



Gregor the Overlander

Suzanne Collins

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This irresistible first novel tells the story of a quiet boy who embarks on a dangerous quest in order to fulfill his destiny -- and find his father -- in a strange world beneath New York City.

When Gregor falls through a grate in the laundry room of his apartment building, he hurtles into the dark Underland, where spiders, rats, cockroaches coexist uneasily with humans. This world is on the brink of war, and Gregor's arrival is no accident. A prophecy foretells that Gregor has a role to play in the Underland's uncertain future. Gregor wants no part of it -- until he realizes it's the only way to solve the mystery of his father's disappearance. Reluctantly, Gregor embarks on a dangerous adventure that will change both him and the Underland forever.

Gregor the Overlander Details

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From Reader Review Gregor the Overlander for online ebook

Eh?Eh! says

I recently went solo dining with the 2nd book in the series and sat down at a counter, speeding through the large font and well-spaced text. The restaurant started to fill up and another solo diner sat down next to me. I glanced over at his magazine and saw that it was a scientific journal open to an article about the brain. I casually angled the cover of my Scholastic-published book away from his view and kept reading, very self-conscious of the approximately 18 grades of school between our reading materials.

Sigh.

I'm bouncing around in my reading material lately. I've been trying to force the weightier books and it's like an overtight pair of jeans. Lay back on the bed, take a deep breath, and hope you can wrestle that zipper up before the oxygen runs out or the button pops off and you lose an eye. The YA and younger books are more like comfortable sweatpants, the waistband slightly stretched and the material over the seat taking on a sheen from wear. I need to take in a few sweatpants books before attempting another jeans book. Who am I trying to impress? No need to do the David Hasselhoff on *Baywatch* stomach suck.

This is what I repeat to myself when I sit next to someone reading a scientific journal open to an article about the brain...you couldn't sit somewhere else, brain guy???

The beginning of the 2nd book helped me pinpoint why I liked this 1st book so much. With the next in the series, Gregor is suddenly having these abilities he never had before. Booooo. The first book moved forward with his own average self, no special powers needed. While he may have been written as more selfless than the typical boy his age, he made mistakes and was cranky like a real boy. When he was courageous, loyal, loving, or expressed empathy, it wasn't unusual - it could be duplicated by any child who read this book. The value of that! You too can be like this!:

[Gregor] nodded. He could never hate people very long because he always ended up finding out something sad about them that he had to factor in. Like this kid at school everybody hated because he was always pushing little kids around and then one day they found out his dad had hit him so much, he was in the hospital. With stuff like that, all Gregor could feel was bad.*

Wonderful.

Oh, the story was set in this quest for his father with a fantastic imaginary world underground featuring people who had lived there so long that they were pale-haired, translucent-skinned, and violet-eyed. The allies and enemies were gigantic bats, cockroaches, and rats. This is meant for a younger audience than *The Hunger Games* trilogy, so probably elementary age. The quest kicked off with an awful set of prophetic verse (not as bad as Brian "One Trick Pony" Jacques but nowhere near the soaring glory (to me) of Susan Cooper). The ending was rushed. But I loved it for keeping the hero ordinary.

My favorite line? From my favorite character, the little sister, Boots: "I poop!"

*Lookie! The square brackets don't insert a colon anymore!

karen says

so this is how superweak my life is: on friday i rushed home from work in the rain to get some homework done. whee... but then i ended up writing that wuthering heights review, inspired by the rain and the clouds etc. and i did some work, but not a ton. and i thought to myself, what do i really want to be doing? and the answer was - put on my pajamas, eat peanut butter pretzels and read unchallenging children's books. so i did. and you can all suck it, with your parties and balls and galas. 'cuz i had myself a nice time.

i didn't like it as much as the hunger games; which is teen fiction, not juvie, so maybe i'm not as developmentally stunted as i thought. look, i'm growing up before your eyes! she has a real knack for pacing, which is way more important in children's literature than adult, just because of attention-span, particularly now, when the options for children are increasingly electronic and faster-paced - a book really has to capture the imagination in order to hold a child's attention, and i think this does a good job of that. i also appreciate her very low emphasis on sentimentality. it is less pronounced than in the hunger games, because of the younger audience, but it's an adventure book, life's hard, things die. and i think that's a good element in children's literature; her lack of prettifying realities. i will probably read the other books in the series, providing my social life doesn't improve, but i don't feel the same urgency to read them that i do for the teen series. it may be the subject matter/younger audience thing, or the lack of a true "cliffhanger" at the end of the book, but i probably will get to them. it was enjoyable, and if you have children, you should probably pick these up and pretend you are reading them together because your kids enjoy them.

and now i can give greg back his copy, and that gets one more book out of my house. which means there's room for one more book, basically. this is how the problem exacerbates...

Rfrancik says

When Gregor falls after his little sister down the laundry shoot he finds himself in a new land. He is faced with deciding where to place his loyalties, how to survive and given the opportunity to search for his father who unaccountably disappeared 2 years ago.

This book has ruined my entire day! I have laundry to fold, dinner to cook, breakfast to eat, 3 papers to write and lesson plans to develop. Instead, I've spent my morning snuggled under a down quilt devouring Gregor the Overlander. As soon as I finished it I slid into my car and ran back to work to collect the next four books in the series. It looks like the rest of my life is going on hold for awhile. Good-bye responsibility, Good-bye family, HELLO UNDERLANDERS!

I have always loved fairytales and mysteries in the Agatha Christie model. It's restful and reassuring to know there may be trials and tribulations but good will always defeat evil and the deserving will live happily ever after.

Gregor the Overlander carries these themes forward but provides subtle opportunities for the reader to question their convictions about "right and wrong" through the protagonist's encounters with various species in the Underworld. Equally appealing is the sharing of Gregor's thoughts as he begins to recognize the limits

he has set for himself with self imposed rules after his father's disappearance.

So often books of this genre for the elementary crowd become preachy and moralistic. Suzanne Collins does not preach. She invites the reader to explore issues about tolerance, responsibility, growing up, and loyalty for themselves. This first book is the equal of the Harry Potter books exploring the same issues with an emotional power and linguistic accessibility for the 5th-8th grade crowd. I've listed a few of my favorite quotes below.

1) .."And then there was Tick. Brave little Tick who had flown into the face of an army of rats to save his baby sister. Tick--who never spoke much. Tick--who shared her food. Tick--who was after all just a roach. Just a roach who had given all the time she had left so that Boots could have more. ...Somehow Tick's sacrifice had crushed whatever thin shell remained between him and sorrow. From now on he felt an allegiance to the roaches he knew would never fade."

2) "Well, Boots's courage might only count when she could count, but her ability to love counted all the time."

3) "No one who spends years with the rats can expect to be unchanged....but will his mind and body heal, I believe so."

4) "He was done with the rule now. For good. Even if times got bad he would never again deny himself the possibility that the future might be happy even if the present was painful. He would allow himself dreams."

Because I teach in a school where far too many children have parents and siblings in jail, I intend to use this book as one of a collection about children who overcome the odds to determine their own destiny.

Reviews:

1) Booklist starred (November 15, 2003 (Vol. 100, No. 6)) Recommends for gr. 4-7 and states.."Collins creates a fascinating, vivid, highly original world and a superb story to go along with it. ..This is sure to be a solid hit with young fantasy fans.

2) Horn Book starred (Spring 2004) writes "Collins sends a reluctant Gregor on the classic hero's journey in this fast-paced, immensely satisfying narrative."

Both of these reviews would incline me towards the book's purchase. Several of the other reviews also mention it is one of a series and they all recommend it for the same age groups. What the reviewers fail to say is now much parents would enjoy sharing this book with their children.

Janina says

I actually got all teary-eyed over the death of an insect. Can you believe it?

A great book, I'm glad I gave it a try although I wasn't sure at the beginning if it would be too young for my taste. Collins has created a fascinating world with the Underland and the book is full of amazing characters (insects and rodents included!).

Kay says

So, my workplace and a few other firms are a part of this program where we got to a local elementary school to read to kids. I was paired up with a fifth grader who loved to read as much as I did. She blew through *Breadcrumbs*, which was amazing, and we had just started on *Gregor the Overlander* (*Underland Chronicles*, #1) when school was dismissed for summer vacation. Me being my usual ADHD self, I left this book unread for months and months while I pursued other books. Now, after reading the entire *Underland Chronicles* in three days, I am so glad I gave this a shot.

Plot Summary Gregor is an eleven year old who lives with his mom, grandma, and younger sisters in New York City. His dad disappeared without a word two years ago, and his mom has been struggling to keep the family together since. One day, Gregor and his sister Boots are sucked down a grate in their laundry room, and find themselves in the Underland, a subterranean world populated by white-haired, violet-eyed humans, and oversized cockroaches, spiders, bats and rats. Though all Gregor wants is to go home, he finds himself embroiled in a brewing war between the humans and rats, and perhaps a chance to find his father.

My Reactions The Underland was interesting, to say the least. I wasn't too convinced by this subterranean world until about two books in. Maybe it's because I hate hate hate hate hate rodents and vermin, which is probably not the best attitude to take when living in New York City. Someone once told me about a sighting of a three-foot rat in Brooklyn, and my spidey senses were tingling whenever I entered a subway station for weeks after. (BTW, the antagonists are six-foot tall rats. With their long, ridged tails and sharp teeth.) Kind of like this: Some parts of the book, like the quest and resolution of the prophecy were quite predictable. But like in *The Hunger Games* has a way of brushing up against the brittleness of the real world without being melodramatic. What remains with me the most was not the questing or the Underland, but Gregor. After his father disappeared, Gregor continually makes sacrifices in the face of hard financial times. Here is an eleven year old who voluntarily gives up summer camp to take care of his baby sister Boots because his mom works nonstop to feed the family. My heart aches for the little guy, who is forced to grow up much too quickly so that the rest of his siblings can enjoy their youths. Not sure how well a fifth grader or even adult could relate--I suppose it depends on the person--but as the oldest in my family, I certainly could. Gregory continues to carry the heavy weight of responsibility with him to the Underland as he takes care of Boots, and that bit of realness threading through the story kept me interested and sympathetic until the end. Overall, I really enjoyed this first book, and the following books are equally (if not more) fun to read. If you thought *The Hunger Games* (*The Hunger Games*, #1) was a feat in YA lit, *Gregor the Overlander* is definitely up there in the kid lit world. Both are highly readable for both the younger folk and the adulty folk.

3.5 STARS AND HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, especially for younger readers.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Gregor the Overlander (*Underland Chronicles*, #1), Suzanne Collins

The *Underland Chronicles* is a series of five epic fantasy novels by Suzanne Collins, first published between 2003 and 2007. It tells the story of a boy named Gregor and his adventures in the "Underland", a subterranean world located under New York City. The Underland is inhabited by humans who traveled below hundreds of years ago, along with various giant versions of creatures like bats, cockroaches, and rats. According to the author, the series involves many topics relating to war, including biological warfare, genocide, and military intelligence. While not as well known as the author's subsequent *Hunger Games* trilogy, it has been reviewed favorably by many critics.

[illegible]

I want to give this book so many more than 5 stars. It was SO SO FREAKING GOOD!!! (I pressed the exclamation mark on my phone really hard then just for extra emphasis) :)

I loved the characters. They had so much more depth than I expected them to. I mean Gregor is an 11 year old kid who has been kind of forced to be the man of the house after his dad disappeared mysteriously 2 years ago. He doesn't let himself dream about happy times because he is struggling to actually be happy with his family not whole. Bro, you're breaking my heart :(Then there is his 2 year old sister Boots (a nickname) who adds so much to the book with her innocence. She kind of reminds me of Sunny Baudelaire from A Series of Unfortunate Events because she is so adorable and obviously isn't speaking properly yet, but she is integral to the team and actually helps bring them all together.

Some of the other things I loved are:

- Chances are you have read *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins too, and if you like her writing and like fast paced books (and you like middle grade books) then you should definitely try this. I implore you because it needs more hype!

Sara Kamjou says

[illegible]

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Greg says

Even though this book has nothing really to do with Kafka, I can't get it out of my head that somewhere in this series is some of the weird Jew from Prague. The cover looks sort of Prague like. There is a main character named Gregor, and there are giant fucking cockroaches in it (must I swear in every children's review I write?).

There has been no real Kafka in the book though. There are some Daddy issues but Kafka doesn't hold the patent on that. Besides looking for Kafka though, I found this fun. Apparently my view of fun lately is fantastical adventures children go on that I can read in a couple of hours. I'm either regressing, or just making up for all the books I never read as a little kid.

But I'll state it again for the kids out there who might be thinking of reading this because of some pretty heavy allusions to Kafka, it's not about Kafka, nor especially Kafka-esque.

Rebecca McNutt says

Proof that Suzanne Collins can be so much better than that soulless, commercialized dreck known as The Hunger Games. *Gregor the Overlander* is a terrific, mysterious fantasy novel with an elaborate, imaginative underground city world that could rival with Inside the Shadow City.

Meredith Holley says

The covers of the Underland Chronicles do them no end of disservice. Since my policy is to judge a book by its cover, it took reading *The Hunger Games* to convince me to pick them up. I had always assumed they would be machine generated chapter books with mythical creatures protecting or seeking some ring or sword, or who knows what, that has some symbolic meaning - or doesn't. Suzanne Collins, however, is in no way machine-generated. She is Dostoyevski for the young-reader crowd. While she uses the quest trope in

each of the Underland stories, her reflections of politics and international history are both gentle and unflinchingly horrifying. Kids have to learn about genocide somehow . . . I guess.

In comparison to other popular child-soldier (or children-save-the-world) stories, the Underland Chronicles are not comforting in the way Harry Potter and Twilight are, nor are they as morally-outraged and uncomfortable as Ender's Game, but I found them more honest than all of those. Collins never seems overcome by her own power as an author, self-indulgent in her story-telling, or worried that her audience won't understand her overall message. That may be the mark of a good editing team, and if so, A+ to them. Her writing is not as lyrically beautiful as Kate DiCamillo's (whose is, for that matter?), but, like Dostoyevski's, it is very effective in reflecting doubts about human nature and, at times, touching. It makes me wish, once again, that Dostoyevski was able to edit well.

Laurel says

With a few exceptions, I am not typically a big fan of science fiction/fantasy, nor of bugs and rats and dark places. Had I not read and loved The Hunger Games, I never would have even considered reading this book. And I would have most certainly been missing out.

This is Suzanne Collin's first novel, and it is quite a first novel. Gregor the Overlander centers around an eleven-year-old boy and his little sister who fall through a grate in the laundry room of their apartment complex. After being hurtled down a long tunnel, they find themselves in the midst of a strange Underland full of talking giant cockroaches, rats, bats and spiders, as well as humans with translucent skin and violet eyes. As the children become acquainted with the strange beings and history of this mysterious land, a prophetic quest forms to find Gregor's long lost father (believed to have fallen victim to some of the creatures here years earlier), and lots of adventure ensues.

Apparently, the author was inspired to write this book after wondering what Alice and Wonderland may have been like had it taken place in a city, where one is more likely to fall down a manhole than a bunny hole.

I thought it was a fantastic story; a real page turner that, amidst all the adventure, asks its reader to consider issues of friendship, responsibility, tolerance, acceptance, determination and loyalty. Very imaginative and well written. I highly recommend it, particularly if you enjoy YA fantasy or loved The Hunger Games.

Courtney says

Oh, dear! I've read another children's book, haven't I? Well, if I may be so bold, I liked it a lot more than some of the so-called classics. (I'm so immature, but at least I enjoy myself!)

Though I've never really been one for the 'guy gets sucked into another world' kind of genre, this one put a spin on my thoughts. I've not enjoyed a book so much since... well, a long time. It keeps you in such connection with the characters, despite their being fictional. I especially enjoyed how, as the reader, I had to keep an eye out for it's symbolism- instead of the horribly obvious whack-you-in-the-face kind.

I love this book's widespread emotions. And why not? With all that the main characters go through; loss, betrayal, fear for their lives (a lot), war... I'd call it captivating in a very good way.

"Ares the flier, I bond to you.
Our life and death are one, we two.
In dark, in flame, in war, in strife,
I save you as I save my life."

"Gregor the human, I bond to you.
Our life and death are one, we two.
In dark, in flame, in war, in strife,
I save you as I save my life."

Kübra Yaşmur Aslanhan says

Çocuk kitabıymı, PEH! Çocuklar'nda okuyabileceği, herkese uygun bir kitap olduğunu söylemek daha doğru olur.

Okuduğumu dün gibi hatırladığım kitaplardan biri Gregor ve Gri Kehanet. Yeni bir kütüphane keşfetmi, kaydı mı yaptırmı, İstanbul'u gezen bir Fatih edasıyla rafların arasını dolaşıp ağızlarının sularını tutmaya çalışırken kalın ciltlerin arasından bana göz kırpmı? bu kitap. Ve ben hiç düşünmeden onu çekip almı, tabii yan'nda iki kitapla birlikte, eve gelip yemeden içmeden okudum.

Her bir kelimeyle nefesimi kesen bir kitap. Tabii o zamanlar bu şekilde bir kitap manyası de'ildim ama bu yola girmeme sebep olan kitapların başını çekiyor bu yüzden benim için hep özel olarak kalacak. Ayrıcâ devamı hâlâ okunmay bekleyen serilerden biridir. ?

C.G. Drews says

Well that was sufficiently fantastic. I, naturally, am a HUGE The Hunger Games fan and basically wanted to read this because SUZANNE COLLINS. Obviously my brain had a lot of pressure on this book aaaand...it's *very* different (obviously) from THG. It's middle-grade. It's an adventure with prophecies and talking animals. And I really enjoyed it!

The characters were adorable. The main character is Gregor (DUH) and he's a fabulous older brother, but he's not perfect. At the same time, though, he didn't make a bucket-load of dumb decisions which I'm SO grateful for. I really hate stupid decisions. Ergh. But Gregory was really smart and logical, and had a bit of sass, and he wouldn't leave his little sister EVER. Which leads me to the cutest human in the universe: Boots! (Well, her real name is Margaret, but who's going to call her that?! HA. BOOTS IS SO CUTE.) She's the most friendly loveable little kid in the world. And her mannerisms and speech were so totally spot on for being a two-year-old. I read a lot of books and often feel the babies aren't...well...realistic. But Boots is SO realistic. (Trust me, I just spent the morning with my 2yrs niece and then read this in the afternoon. 100% of realism to Boots. A cookie will basically fix everything.) I was just so completely in love with Boots and I thought Gregor was terrific.

So my only problem was:**I couldn't care less about the animals.** Call me a hater (actually, um, don't) BUT I HATE BUGS. I FREAKING HATE RATS AND BATS AND BUGS. So when they died (and applause for

MG books that kill things/people/whatever) I just was like "Oh so what?" Which is, um, heartless of me. But they're *bugs*. Ugh.

Although is it just me or is the good-rat Ripred like another version of Haymitch?!! Snarky and wise. I SEE WHAT YOU DID THERE, SUZANNE COLLINS. (Although, um, I know, these books came first, but shhh, don't ruin my cacophonies.)

Anyway, this was fantastic and I want to read the rest of the series ASAP!
