



Monsters of Men

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

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The critics certainly enthused about the first two books of the multi-award winning **Chaos Walking** trilogy ? ?fantastic?, ?extraordinary?, ?brilliantly evocative?, ?furiously paced?. Well yes, but at over 600 pages, this concluding volume is also *long*. That would be fine if shifting events and relationships dictated such length, but here the plot is frequently repetitive. One skirmish echoes another in a protracted military stand-off without significantly moving the book forward to a resolution. The action rarely moves outside a single valley and the cast of major characters is small for a book of this scale; that could make for greater intensity, but it may also prompt a wish for more variety.

You would be adrift in **Monsters of Men** unless you knew what had gone before. So for new potential readers, it makes sense to suggest starting with the first volume, **The Knife of Never Letting Go**, rather than offering too much detail about the present novel. In essence, Book Three continues the account of the struggles and shortcomings of humans in their attempts to settle the planet New World. The conflicts which arise are mostly seen through the eyes and adventures of the young protagonists, Todd and Viola; a third voice allows the reader to share the perspective of the spiritually aware native population. There are undeniably some highly inventive and powerful dimensions to the trilogy: the notion of some characters being able to read others' thoughts and so to manipulate them; the dilemma of whether killing is ever justifiable in pursuit of a lesser evil; issues of colonialism as the human settlers confront the indigenous Spackle, who think and act as one community. The three contrasting narrative voices work well and there are some intriguing pressures at play among the main characters, especially within the ambivalence between Todd and the devious, ruthless Mayor Prentiss, the would-be military dictator of this brave new world; but even this complexity is diluted because the relationship is revisited too often ? and with too little development ? for interest to be maintained. Blockbuster fantasy/science fiction stories are in vogue, but the observance of the old dictum ?Less is More? might well, for me, have resulted in greater involvement.

Running Order:

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