

Not only do I get the privilege of being the first to review this book on Amazon, but I get to give it five stars!

A period piece about breaking traditional gender roles is how I describe *A Light Within*. A young woman named Cora laments about her inability to attend medical school. Because she's a woman. Alright, pretty standard for the time. The events that follow are anything but standard.

Set during a time of abolitionists and women becoming self-aware, *A Light Within* takes on a heavy task. There was much going on in the pre-Civil War era that was important, and the author managed to encompass quite a bit.

Something that stood out besides the excellent writing, was the attention to detail. A heavy bit of research seems to have gone into everything from locations, to speech and dress. The novel never feels like it "breaks character" and has modernism creep in. Though it does mimic certain current events, or are we repeating history because we can't seem to learn from it?

While traditional in some ways, we see more and more of the opposite as the story unfolds. And the story's woven tighter than Gordian's Knot. Later on, it morphs to takes on a more *To Kill A Mockingbird* feel. The issues of morality, good and evil, and racism are now at the forefront.

Now, anyone who reads my reviews knows my thoughts on how romance gets portrayed. It usually follows the same formula over and over again. The woman's thought process of "I am independent and don't want a family" changes when she meets a man. What's different about Cora is the fact that she does want that. Eventually. She has things to do first, and she remains true to that. The love story that blossoms with her is well done. It's subtle, and progressive, and it doesn't try to take away from the story. In other words: it remains a tertiary theme.

Characterization represented an interesting dichotomy, especially within Cora's family. Remember how I said traditional gender roles get broken? Look at the character development. There are significant points that the reader can see it happen. The author isn't subtle about it at all. Nor are they apologetic.

There was a lot I liked about this novel. Writing language from a different time is a difficult task, but the author was up for the challenge. *A Light Within* is very immersive and so well-written. A great deal of thought and effort went into this novel and the result is stunning. A must-read.