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When Max, Kyle, and Emma are sent to live with their reclusive grandfather, they think he's crazy, especially when he tells them about his time machine. But after Emma is kidnapped at the exact time that her grandfather predicted, Max and Kyle are forced to believe his eccentric stories—even the one about the Chronal Engine in the basement.

Now, to save Emma, Max, Kyle, and their new friend Petra must pile into a VW Bug, and use the Chronal Engine to take the road trip of a lifetime—right back to the Cretaceous period. With dangers all around, the teens find themselves dodging car-crushing herbivores in addition to the terrifying T. rex. In this ancient environment, can three contemporary teens hunt down a kidnapper, forage for food, and survive long enough to return home?

Chronal Engine: A Prehistoric Time-Travel Adventure Details

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Author : Greg Leitich Smith , Blake Henry

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From Reader Review Chronal Engine: A Prehistoric Time-Travel Adventure for online ebook

Audrey Wilkerson says

Ink and Page's Quick & Dirty Review

Rating : 3

The Low Down : The twins, Kyle and Emma, and their younger brother, Max, are staying for the summer with their grandfather on his ranch. The recluse grandfather that they have only seen once.

Family lore has it that their great-great grandfather built a time machine, was ridiculed for it, and became a hermit. Handing Max an envelope, his grandfather tells him they need to be at the dinosaur prints at precisely eight o'clock in the morning. Then when he shows them the actual machine, the Chronal Engine, he only has time to give them a few instructions before they hear a helicopter outside, and Grandpa has a heart attack. That he predicted a few minutes before.

Along with their new friend, Petra, they start their adventure when Emma is kidnapped, they travel in a Beetle to the time of the dinosaurs to find her, and they are pursued by dinosaurs through the Cretaceous Period. Along the way, they see a wrecked steamboat, an operational steamboat, many more dinosaurs and they meet Samuel, who came from the year 1919. Can they find Emma and return to the present day?

Best Thang 'Bout It : It takes place in Texas. I recognized many of the names and places of which the author writes. You certainly can tell how much the author loves dinosaurs.

I'm Cranky Because : The mystery and the action was overshadowed by all the (sorry) dino-talk. At one point, even one of the characters says "Thank you, Professor" after a particularly dry explanation. Written in first person, from Max's point of view, there were some word usage descriptions that weren't what I would think an eighth-grade boy would use/say, such as: sconces; a girl being "attractive;" his knowledge of the flora. Also, Samuel says "I'm just saying" at one point which doesn't sound like anything a boy from the early 1900s would just say. And would they really let a baby dino with a retractable switchblade claw follow them around like a tamed parakeet? OK, they're kids. I'll give them that one.

Should You? : I think this book is perfect for a kid who really loves dinosaurs. It is very well suited for a child in upper elementary to about 8th grade.

Chronal Engine by Greg Leitich Smith was published on March 20, 2012 by Clarion Books.

Genre : Juvenile SciFi Fantasy Time Travel Dinosaurs

Ages : 10 and up

Kimberly says

This was my first time reading a book by either of these two authors and I really liked it. Let me tell you that in my house watching the Discovery Channel, Nova, and the History Channel after school was not optional.

This is both good and bad, you see now have a love of all things dinosaur and prehistoric as well sharks and nazis. It's true. By the time I was 8 I knew more about the past than any kid in my class...and though I got tired of my Dad forcing me to watch WWI and WWII shows I still have a great love for prehistoric animals and sharks. Seriously Shark Week for me is like NY Fashion Week for other girls I know. But, rather than be ashamed of this I chose to put it out there on the interwebs.

My name is Kimberly.

I am a nerd.

So of course I knew as soon as I read the description on NetGalley that I HAD to read this. I mean the kid in me would not forgive me if I were to have passed it by. I'm so glad I read this! I really wish it had been around when I was younger because I think I would have loved it.

The whole idea behind the story was awesome, I mean it had time travel AND dinosaurs. What more could I ask for? I really think that the story is great for kids 10+. The characters were likable and I thought that it was somewhat like a kid's version of the H.G. Wells classic book The Time Machine.

Out of all the characters I would have to say that I liked Max the most just because I know what it's like to be the youngest sibling and to be babied by my older brother and sister. I think that the authors added just the right amount of dinosaurs to the story as well as just the right amount of mystery and intrigue for younger readers.

I highly recommend this book to everyone who has a kid that loves dinosaurs and time travel and I really hope the authors write another book and will turn this into a series and will take them back in prehistory again.

Ms. Yingling says

When their mother gets a prestigious job on a far-flung archaeological dig, Emma, Max and Kyle have to go live with their grandfather, since their father was previously killed in Afghanistan. They haven't seen their grandfather in a long time, although he doesn't live far away, because he has checked out from humanity a bit. When the trio arrive, their grandfather tells them he is having a heart attack and that they must investigate the Chronal Engine, a time travel device, that is in his basement. With the housekeeper, Petra, the siblings are check out fossilized sneaker prints when Emma is kidnapped. They chase her back to the Cretaceous period and have to fight not only the kidnappers but a variety of dinosaurs. Luckily, Max is a huge dinosaur buff and his information saves them, even though it occasionally leads them into trouble. Will the children be able to use the time travel to their advantage... survive the dinosaurs? This seemed the like the first book in a series.

Strengths: If you have students who liked Z Rex, this might be one to have. Lots of action and adventure, and time travel with no excuses, even there are a few questions about procedure in my mind!

Weaknesses: Still having trouble selling time travel, and there wasn't something about this book that just didn't grab me, even though I normally love time travel.

Linda says

A time travel adventure that kids can really sink their reading teeth into! And the story bites back with

thrilling excitement, family drama, and DINOSAURS!

Every little boy I've known has reached what I call "The Dinosaur Stage" where even as toddlers they're spouting off huge dinosaur names and begging for T-Rex toys. Girls, too, are drawn to prehistoric beasts-- which makes CHRONAL ENGINE a great read for all kids (and adults who are kids at heart).

Author Greg Leitich Smith knows his dinosaurs. Facts mingle with fiction in such an interesting way that kids won't even realize they're getting a history lesson. They'll be too busy flipping the pages to find out what happens next, their hearts thudding at scenes of kidnapping, dinosaur chases and time travel. Great pacing, likeable characters and settings that literally bring the past alive.

Also there's an added bonus of artwork throughout the book. I loved the drawings! They really add another dimension to the story and will give young readers a clear idea of the size of dinosaurs compared to kids.

Great start to a new series! A must-buy for librarians. A great read-aloud for classrooms and parents. Enjoy the dino-drama!

Steven R. McEvoy says

This was the third novel by Greg Leitich Smith that I have read. Each has been a wonderful read. This story is written in a long tradition of Robinsonades. It is the story of time travel, dinosaurs and family. It was incredibly well written. I found it hard to put the book down the few times that I had to while reading it. The characters were amazing, and the loops in the story and the logic behind them was stunning. The way Greg has scripted this story sets it up for a number of wonderful reads in the same world.

The story follows three youngsters who travel back in time to rescue a fourth. Their great, great, great grandfather supposedly created a time machine. Now they must use it and go on an adventure of their own into prehistoric Texas. Kyle and Emma, the twins, and their younger brother Max have come to their grandfather's ranch to spend the summer while their mother is on an archeological dig in Asia. Petra is the daughter of the housekeeper and together with Max and Kyle needs to head back in time to rescue Emma.

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Read the rest of the review and with links to other reviews by the authors on my blog [Book Reviews and More](#).

Micah DeGraw says

This book is about Max, Kyle, and Emma. They are siblings going to their grandpa's house for the summer, because their mom is going on a cruise. They think that their grandpa is just mean and doesn't care about them, but they realize that isn't it when their grandpa predicts his heart attack, and Emma gets kidnapped by a time traveler. Then when the grandpa goes to the hospital, Kyle and Max find The Chronal Engine. The Chronal Engine is a time machine, and the kids take The Chronal Engine to the Cretaceous period. They have to avoid getting eaten by a T-Rex, find food, and save Emma before she gets killed.

There wasn't a lot of poetic devices in this book, but there was some hyperbole.

I liked this book because it was funny and I also like the way it was wrote. The pictures in this book were awesome. I also like the characters because they are really brave and funny, and weird.

Angela says

Huh. Well, that was...huh. The one thing I loved about this book was the occasional awesomely funny line that came out of nowhere. But kids + dinosaurs isn't exactly the most original combination. It would need something exceptional to make this topic special, and somehow even time travel just didn't cut it. I guess the biggest problem is how matter-of-fact everything is. When the kids' sister gets taken, they don't stress about it at all--they barely seem ruffled. They just almost immediately go back in time to fix it, despite not really knowing how to use the technology. They have no real plan to find her once they get to the Cretaceous, but wander around fairly confidently until they find her. You're just never really worried about anything, because you already know that it has to work out for them--and because the flatness of the characters--which takes away most of the point of reading the story. Plus, you'd think someone of the serious scientific bent of the main character (no kid has ever been THIS interested in dinosaurs) would be a bit less blase about traipsing through time and changing stuff. But one of his companions brings a baby dinosaur back to the present with no one so much as remarking on it. And I don't mind books sometimes making fun of themselves, but one more than usually susceptible to the problems of the genre should probably avoid it. It sounds like a sequel is being set up for, which might even be interesting--but given my feelings (or lack thereof) for this book, I probably won't read the sequel.

BAYA Librarian says

Emma has been kidnapped. Her brothers Max and Kyle along with new friend Petra set out to find her. The catch: Emma has been taken back in time to the Cretaceous period, using their grandfather's time machine. They will need to evade dinosaurs and figure out how to survive as they solve the mystery of the Chronal Engine and rescue their sister.

Time travel, dinosaurs and kidnapping all blend together in this middle-quality, middle-grade adventure story. Max is dinosaur-obsessed so much of his dialogue sounds like it came straight from an encyclopedia. The other characters are bland. The plot feels convenient, like grandpa knew what would happen and put all the pieces in place. But, like many time travel stories, the plot falls apart under any scrutiny. Clunky writing doesn't do much to help the thin story. Full-page illustrations are placed every few chapters, providing very little visual interest but occasionally revealing a plot point before the event happens in the text.

Perfect for your dinosaur-obsessed ten-year-olds, but annoying for everyone else, this predictable story will likely lead to a series.

Drew Hoster says

Chronal Engine by Greg Leitich Smith is a great book about Max, Kyle, Petra, and Emma. The four kids are out on a walk when a mysterious man grabs Emma and then mysteriously disappears with her in his hands. Then Max, Kyle, and Petra find out about the Chronal Engine and have to go back to 20 million B.C. to save their sister Emma.

I would recommend this book to all of the action lovers out there. This book is also filled with mysteries so any mystery lovers out there would enjoy this book.

I loved this book and I would rate it five out of five stars because it was very interesting and I got to learn a lot about dinosaurs!

KWinks says

I found this to be a pretty excellent survival story. Add in some dinosaurs and some time travel, and there you go. The pace was pretty quick, the science not over-explained and I added this to my list for older developing (formally "reluctant") readers. My only gripe is that the illustrations are in ill-timed positions, often ruining the surprise before the reader can even get to the set up. By the end, that totally frustrated me. Another problem with the illustrations is of WHAT they depicted. In a story about dinosaurs I have never heard of before, and a setting that is also new, why are we given pictures of two boys sitting on a rock (115) or a fight scene in which the dino is obscured by the human characters (122)? Just saying.

Nick says

The book Chronal Engine by Greg Leitich Smith is a very fascinating book and adventurous. What makes it fascinating is that the author ties two of my favorite things, time travel and dinosaurs. The fact that it was adventurous was that the main characters actually got to use the time machine.

The book is about when the three main characters, Max, Kyle, and Emma, are sent to live with their reclusive grandfather, they think he's crazy, especially when he tells them about his time machine. When he was taken to the hospital because he had a heart attack, Emma gets kidnapped to the past and it's up to Kyle and Max to save her.

I thought the book was amazing to read. I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in time travel and into dinosaurs. The age group would be about nine to adult age. I loved the book and hope you do to.

P.J. says

Here's what I have to say about THE CHRONAL ENGINE:

1) If you're looking for a fast-paced middle grade adventure/science-fiction story, then this book is for you! The action starts on page one, and it never ends.

2) THE CHRONAL ENGINE is what happens when JURASSIC PARK meets GIDEON THE CUTPURSE. Yes, dinosaurs and time travel all in one awesome place.

3) The characters have serious spunk. They never stop trying to reach their goals. (I think we could all learn a lot from them.)

4) Did I mention Greg Leitich Smith was just awarded as one of the ambassadors of kid-lit in Austin by Austin SCBWI?

5) I've noticed the fun can be revised out of middle grade fiction. Not at all the case with THE CHRONAL ENGINE. This is the kind of adventure I would have desperately wanted to go on as a kid (or heck, even as an adult). It's smart and witty and 100% engaging!

So, yes, boys or girls, third grade or up, don't miss this book! You'll pick it up and won't put it down until you're finished!

Source of book: From publisher by request

Jen Bigheart says

After their grandfather predicts his own heart attack (you read that right) and their sister Emma is kidnapped and vanishes into thin air, Max, Kyle, and Petra ban together to rescue Emma. Full of jaw-dropping moments, car chases, and man eating giants all set in prehistoric Austin, Texas, this story is all about surviving. The characters are all smart in their own way, but Max is the brains and the dinosaur extraordinaire. That may come off as a little nerdy for an 8th grader, but he doesn't care. Turns out mom and dad were right, nerds do rule the world and Max is one of them! Max is curious and observant, and I love that he is more or less the hero in the story. His dino knowledge gets everyone out of hot water many times and without him, the rest of the group would not have lived in the wild for five minutes. As we make our way through the story, Max is teaching us about the prehistoric landscape, its inhabitants and how to survive. Max (and Greg) make learning about dinosaurs fun and totally interesting to any novice.

This story reminds me of a much more sophisticated (and educational) Magic Tree House book. You know the one I'm referring to, book #1 - Dinosaurs Before Dark. I can't tell you how many times that book has been circulated and read by both boys and girls alike in libraries and classrooms across the world. Chronal Engine is a fantastic book for those Jack and Annie fans that have moved up to middle school and beyond. The chapters are short, ranging from 5-8 pages, and usually break during a heightened moment making it a great read-aloud. The illustrations, from Blake Henry, are spot on and this girl appreciates the visuals to go along with creatures I have never heard or seen before. I never knew a Deinosuchus looked like a hammerhead shark with four legs! This story could easily be adapted into a full graphic novel. Even better, have students/kids create their own story and incorporate their favorite creature - extinct or fictional.

Chronal Engine is a fast paced, middle grade adventure perfect for boys and girls that love history, dinosaurs, and time travel.

Tracey says

I found this unoriginal and not very well written.

William says

This book is about some kids that go to their uncle's house and discover a machine called the Chronal Engine. The always thought it was just made up until one of them got kidnapped. They had to go back in time to save their sister. They went through a lot of struggles in the book like dinosaurs and their car. I really

liked this book because it was filled with a lot of action and adventure. Also I liked this book because it was about time travel and going back in time. I recommend this book because it is science fiction and takes you back to the dinosaur age and really make you feel that you are there.
