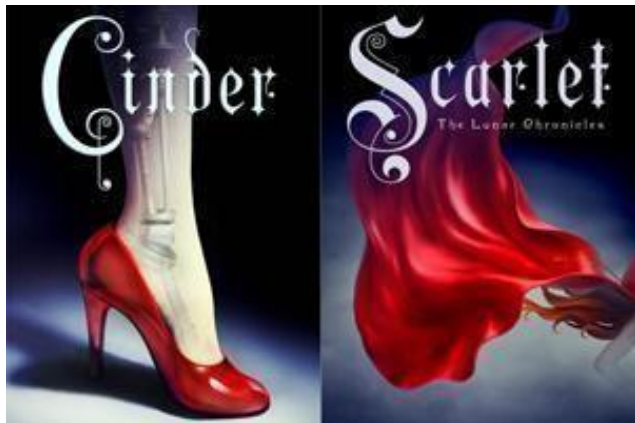


Review: Cinder

by Keriann Dowling

Cinder (2012) by Marissa Meyer,
Grades 7-10



The YA world is abuzz about *the Lunar Chronicle* series by Marissa Meyer. While reviewers can be quick to judge *Cinder* and its sequel *Scarlet* as predictable, teens themselves seem to be eating them up. I've seen YouTube reviewer after YouTube reviewer rant and rave over these books and I can finally understand why.

In Marissa Meyer's debut novel, Linn Cinder, a cyborg, and thus second rate citizen, is working as a mechanic in order to support her cold and disdainful adoptive mother and two stepsisters. It's while working at her market stall shop that she meets the handsome prince of New Beijing, Kai. However, there's no real time to fall in love because the Blue Fever, an incurable plague that's been sweeping earth, strikes one of Cinder's sisters down. Thus leading her adoptive mother, in a purely vindictive move, to ship her off to Dr. Erland, a royal researcher that uses cyborgs as guinea pigs in an attempt to cure the plague.

Meanwhile, the Lunar colonies are threatening war unless Kai marries their Queen Levana, but something's not quite right about the Queen. Could she really be using mind powers to keep the people in her thrall?

Meyer certainly gets points for creativity. A sci-fi dystopian mash-up with fairy tales certainly doesn't show up on bookstore shelves every day. In addition, Meyer gets my kudos for having a Cinderella character that isn't named Ella and is a strong female character interested in stereotypically masculine pursuits. Also, details like Cinder leaving her prosthetic foot behind instead of a shoe and riding in a beat up pumpkin-orange car are sprinkled just enough throughout to reward readers with satisfying "a ha!" moments.

Now the "secrets" of Cinder's past aren't terribly hard for readers to guess, but then when a novel is based on a centuries old beloved fairy tale it would be very difficult to believably work in a *huge* plot twist and the pacing is brisk enough that one hardly has time to notice the plot's predictability. What's possibly more noticeable is the influence Meyer's love of the anime, Sailor Moon has on her work. However, mentions of a missing lunar princess and evil queen's reigning in their absence will probably go uncommented on by readers unfamiliar with the anime and might even draw in Sailor Moon fans.

Cinder's story is continued and intertwines with that of Scarlet Benoit, a Little Red Riding Hood archetype in the 2013 sequel *Scarlet*. This time set in post WWIV France, Meyer turns Little Red Riding Hood on its head, as petty thief Scarlet searches for her missing grandmother with the help of the potentially untrustworthy street tough, Wolf.

The third book in the quartet *Cress* is expected for 2014 tentatively featuring a Rapunzel-like character and the return of our beloved Cinder against the backdrop of a futuristic Sahara desert.

Overall, teens will enjoy these breakneck romps through a futuristic dystopia with just a dash of romance.