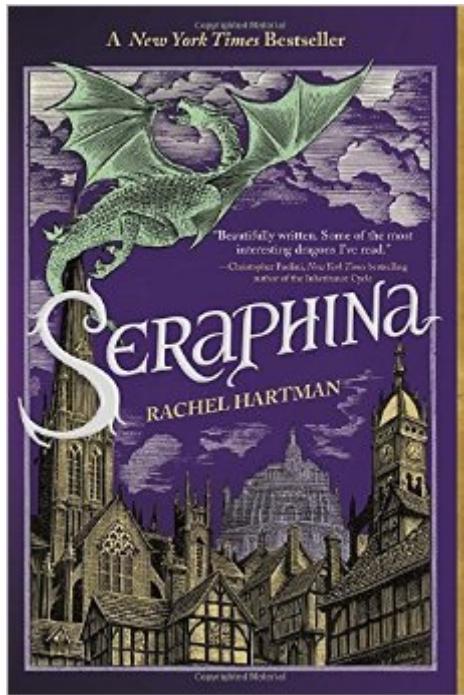


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Seraphina



Synopsis

Lyrical, imaginative, and wholly original, this New York Times bestseller with 8 starred reviews is not to be missed. Rachel Hartman's award-winning debut will have you looking at dragons as you've never imagined them before! In the kingdom of Goredd, dragons and humans live and work side by side – while below the surface, tensions and hostility simmer. The newest member of the royal court, a uniquely gifted musician named Seraphina, holds a deep secret of her own. One that she guards with all of her being. When a member of the royal family is brutally murdered, Seraphina is drawn into the investigation alongside the dangerously perceptive and dashing Prince Lucien. But as the two uncover a sinister plot to destroy the wavering peace of the kingdom, Seraphina's struggle to protect her secret becomes increasingly difficult – while its discovery could mean her very life. "Will appeal to both fans of Christopher Paolini's Eragon series and Robin McKinley's The Hero and the Crown." "Entertainment Weekly" "[A] lush, intricately plotted fantasy." • "The Washington Post" "Beautifully written. Some of the most interesting dragons I've read." Christopher Paolini, New York Times bestselling author of Eragon

From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

I hate it when I have the impression that I am reading a different book from other readers whose opinion I value. Hate it. Unfortunately, it happened with this book. I've read some really glowing reviews but, alas, I can't just - partially - share the love. Objectively, Seraphina meets all the requirements to become the next epic fantasy series: it has an original take on a fairly exploited theme - dragons -, an amazing world-building, a well formed, strong main character, a 5-star-worthy writing style. But let's go in order: The story is set in a world where two species exist: dragons and humans. Dragons, powerful creatures, mathematical minds, able to take human form (saarantrai) to interact with people, reject all emotions as weakness, to the point of excising them from their brains. Humans, constrained in their fragile bodies, fear dragons above all else and despise them, even in their human form, to the point of racial discrimination. These two species have been at war with one another for the longest of times, except for the past forty years when a rather unstable truce gave apparent peace to the world. Now it's the time to renew the peace. So, dragons. And humans. And then, there's Seraphina. She is the unthinkable, a half-dragon. It is imperative her identity remain a secret, but when the Prince of Goredd is found brutally murdered and all fingers point to the dragons, Seraphina becomes the unwilling protagonist of an investigation to unveil a plot that is threatening to jeopardize an already unstable peace and which will oblige her to face her most dreaded nightmare: the truth about herself. Sounds awesome, doesn't it?

One of the things which instantly caught my attention in the descriptions of this novel was the ability of the dragons to change their shapes to mimic the human body. That concept just absolutely opened up an entire realm of possibilities for this author. As it turned out, the saarantras (dragons in human form) are still not able to feel human emotion, but at least they can interact with humans without scaring them to death. That was simply one of the new world concepts this author invented to make a fascinating novel. The broad concepts of mathematics and music are also key to this new world along with bigotry and diplomatic negotiations. But I'm getting carried away and rushing too far along. The book description states that it is intended for ages 12 and up and it is perfectly appropriate for someone as young as 12. There is nothing of a sexual nature in the novel. I do think that the story was a little slow to engage my interest because the world building is so prominent in the first third of the novel, but don't give up on it. You will miss a real treat if you do. This story concerns the central character of a young woman, Seraphina Dombegh, who has spent her entire 16 years of life hiding a secret. Now circumstances are beginning to change and Phina is having a harder time dealing with all the new happenings in her life which make the secrecy more urgent and yet harder to maintain. She has recently been hired as the music assistant to the court composer

and her first difficult job will be to play a flute solo at the Invocation for the funeral of Prince Rufus. Feeling is running high because it would appear that the forty year peace accord between humans and dragons has been violated.

I loved Seraphina! I was totally blown away by this phenomenal YA fantasy, full of fresh ideas, clever plot developments, and fascinating dragons. This beautifully written novel is sure to impress readers, with relatable characters, savvy storyline and magnificent world-building. Rachel Hartman's dragon world is simply gorgeous. I loved that she developed such an interesting and complex society, complete with political and social aspects. Dragons in this story mingle with the human kind; they take on a human form and live among their former enemies. They are not violent, fire-breathing, blood-thirsty creatures - they're very intelligent, rational, cold-minded, and diplomatic. They don't roam the skies in search of an easy pray, and they don't randomly attack innocent people - they're far more civilized for that. Hartman's dragons attend the court as ambassadors and give lectures at universities. They are scholars, scientists, and tutors. And yet humans don't trust them. The peaceful co-existence between humans and dragons is ensured by the peace treaty, but like with any treaty, there are those who support it and those who'd like to destroy it. The already unstable truce threatens to fall apart when a body of Prince Rufus is found, and the fact that it's missing head seems to be pointing to a dragon as his murderer. Our sixteen-year-old heroine, Seraphina Dombegh, lives with her father, and works as the assistant of the royal music master. Her mother died while giving birth to her, and though Seraphina has no memories of her, she inherited her incredible musical talent. Though extraordinarily talented, she can't display her musical skills publicly, as she can't afford to draw attention to herself. Why? Because of the dark secret she's hiding.

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