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The Testing #1: The Testing

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It’s graduation day for sixteen-year-old Malencia Vale. All Cia can think about is whether she’ll be chosen for The Testing, a government program that selects the best and brightest new graduates to become possible leaders of the slowly revitalizing post-war civilization. The government has the last university program available to those select few chosen to rebuild the country. But to enter this selected group, candidates must first pass The Testing—their one chance at a college education and a rewarding career. When Cia is chosen, her father finally tells her what little he remembers of his own “testing” experience. His final words before her departure are “Cia, trust no one”. Upon arriving at Tosa City, the candidates enter into the testing – a series of tests which evaluate the candidates’ skills in nearly every area—from intelligence and cleverness, to leadership and loyalty. A candidate must pass or be redirected (never to be seen again). Some of the tests have life or death consequences.

The Testing is a chilling, suspenseful dystopian science fiction adventure with some similarities to The Hunger Games. There’s a fair amount of violence – including a suicide and a death by nail shot through someone’s eye – but the female teen protagonist in particular does not take any killing lightly. The language in the novel is very tame (“hell” and “damn”), and the level of sexual content (kissing) and substance use (two instances of celebratory drinking) are very low.