Lee Westfall has a hidden gift that could make her family rich if it wasn’t so dangerous. She has a gold sense that can lead her to gold, things close to the surface or veins of gold underneath the earth. When her parents are murdered, it seems that someone has discovered her secret. To stay safe from her villainous uncle, she goes to find her best friend, Jefferson, who has gone to California after the news of the discovery of gold in California. Lee disguises herself as a boy to avoid getting caught and goes on an adventure across America to find gold, find a new family that cares about her, and maybe even find the possibility of love while avoiding Indian attacks, disease, and other challenges of a wagon train.

This new series by Rae Carson is refreshing in many ways. The American Gold Rush era is an unusual setting for a YA novel, but the mix of fantasy helps make it appealing to a broader audience. It depicts the hardships of life during the time and how dangerous traveling across the continent could be, as well as how dangerous people can sometimes be. Some people might not like that most of the book is about travelling and so it might seem slow or that the gold sense isn’t a bigger part of the story, but the brilliant way that Carson captures the real challenges that people went through during the time period as well as combining some element of fantasy will be worth the read for many.