



Freakling

Lana Krumwiede

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In twelve-year-old Taemon's city, everyone has a power called psi—the ability to move and manipulate objects with their minds. When Taemon loses his psi in a traumatic accident, he must hide his lack of power by any means possible. But a humiliating incident at a sports tournament exposes his disability, and Taemon is exiled to the powerless colony.

The "dud farm" is not what Taemon expected, though: people are kind and open, and they actually seem to enjoy using their hands to work and play and even comfort their children. Taemon adjusts to his new life quickly, making friends and finding unconditional acceptance.

But gradually he discovers that for all its openness, there are mysteries at the colony, too—dangerous secrets that would give unchecked power to psi wielders if discovered.

When Taemon unwittingly leaks one of these secrets, will he have the courage to repair the damage—even if it means returning to the city and facing the very people who exiled him?

Freakling Details

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Author : Lana Krumwiede

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From Reader Review Freakling for online ebook

Deborah Andreasen says

Fantastic story. Superb writing. No plot holes that I saw (or rather heard). I listened to the audio book version. Perfect narrator. Highly recommended to all readers.

Kyra says

I just finished Freakling and I thought it was a fabulous story. The book is debuting in October, but I received an advanced copy from a teacher at my school who went to a book convention in Chicago. I was ecstatic to read a book that has yet to be published but little did I know that the plot and characters would be so multi-dimensional and intriguing that I hardly put it down. The main character, Taemon, is a boy with great intellect and deep thoughts. I applaud Lana Krumwiede for her descriptions that gave the reader insight into Taemon's thoughts and motives for his many actions and decisions in the story. The plot was easy to follow but allowed the reader opportunities to really dig deeper into Taemon's life and mind. Overall, I enjoyed Freakling and I recommend it for both sci-fi fans and dystopian novel readers alike. The ending was perfectly constructed for there to be a sequel and I read online that in 2013 that it will be published. I'm excited to see where Taemon's adventures take him in the next story!

Annie says

First Look: This looked pretty interesting. I actually had a similar idea revolving in my head for quite awhile (though it's now been put indefinitely on the back burner). Ultimately, the execution of this book was very different from my idea, which is perfectly alright with me. Also, it's kinda refreshing to read middle grade every so often--it gives me a break from angsty romance and love triangles everywhere.

Setting: I love, more than anything, the fact that this setting made me think quite a bit about something I'd never thought of before. These people had spent their entire lives doing things with psi, with everything from eating to doing work to playing sports. (Using "psi" is basically doing things with mental powers, like telekinesis.) I had never before considered how much our daily lives revolve around *doing* things, physical things. I'm pressing down on my keyboard right now. Earlier I picked up my food with a fork in order to eat it. I put my contact lens on my finger and put it into my eye (yep, I'm a contact-wearing person now). We physically do things, all day, every day. So what if you, say, didn't have to touch your phone in order to press the buttons? What if you could control everything internally? And then, what happens when you lose that power, in a world that doesn't know how to live without it?

This aspect was fascinating. Had this book been longer, I'm sure Krumwiede would have delved into this even more, but she still did a great job exploring this idea.

Characters: I liked Taemon. He reacted realistically to the events of the story, and had plenty likable traits. He was smart and determined. There wasn't anything that made him stand out from the crowd, but he was still a fairly solid lead.

Some of the side characters--especially kids other than Taemon--were flat. I could find no distinguishing traits about them. Except for Moke, though. I liked him. Something's up with that kid--I want to know more! And Yens had some really weird and interesting stuff going on. I'm skeptical that any sixteen-year-old would actually want to kill their brother, but...okay. At least he didn't stray into I'm-evil-because-I'm-evil mode.

Plot: It was interesting, but...it went too fast, for me. Some of this probably came from the fact that it was a MG book, but still (or maybe that's just me, because when I was twelve I was reading 500-page monsters). There were some things that could have been expanded on, giving the plot more depth.

I'm also a bit skeptical on some of the plot elements. As in, would that society turn completely from a good place to a not-so-good place that fast? I'm not sure I believe it. Can a twelve-year-old outsmart a prison system put in place by trained adults? Not sure I believe that, either.

Uniqueness: This book mixes familiar dystopian aspects with fresh, different ones.

Writing: There were some typos, but my copy is an ARC, so that's to be expected. Unless they weren't corrected when the book went to actual printing. But I'll assume they were.

Otherwise, the writing did a good job telling the story. I don't have anything more to say about it.

Likes: Nothing not already mentioned above.

Not-so-great: First thing: There are some weird biblical references here. I'm not sure whether this is a good or bad thing. I can't decide if some of these references are unintentional, or if they were meant to be there. First, there's the thing about the True Son, which is an obvious Christ-figure reference, not to mention a very interesting word choice. The "True Son" (okay, the kid who they thought was the True Son) tore down the temple. Um....

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." (John 2:19)

And now I'm left wondering if the actual True Son is going to build it up again. Also, there's some stuff about a prophet leading people to a new land, etc.

Second thing: In the powerless colony, there is a family that safeguards a secret library. In this library, there is a book titled *Understanding the Atom*. The parents of the family make a comment that goes something like this (this is by no means an exact quote, but it's the general message): *"If you knew what an atom was, and how to use it, you could destroy the world. That is why we must keep this knowledge secret."* This is obviously referring to the atomic bomb, and how a person could potentially use this power to destroy the world. I'm not going to sit here debating the ethics of dropping bombs on Japan during WWII, but in short, I believe it was necessary. There are 11-17 million reasons for this. (And no, I'm not just tossing out numbers.) Also, the idea of hiding knowledge has never sat well with me.

Third thing: I don't really agree with the choice Taemon made at the end, to (view spoiler)This doesn't sit well with me, either.

Overall: This is an interesting dystopian read with a likable main character. It presents some really cool and fairly well-executed concepts. I love the idea of psi and the culture that goes with it. This is a middle grade

book, so it's aimed at 10-14 year olds, but then again, I'm sixteen and enjoyed it. The only thing that gives me pause is the subtext. There's some serious stuff going on beneath the surface of this book, and some of it doesn't sit well with me. Taemon's story is just the tip of the iceberg, here. I feel like younger readers won't see the subtext, but I did. It'll be interesting to see where the series goes.

Similar Books: *The Always War*, *Witch and Wizard*, *The City of Ember*

Experiment BL626 says

This dystopian Middle Grade book would have been an easy 3-stars were it not for a few big things.

+ the weak hero

I did not like Taemon. I could tolerate his lack of self-confidence, but his refusal to listen to his common sense pushed my limit. When you live in a society where psychic power is everything and you lose your own, common sense dictates that you should avoid everything that would pull attention to you. That means no participating in sport events where psychic power is the way you play the sport, *especially when nobody forced you to participate*, and no going to school where you're being tested on the active use of your psychic power, *especially when you could have easily been homeschooled*. Where was the parenting?

The biggest thing of all, no doing anything your evil older brother says or going anywhere alone with him, *especially when you can detect his evil intent from a mile and a galaxy away*. Taemon wasn't stupid; he was astute. But he made so many bad decisions that I found it hard to believe the kid was still alive by the end of Part 1 of the book. The kid was lucky that the villains were not more wicked.

However, what really grated on my nerves was his Guilt Complex. Not only was it annoying, it presented the character as a Jesus type of hero. Dafuq? I knew from the blurb that Taemon was going to be the Chosen One, but not in a Jesus-y way. Fortunately, this crap arose only intermittently. Any more frequently and I would have wanted to gouge someone's eyes out.

+ the anti-intellectualism bent

The idea that knowledge was dangerous and thus should be kept secret because of the great possibility humanity would use it for evil (see chapter 14) was unchallenged, and I didn't like it. Nevermind the equally great possibility that humanity could use the knowledge for the greater good because cynicism, which made little sense given how easy the villagers confessed the secret to Taemon, an outsider. Readers know Taemon is a good person (Jesus!) but from the villagers' POV he could have been a spy for all they know, considering when they were made aware of his sibling status to one of the villains.

I hated how the good guys were incompetent in their handling of the "forbidden knowledge." They ended up costing a lot of savable lives. The book was yet another dystopian/post-apocalyptic fiction with an anti-intellectualism bent. And the fact that the setting was in a religious context, I did not care to explore what the bent could mean and go farther on the path of critical thinking because I was sure it would make me more

annoyed and mad. Admittedly, there's a chance that subversive goals are at work but I seriously doubt it.

+ the forgettable characters

Characters were flat and forgettable, especially during Part 2 when the cast expanded to include non-psychic villagers who among them I only remembered a spunky girl. I remembered Amma because she had traits of a kickass heroine and more right to be the main character than Taemon did. Other than her, I did not remember any other character introduced after Part 1. The characters I did remember, I had nothing but complaints.

Taemon's family were halfway to being window dressing to the point that the author should have just went ahead and made Taemon a complete cliché by making him an orphan with a mysterious past. The book dismissed his mother and father after Part 1, never to be heard from again, and became another case of the Disappearing Parent Syndrome.

As for Taemon's brother, the dude was outright evil: power-hungry, narcissistic, and jealous. There was little explanation for why Yens became evil other than bad parenting (read: no parenting) and Uncle Fierre who spoiled him. Okay, so maybe that is all the explanation needed but the character felt like he was just born evil rather than a case of bad nurturing in the sense that someone needed to be evil aside from the evil mastermind. In sum, what little can be called family dynamics were so awkwardly done that, to reiterate, the book would have better off making Taemon an orphan with a mysterious past.

I did appreciate that Taemon was given a break in the form of a best friend, Moke. For all the characterization of Taemon as a special snowflake, less than average Moke was more interesting. If Amma had first place in having the most rights to be the main character, Moke had second place, which is why it really sucked what happened to him at the end. So much for that break.

As for the main villain, Elder Naseph was your typical corrupted priest who wanted the world as his oyster because being high priest is not enough. All the characters were either good or evil. Character development was the book's weakest point.

In Conclusion

I rate *Freakling* 2-stars for it was okay. A thing I did like was like the religion and how it was based on nature with Mother Nature as the divine power, the True Son as her Jesus, and how psychic power was the privilege bestowed on her chosen people. However, I wish more creative liberties were taken because the religion felt like a clone of Christianity.

In regard to the plot, Part 1 was too long which made for a slow beginning, and frustrating because of the hero. Part 2 was meh, and with no sign of character growth on the hero I skimmed. Part 3 was where good action happened but I ceased to care back in Part 2. Overall, in another writer's hand, the book could have been way better.

♥Marie Gentilcore says

This was a very entertaining book. It is set in a dystopian world where there is a community of people who have "psi" which is an ability to move things using just their minds. There is also a community of people without this ability who are considered "powerless." The main character Taemon lives in the psi community.

There is conflict between Taemon and his brother Yens who is doing all he can to be proven to be "True Son" of the psi community. I don't want to give away too much so I will stop here but it was a fun book to read and I plan to read the next couple books in the series.

Wendy Bunnell says

I'm giving this a 3 1/2 star rating, and added the next book in this series to my "to be read" list. I coincidentally read it the same weekend that I read The Darkest Minds and that might have been a little too much psychic ability YA for a single weekend, but this came out as the stronger book. The audience for this book is younger than YA, but pretty close.

Fantasy and sci-fi books really come down to three things for me: Characters, plot and universe.

I really liked the characters of Taemon, his friend who was his psi ball partner (can't remember the name - I listened to this on audiobook), and also Amma. I haven't decided yet whether I like the character of his brother, as he is dark and twisty, but we don't know yet whether there is a decent reason for it or just you know, evil. I don't care for Taemon's parents, as they really let Taemon down. His dad tried to help by inventing a manual bass drum, but didn't really step up to protect him. Hell, his mom forbade him from feeding himself. Selfish much, mom. I recently read The Glass Castle and let's just say I really appreciate that my parents aren't self-absorbed nincompoops like the parents in this book and that memoir. Yes, that one is a memoir, how horrifying. I get that "parents are mean" is a YA book theme, so fine, but damn. I liked Taemon's resilience and willingness to keep trying and striving, despite all of his setbacks, and to keep making friends along the way. In a couple years, I might try to get my son to read this book just so he can learn from Taemon's example.

The universe was interesting, but not really complete. It didn't make a whole lot of sense why Taemon's parents tried to hide his loss of psi in such a cruel and ham-handed way, but I liked the way that they described the universe and the cluelessness of people who have come to rely on psi to do everything from cooking and feeding to driving to laundry to probably wiping their own butt. Which reminded me of my favorite line from the Lego Movie, in which Captain Metalbeard tells the others "Wiping yer bum with a hook is hard, this is impossible!" Do these people have media and know what is going on in and outside of the city? That wasn't really clear. If they don't, then the ending must have been really baffling. If they do, they never mentioned it.

The plot was decent, but let me down. Taemon's journey outside the city into the land of the non-psi people was interesting, and gave a wonderful contrast, but I don't know that the logic of all of that was well explained. It reminded me of the third Divergent book in which the author gutted her own premise when she went outside the walls of New Chicago and found that everyone out there was pretty much the same type of "special" as our heroes, or something like that. What? Who are these people and how do they fit into the plot of everything else going on in the city? We did not find out. Why did they bother introducing Daemon to a family with 5 kids to live with if he was just going to move in with the tinker as soon as he decided where to apprentice? No idea. What is Amma's family doing there? I'm not sure.

I liked it because it was interesting and I like Taemon, but not sure if I can forgive the weird plot twists enough to make it through the trilogy. I'll try to pick up the second one and find out though.

Lana Krumwiede says

Rating your own book is like voting for yourself. You feel silly if you do it, but stupid if you don't.

Marjolein says

Full review to come!

Blodeuedd Finland says

Another MG one, but I was really surprised when I read that this one was MG. There was violence, death, threats of violence and even a hint of a threat of sexual violence. I get that the main character is 13 so I guess that makes it more MG then, but, since it is labelled as MG some really young readers could read it. But maybe kids these days are more used to things. Still, I would say this one is more for younger YA readers. Cos no, there is not that much violence. YA has more, but I still feel like it was a bit too dark for MG. I mean an 8 year old could read this and they just kill a kid like that and torture people so...maybe I am the only one that feels like this. It was just such a change from the other MG I just listened to.

Speech over. 11 up absolutely. Not under that. But older YA would find it too simple so yes it lies there in the shadow land of upper MG, lower YA

Is this a fantasy world? Is it our world? No idea. I do like when things are clearer cos I always wonder. Is it dystopia? Sci-fi? Interesting mix at least. A world where a group of fanatics (yes I will call them that) left and made a mountain (why no one come over the sea and takes a look I have no idea), and then they live there using psi powers they got. Which to me seems too exhausting. They can do NOTHING by hand. Not eat, not going to the toilet I assume. NO lifting. Nothing. I wonder how they make babies, I guess they can touch then...or? Cos the kid keeps saying that no one touch each other. You do not want to know what I am thinking now. Touch is a sense. Why take away that completely?

Anyway, this kid Taemon loses his powers and is sent away. I liked him, though he really should just have killed his psycho brother. That does make it MG, he was so damn nice.

There is an evil guy who is evil and Taemon will obviously save the world.

Interesting world and a nice story, even if, I mean come on people, touch is a sense!

Narrator Nick Poedl

I liked his voice and omg the voice for Tae's sociopath of a brother, yes he sounded evil!

Tara says

Let me clarify...I really liked this book for a ten or eleven year old. I would even give it to an older reluctant reader. Despite an interesting premise, the writing is just too simple for the book to go much higher. And, it needs to, because the themes it addresses--pride, loyalty, deception, self-sacrifice and death--are ones that can require a bit of emotional maturity. My eleven year old read this in an afternoon and we had a great discussion about power, knowledge and making decisions for oneself or the good of others. Things I'm pretty sure the author intended and I liked. I also appreciated that the author explained psi as more than the power of telekinesis, but stipulated that in order to use it, one had to understand how something worked. A gentle introduction to the mechanics of magic that made the story more believable and more interesting. Great choice for readers who are too young to understand the machinations of Artemis Fowl.

Devon says

First of all, this book started off slow and I didnt think I would enjoy it...AT ALL. However, making connections and looking deeper into the text made it more into like a mystery book, which I enjoyed. Doing "a home things" when reading this book made me change my opinion in the book. But there were still sometimes where the book was sooo detailed that it made it terrible.

Honestly, when in social studies class and reading TKM in the past, this made me connect slavery with this book. Generally because of how black people during slavery were treated different and were known as different because of their abilities and color of skin. This was the same with "Freakling". Taemon (the main character) had this mind ability known as "psi", but he loses it along the way in the book. When you aren't born with psi or loose your psi, you move to the Colony and have to work for the people WITH psi. If you think about it, this is similar to the way of slavery, but with different concepts and ideas. Seeing how one COMPLETELY different concepts come together make me really feel like this book is supposed to resemble slavery in a way.

Overall, "Freakling" was very slow in the beginning, but when coming across action and mystery and seeing what Taemon was going to do, it truly made me enjoy the book more. Pretty good book if you are into the books that make you "connect the dots"!!

Amber says

Taemon is a young boy who has psychic power known as Psi. When his brother Yens tries to kill him, Taemon fights back only to lose his psi power. When the whole city finds out that he is powerless, Taemon is exiled to the powerless colony to be with the regular humans. Can Taemon survive and have the strength and courage to protect his new home? Read on and find out for yourself.

This was a pretty good Science Fiction Fantasy YA adventure that is the first of a trilogy. There is tons of action and more in it. I look forward to continuing the trilogy in the future. If you like these types of stories, be sure to check this book out at your local library and wherever books are sold.

Bennett says

I gobbled this thing up in one single night. I was expecting a cheap spoof of the The Hunger Games, but I was delighted to find that I was wrong. Freakling is a thing of its own!!! I love the idea of having psi (I'm guessing the P is silent) and moving stuff with your mind. I'm so glad this is a series! This book deserves to be praised heavily.

Alternate Rating: B

Jada Smith-Lopez says

In this book I really enjoyed it because being in a world where being different is dangerous you really have to understand where Taemon comes from you can't be yourself or people will try to kill you because they want a society where they want wise and smart and talented people to make their world look better than what it really is. If someone doesn't like the way you act or the way you look they label you as a freakling and that spoke to me because that happens in real life.

Powder River Rose says

A future society that uses forms of psychokinesis and has forgotten how to even zip a zipper unless through the power of the mind. The narrator was excellent. I enjoyed this book, it is great for teaching morals, good vs evil and a bit of science, but it is also a fun and gently mysterious story of a young boy who was hurt in an "accident" and how he overcomes his disability. I'm looking forward to listening to the rest of the series as it comes out.
