The Time Travel Team: The Great Historic Mystery

Jordyn Hadden
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The Time Travel Team is an intricate middle grade fantasy that lauds inventiveness and science.

Jordyn Hadden’s action-driven middle grade fantasy The Time Travel Team imparts lessons on the history of invention.

Tyme Newton is one of four teenage descendants of great historical thinkers, along with her friends Luna Edison, Avia Wright, and Olympia van Gogh. When she finds a mysterious note and four time crystals in a copy of her ancestor Isaac Newton’s book, she and her friends are drawn into a life-or-death mystery. They collect clues, overcome obstacles, and travel through time to disable an invention initially designed to create free electricity for the whole world, but that could instead destroy the world.

Along the way, the teens face Zina O’Connell, whose parents have disappeared, leaving her angry and worried, and who has fantastical powers of her own. And at the heart of the mystery is another dimension, Intelligentsia, where great thinkers meet and share ideas outside of time. To become one of the creative and brilliant people who can travel to Intelligentsia, Tyme faces difficult choices.

This is a rollicking and age-appropriate tale, though its complex system of time can be confusing. There are discrepancies over how the dimension outside of time interacts with Earth’s dimension, as when interdimensional emails are sent. Repeated sections of exposition—as when characters explain the function of “time crystals”—ensure that most of the book’s rules are clear. Conversations between the teens read more like written dialogues than natural, spoken ones, though their advanced vocabularies help in establishing their intelligence.

The characters are engaging and work together well. Each of the four main girls contributes and hinders their mission by turns, and their flaws—like Tyme’s selfishness—make them relatable. Transitions between scenes are smooth, and Tyme’s story includes valuable and subtle lessons about teamwork, regret, and courage.

The teens overcome a wide variety of hurdles, though, and the rising action around them feels drawn out. Future events are better teased in early scenes, making the final showdown seem inevitable. Some of the subplots, including those focused on Zina’s pursuit of her family and Tyme’s memories of her grandmother, contribute to this dazzling conclusion.

Historical scenes—as when the girls travel back to the moments before Orville Wright’s first flight—are detailed and fun, featuring intelligent, creative people whose shared ideas contribute to the betterment of society. They help to make The Time Travel Team an intricate middle grade fantasy, full of inventions and science.

LAURA LEAVITT (June 5, 2019)
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