

The Young Elites

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10 years ago, a plague known as the Blood Fever devastated Adelina Amouteru's country. While her beautiful, lively sister escaped untouched, Adelina was left with silvery white hair and a missing left eye. Not only are her future prospects ruined, but her father can barely stand to look at her without seeing the misfortune she has wrought on their family. Drowning under the weight of her father's cruelty and her own desperation, Adelina runs away from the house she has come to loathe. But when she is forced to take action, Adelina discovers a side of herself that craves power. And vengeance is the only thing that satisfies her.

My favourite part about this book is the lack of distinction between the "good characters" and the "bad characters". The protagonist, Adelina, is an anti-hero, and is directed by her need for revenge and power. As the bitter anger within her takes root, the book plunges into the darker, deeper end. I appreciated how everything wasn't told in black and white, and instead experimented with the layers in between. Each character had complex and selfish motives, and were not afraid to admit it. The blatant darkness of the story was so different from other novels, creating a new and refreshing atmosphere.

The side characters were not as well developed, making it more difficult to relate to the storyline. There were a few brief POVs from some of the minor characters, including Enzo and Raffaele but not enough to provide in-depth insight into their personalities and weaknesses. In addition, the tension loosened as the story progressed, dropping to a standstill around the middle of the book. This element resulted in inconsistent pacing, reducing reader engagement. Lastly, there was very limited world building, with vague but univertive references to Renaissance Italy. For example, the Blood Fever represented the black plague, but with a magical twist. However, there were no original or creative allusions that would allow the reader to guess this on their own. The Young Elites contains many darker details, and is best suited to readers aged 13+.

Recommended Titles:

Pantomime by Laura Lam

The Girl of Fire and Thorns by Rae Carson

Graceling by Kristin Cashore

Seraphina by Rachel Hartman

The Thief by Megan Whalen Turner