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# Mechanica

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# Book Review

**Title:** *Mechanica*

**Author:** Betsy Cornwell

**Reviewer:** Carlie Smith

**Publisher:** Clarion Books

**Publication Year:** 2015

**ISBN:** 9780547927718

**Number of Pages:** 307

**Interest Level:** Intermediate, Young Adult

**Rating:** Outstanding



## Review

Nicolette Lampton, Nick, knows her life under “the Steps” is about to change when she locates the key to her mother’s secret workshop. As she tinkers around she discovers the unlikely blend of technology and magic that allow her to further her mother’s work with practical mechanisms and delicate, automated animals. When Nick takes her inventions to the market she finds not only buyers but also real friendship in palace workers Fin and Caro. At the ball before the Exposition (a showcase of the realm’s finest mechanical marvels), Nick meets the Heir and leaves behind a glass and gear slipper. Despite the excitement about her identity, Nick chooses independence over matrimony, entrepreneurship over royalty, and friendship over romance.

This retelling of the Cinderella tale is remarkably fresh. The idea of a self-made heroine has been skillfully done before, and Betsy Cornwell further modernizes the story by breaking gender stereotypes, focusing on friendship rather than romance, and celebrating the wonders of technology. The conclusion also shows a sophisticated measure of restraint that help the characters and situations to seem more real. Cornwell doesn’t answer every question about magic and its complex relationship with the state. Relationships show growth but not perfection. *Mechanica* ends happily, but there is no guarantee it will last “ever after.” Nick will have to continually reinvent herself as she meets new challenges.