connection and resilience, illustrating the human spirit's capacity to persevere even in the bleakest situations.

What impact did 'This World We Live In' have on young adult literature?

'This World We Live In' has been influential in young adult literature by addressing contemporary issues such as climate change and societal collapse, inspiring discussions around environmental awareness and the importance of community in times of crisis.

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