

The City of Ember

By Jeanne DuPrau

Reviewed by Eileen Hu

This story takes place in the fictional city of Ember. For the city, it is the year 241 and the city is already failing. The citizens of Ember have been taught that their city is the only place where things live. But two courageous children, named Lina and Doon, find evidence that there is another world. They start exploring, and after many setbacks, they find a way to escape Ember.

I enjoyed reading this book, mainly because the author's writing style appeals to me and I like the plot. Jeanne DuPrau used a vast number of adjectives, many of which I added to my vocabulary. She paints vivid pictures by choosing adjectives that fit well with the story. Here is evidence;

In the city of Ember, the sky was always dark. The only light came from the great flood lamps mounted on the buildings and at the tops of poles in the middles of the larger squares. When the lights were on, they cast a yellowish glow over the streets; people walking by threw long shadows that shortened and then stretched out again.

The following is the same paragraph without some of the adjectives:

In the city of Ember, the sky was always dark. The only light came from the flood lamps mounted on the buildings and at the tops of poles in the middles of the squares. When the lights were on, they cast a glow over the streets; people walking by threw shadows that shortened and then stretched out again.

This version does not create a clear image of Ember in the reader's mind. The adjective "yellowish" is essential to this paragraph. I cannot see Ember if I don't know the color of the streetlamps. They could be turquoise for all I know.

In the following paragraph Jeanne DuPrau used some onomatopoeia (a word that sounds just like what it describes) when she describes the awful noise that comes out of the machine that lights up all of Ember, the generator:

*Such a horrendous noise met him that he staggered backward a few steps. It was an earsplitting, growling, grinding, screaming noise, shot through with a hoarse **rackety-rackety** sound and underscored with a deep **chugga-chugga-chugga**.*

This paragraph makes me think of a big, black contraption that growls like a caged lion, chugs away like an old-fashioned train and screams like a trapped fox. By using onomatopoeia and adjectives, the author effectively conveys the complexity, powerfulness and oldness of the generator.

I like how there is a lot of suspense in this book. Suspense is a good element to add to a story. One example is of when Lina runs away from the mayor, who had wrongly accused her of spreading vicious rumors. The readers

will most likely anxiously ask themselves "Will Lina be caught? What will happen next?"

From this book I learned that adjectives and imagination are crucial for any fiction book. This is because the imagination is evident in this science fiction novel. Imagine a whole new city that has been taught they are the only civilization in the whole world! Don't you think to create that with only words you would have to be extremely creative and imaginative?

The best part of *The City of Ember* is when Lina is struggling to figure out the instructions for leaving Ember, which she found in a gray metal box. The anticipation of finding out what the incomplete instructions mean is almost unbearable.

I like how Lina and Doon are people, just like you and me (only they might be a little braver), but their lives are totally different! I recommend this book to science fiction lovers and people who find adventure books interesting. *The City of Ember* isn't only science fiction.