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Dreamland

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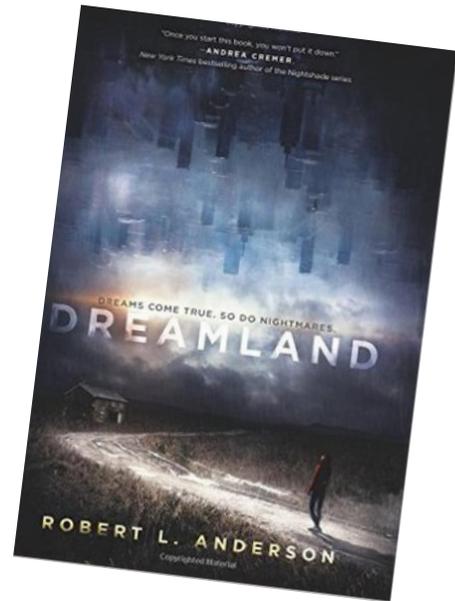
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Book Review

Title: Dreamland
Author: Robert L. Anderson
Reviewer: Shelly Darrington
Publisher: Harper Teen
Publication Year: 2015
ISBN: 9780062338679
Number of Pages: 332
Interest Level: Young Adult
Rating: Dependable



Review

Odea Donahue has always been different. She and her mother are dreamwalkers—individuals who are able to visit the dreams of normal people. While on the surface this seems like an exciting superpower, Dea has to dreamwalk just to survive. The more time that passes between walks, the weaker and sicker Dea becomes, so visiting dreams became a necessity. Dea never questioned her mother's strict rules of never interfering, never being seen, and never visiting the same person's dream more than once, but things change when a boy named Connor moves to town. Dea finds herself drawn to him and his dreams, and ends up breaking the rules. She discovers that she and her mother have been on the run for years, and they are being hunted in dreams. When her mother goes missing, Dea tries everything in her power to save her, while also trying to solve a grisly mystery from Connor's past. She eventually finds her way to a dream city, a whole civilization that only exists within the dream world. She finds her mother there, but she also discovers her mother's secret. Both she and Dea had originally come from the dream city, but they fled from Dea's father, the king of the city, into the waking world. Her father gives her a choice: leave the city forever, never seeing her mother again, or come back to where she belongs and learn more about her world and her origin. In the end, Dea chooses to stay in the city, while also maintaining a relationship with Connor by visiting him in his dreams.

Dreamland has a fascinating premise. Walking dreams seemed like a dream itself, and what person wouldn't want a special ability such as that? But the book found itself somewhat struggling to keep up with a plot that had a lot of promise. Robert L. Anderson created an entire new world that exists concurrent to our own, but barely explains anything about it. There's no explanation of how it came to be, or who the people living there are. There wasn't a sufficient backstory of the events that led to Dea's mother fleeing the city. While not divulging everything can be tantalizing or even enjoyable for the reader to fill in the pieces with their own imagination, the lack of detail simply led to confusion. Despite the lack of world building, the story of Dreamland moves along nicely. It isn't boring, and the characters are compelling enough that reading the book isn't a chore. Dreamland is YA fiction, and there is some vulgar language, but beyond the main characters spooning there are no sexual themes. Dreamland also could have benefited from a better editor, as the narration jumps between different names for the main characters, leading to some confusion, and random swear words—as if author suddenly remembered he wanted to write something edgier. Overall, while a decent read, Dreamland suffers from good ideas that weren't fleshed out to what they had the potential to be.