

Sever

Lauren DeStefano

Reviewed by: Rina Guo, 17

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Rhine and Gabriel are once again at the mercy of Housemaster Vaughan. And after their betrayal to Linden and the entire mansion attendants, Vaughan is determined to take advantage of them for his sinister medical experiments in the secret basement of the mansion. But soon, Rhine finds out that Rowan, her only twin brother, seems to be involved with Vaughan's experiments as well. If that wasn't enough, her brother has also become a national rebel leader in opposition towards the efforts to develop a cure for the virus destroying the country, and it seems that he too, has been deceived and lured into Vaughan's disturbing plan as well. As their lives are quickly running out, Rhine tries desperately to save the people she loves and along the way, she uncovers secrets from her parents before they died in a laboratory, and answers to what may stop the biggest virus threatening the human race.

This book is suitable for readers age 15-20. Something to note is that compared to the last two novels in the Chemical Garden series, this book contains the most death, but it's not overly gruesome or violent. It's also much less suggestive than the last books.

I liked this novel. I would consider this a pretty successful conclusion the series. In this novel, we see some new characters, including Reed and Rowan, as well as some old characters, like Linden and Cecily. I really like the blend of new and old side characters coming together in this novel. Rhine's relationship with past side characters develops on a more nuanced level and it really strengthens the overall story. I'm really happy about the fact that in this novel, we got to see more of the big picture going on, and we learned way more about the virus problem than the last two books combined. The conflict in this novel was more focused on the relevant circumstances going on, and I felt satisfied to get some questions cleared up. Also, compared to the last books, we get to understand a deeper view of Vaughan. For the first time, Vaughan opens up more about his familial background and his medical discoveries, making me nearly reconsider my negative opinions for him. I really love that we get to see that kind of change in perspective for him. I was also so excited that we were getting new insight about Rhine's familial background as well. For the first time, we finally meet Rowan, Rhine's twin brother, that she never stops talking about but never actually meets until now. Rowan's position in the story gave a really satisfying plot twist to the novel, and their reunion felt pretty climactic. However, after the reunion, we didn't see nearly as much depth in Rowan's character, as I had hoped and the twin bond between the siblings didn't feel very strong and sustained. To be honest, some of Rhine's bonds and relationships with the side characters seemed a lot less impactful. This novel was probably the least romantic of the trilogy, but I appreciate that the story focus was new and different, and it finally delved into the more sci-fi genre I was looking for.

I really loved what DeStefano had in store for *Sever*, and in a way, it helped me find a sense of closure to my unfulfilled hopes and unaddressed concerns I had in the past books. I only wish DeStefano could have written the first two books with the same kind of focus and complexity. Still, I'm really happy with how the series ended, and only after finishing the third book, do I feel like I have a valid opinion and idea of the individual books that came before *Sever* as well. I'm also really glad that we finally have an answer to the questionable title of the series and the titles of the past books as well. I feel like DeStefano must have had the whole story

of the series in mind before starting to write the first book, but she just failed to give enough symbolism and insight into the hidden meanings of the earlier books. It's really only until *Sever*, that the title and purpose of the series makes sense. Overall, I enjoyed this novel and I would recommend this as a book to check out, if you enjoy science fiction and action thrillers.

Recommended Titles:

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Allegiant by Veronica Roth

Legend by Marie Lu

Jewel by Amy Ewing

Perfectly by Kate Jarvik Birch