

Red, White, and Royal Blue

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Red, White, and Royal Blue tells of a star crossed romance between former enemies Prince Henry and Alex Claremont-Diaz, son of the President of the United States. The two have a bit of a rough start, but they soon realize how deeply they understand each other. But because of the distance and their families' reputations, they can only correspond through secret emails — that is, until the emails get leaked.

The book is a series of cliches loosely tied together. It's incredibly cheesy in an early 2000s Disney Channel original movie kind of way, but without the elements that made those bearable. All of the characters are unlikeable and do not develop as people at all throughout the course of the novel. The integration of politics is mishandled at worst and performative at best. The story takes itself too seriously while also sounding like a run-of-the-mill rom com aimed at elementary schoolers. Without the explicit language and some of the mature content, this would have been a great children's novel. But because the content is aimed at older audiences, it feels dragged on and immature.

That being said, I do understand why many people liked it. The emails really carry the book, and if it were entirely an epistolary novel I'd have liked it a lot more. Though the main characters are pretty annoying, it is sweet to see how they interact and fall for each other. The political element serves to raise the stakes of the romance, which I did not like, but it is an interesting way of grounding the story in reality. Those high stakes combined with the cliché and predictable story made it a safer and lighter read that wasn't entirely boring. We can all tell exactly where the book's going, but the tension makes it interesting enough to get you to finish it. Some of the humor was actually funny, but a lot of it felt a little forced.

Red, White, and Royal Blue is a great light read for older teens and young adults who enjoy classic rom coms. It's filled to the brim with tropes and romance that you'll love, as long as you don't take it too seriously. It makes a wonderful gift for rom com fans, but I'd recommend checking it out from your local library.

Recommended Titles:

To All The Boys I've Loved Before by Jenny Han

Dumplin' by Julie Murphy

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda by Becky Albertelli