ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Islands Across the Universe
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BookSurge
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Most movies and books that feature aliens depict them as evil creatures that either want to destroy humans or take over Earth. *Islands Across the Universe* provides a fresh perspective on space aliens. The creatures here are benevolent goodwill ambassadors with no evil ulterior motives, despite their advanced technology. Their only goal is to collect plant seeds, animals, and fish to make other Earth-like planets in the universe inhabitable. The novel describes the aliens' experiences over a period of decades in which they visit the same New Mexico ranch and befriend three generations of a family.

The current owner of the ranch is twenty-four-year-old Jonathan Homer Jenkins who happens upon the aliens as they are fixing their ship. Once he realizes that they are friendly, he takes them home and eventually introduces them to those close to him. Jonathan's foster mother and her niece (who later becomes Jonathan's wife) bond with one of the aliens who is pregnant. They even take trips on the space ship to spectacular places like Niagara Falls, the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower, and the Golden Gate Bridge—all in one day. The aliens share their plant and healing technology with Jonathan so that he can share it with the world.

The author does an admirable job of infusing scenes with suspense, including the moment when Jonathan first encounters the aliens and observes them from a ridge. There are also some humorous scenes, like when he tries to establish verbal communication with the aliens, who communicate telepathically, and again when the aliens spend their free time in front of the television and become couch potatoes. But as for overall story development, the author fails to demonstrate several key features present in a well-developed novel: good descriptions, meaningful dialogue, and realistic characters.

There is too much "telling" and not enough "showing," which slows the pace. Good descriptions create pictures in readers' minds and allow them to connect with the characters. Meaningful dialogue is another way the author can reveal who the characters are and what the story is about. Dialogue opens up their world to the reader. Finally, great characters are lively

and seasoned from life experiences. The characters here have no emotional depth so one never gets a sense of who they are.

There are occasional gaffes in grammar, but not enough to distract from the overall story. However, good editing isn't just about grammar, it also includes fact-checking story content. For example, astute readers will know that Jonathan is twentyfour and the year is 2006, so he would never use the word "courtship" to refer to dating as he does at one point in the story.

While these space aliens are not stereotypes of pervious novels, their story is not exciting enough to hold the interest of adult readers. Younger audiences may find it more appealing.