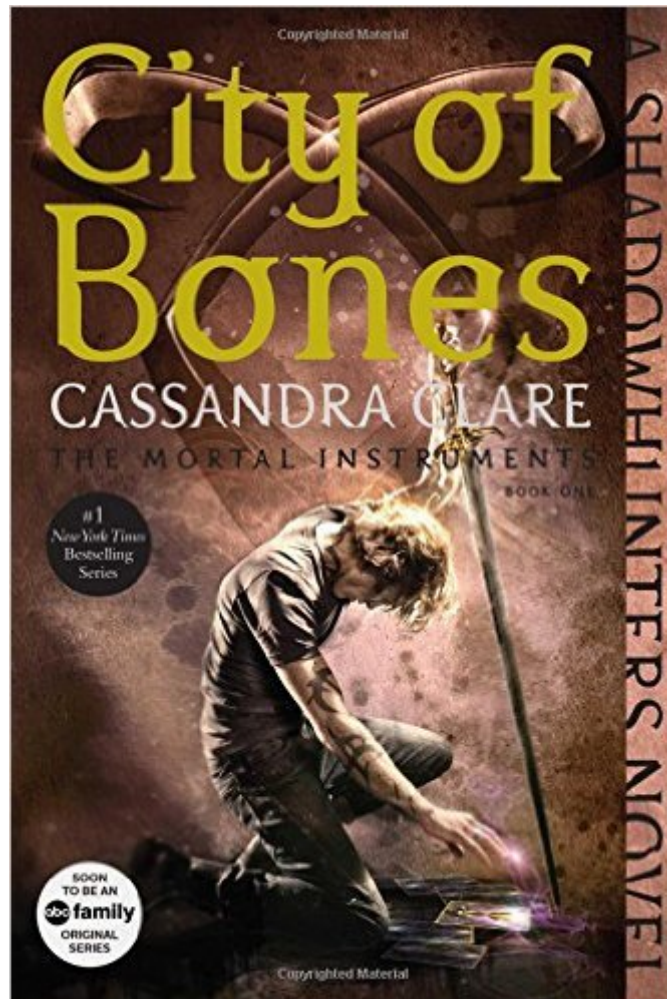


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City Of Bones (The Mortal Instruments)



Synopsis

Discover the world of the Shadowhunters in the first installment of the internationally bestselling Mortal Instruments series and "prepare to be hooked" • (Entertainment Weekly) "now with a gorgeous new cover, a map, a new foreword, and exclusive bonus content! City of Bones is a Shadowhunters novel. When fifteen-year-old Clary Fray heads out to the Pandemonium Club in New York City, she hardly expects to witness a murder" much less a murder committed by three teenagers covered with strange tattoos and brandishing bizarre weapons. And she's more than a little startled when the body disappears into thin air. Soon Clary is introduced to the world of the Shadowhunters, a secret cadre of warriors dedicated to driving demons out of our world and back to their own. And Clary is introduced with a vengeance, when her mother disappears and Clary herself is almost killed by a grotesque monster. How could a mere human survive such an attack and kill a demon? The Shadowhunters would like to know |

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Customer Reviews

This review was written for my blog, so the hyperlinks and strikethrough text got erased when I posted it here, but I think you get the gist.---I'm finally getting around to reading Cassandra Clare's City of Bones (first book in the "Mortal Instruments" series) and I have so many conflicted feelings about it, I'm actually having a hard time just reading it. Nevertheless, this post is actually a review of City of Bones. IT HAS SOME SPOILERS. Not that there's much to spoil. First of all, I've been familiar with Cassandra Clare's work for quite a few years now...of course, what I mean is that like

thousands of other people, I knew her from her LOTR and Harry Potter fanfiction days, under the penname "Cassandra Claire." She would probably be the most stellar example of what's known as a BNF, or a Big Name Fan. She wrote the "Very Secret Dairies" for LOTR and the "Draco Trilogy" (Draco Dormiens, Sinister, and Veritas) for Harry Potter. They've been translated into various languages and most likely if you read any Harry Potter fanfiction at all, you've probably heard of Cassandra Clare. Unsurprisingly, there was also some controversy and accusations of plagiarism involved, since she paraphrased or "forgot to cite" a lot of phrases and quotes that she used in her stories, which she'd taken from other famous works/fandoms. You can read all about it at her very own Fanlore page . As I recall, she may or may not have been gifted a laptop by fans when hers was stolen - though this is apparently one of the myths that got deleted off websites like Fanlore. Anyway, all this is just background context, but it's important context, and you'll see why. So basically after this highly successful fanfiction stint, Cassandra Claire became Cassandra Clare, the best-selling author of the YA "Mortal Instruments" series, which finally brings me back to City of Bones. With that said, City of Bones is more or less the Harry Potter world reimaged, and what I mean by that is that basically almost every single concept and phrase and description in this book seemed oddly familiar... But that's kind of to be expected, since naturally a writer's style can't change overnight. Still. Here's now the series works. Clary Fray is your normal teenage girl - for about fifty pages, anyway - and basically she starts seeing things that other people can't see. No, it actually isn't a book based off the ever popular faerie mythology. Clary sees three teenagers covered with weird markings kill someone they claim is a demon. Turns out, there's a whole "Shadow world" out there, where there are vampires, werewolves, faeries, and so on. One of those marked teenagers turns out to be a young Shadowhunter named Jace, who happens to have all the same mannerisms and characteristics as Draco Malfoy, especially the Draco Malfoy portrayed in the Draco Trilogy. In other words, he's arrogant, wealthy, sarcastic, blond, and he even comes with a back story with some kind of stern father who teaches him that "to love is to destroy." The father spoiled his son with luxuries (they live in the Malfoy - well, a manor - after all) but the father also died. Jace is a Shadowhunter, meaning he's been trained since birth to kill demons and whatnot. A Shadowhunter uses a stele (which is a wand-like object, Clare's description, not mine) to draw runes, i.e. they use this "tool" to do magic. Cool, right? Okay, Jace is actually pretty appealing (well, why not? He's basically Draco) but the similarities don't stop there. See, about 16 years ago in this magical world, this guy named Lord Voldemort - er, I mean Valentine - decided to get rid of everyone who he felt wasn't pureblooded enough, which in this case means anything nonhuman. There's actually quite a bit of snobbishness going on between the Shadowhunters and the Muggles

- er, I mean mundanes - that don't know about this magical world that's hiding in plain sight. Anyway, 16 years ago, "Valentine" failed and everyone thought he and his wife and child died. His supporters, the Circle (okay, fail, Death Eaters sounds so much cooler), either died during the Uprising or turned themselves in and are somewhat co-opted back into the government, but exiled. Clary, of course, turns out to be mysteriously connected to He Who Shall Not Be Named, who turns out not to be dead. Like you didn't see that one coming. Anyway, Valentine sends demons after Clary and manages to kidnap Clary's mom. Clary's dad conveniently died around the time she was born. Hmmmm. Valentine used to be this popular and handsome Shadowhunter who, you know, didn't start out evil but gradually became obsessed with killing all the Downworlders (those nonhuman, part demon whatever) and using this thing called the Mortal Cup to create more Shadowhunters from regular humans. Problem is, only like 20% of the converted humans survive, but Valentine's not going to let that stop him. He builds up his followers - the Circle - which basically consists of the parents of all of Clary's new Shadowhunter friends. By the way, the Shadowhunter names are all things like Blackwell, Pangborn, Lightwood, Fairchild. Just so you know. No sense of deja vu, of course. Also, in a twist you so couldn't see coming, Valentine turns out to be Clary's mom's husband, which makes Clary...right, his daughter. Oh no! To help you (and Clary) keep track of everyone, there's this old picture of the Circle when they were young, y'know that group of friends who were all together...too bad the picture isn't animated, right? Let's keep going though. So V's after the Mortal Cup, which Clary's mom has hidden, so Clary and Jace try to find it while some action and unrequited love pads the story. The relationships are painfully similar to what was in Draco Trilogy, but I guess you can't really plagiarize from yourself. On the romantic front, I won't spoil it completely, but just think Leia and Luke Skywalker. Uh huh, another classic. Jace also has an "I am your father" moment. All right, all this said, despite all of the above, City of Bones is a pretty good book, in the same way that I thought that the Draco Trilogy was pretty fun to read. Incidentally, the Draco Trilogy can be downloaded as a PDF from a variety of places. Both the Trilogy and this "Mortal Instruments" series have lots of Latin inscriptions, lots of references, and lots of funny moments. It's only irritating because the whole thing constantly makes me think "wow, I've seen this before," to the point that it was really distracting. There wasn't a single part that I felt was all that new, but everything was pretty well done and well written. Clary is almost unbearably a Mary Sue, but I was way more distracted by the shoutouts to Jaida Jones (another famous fanfic writer turned published author, who actually did write a novel I liked, Havemercy) and Holly Black. Regarding the Mary Sue issue, though, can we please get rid of all these fantasy heroines who never seem to realize they're beautiful until their romantic interest tells them? Cliche much and annoying much?

Please, you're telling me a 16 year old girl somehow never realized her own level of attractiveness. Really, now. Unsurprisingly, the "Mortal Instruments" series has been a big hit and might be being made into a film. Lots of people are saying it's the next Harry Potter. In my opinion, it's more like a Harry Potter rehash, but given how much HP has sold, if Cassandra Clare can take even 5% of the market share, that would be a pretty big success. Would I recommend it to others? Hmmm. I think as an avid reader of YA novels, I have far better series to recommend to my friends. You could definitely do worse, but you could also definitely do better. For those who like fantasy and heroic fairy tales, try Kristin Cashore - though her books are very well rounded and definitely deserve all the YA awards they've won, so try her even if you don't usually go for fantasy. For those action-minded, try Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games trilogy or Ann Aguirre's Enclave. If you're looking for a more grown up, but still teenage epic action/romance series with vampires, try Richelle Mead. If you like stories about futuristic technological dystopias, try Scott Westerfeld or Robin Wasserman. Leaning toward epic fantasy or consider yourself a fan of Tamora Pierce? Try Allison Goodman's Eon. Update: The "MI" series ARE being made into films and the hype is already that it'll be the "next big thing" when Twilight ends. All I can say is, that's almost as predictable as the book.

First, a word about the rating. This deserves five stars for understanding its audience and delivering exactly what that audience wants to see. This deserves one star for its execution and style. So I gave it three. Cassandra Clare understands teenagers. She knows what they want: ordinary heroines with a special destiny, attractive, caustic boys with a burning urge to protect said heroines, love triangles, monsters, magic, and so much more. She gets teenagers in a way that few of her YA compatriots do, and for that she deserves all of her success. As an author, however, she is middling. City of Bones, her first novel, is embarrassingly purple and overlong. It succeeds in understanding its core demographic, in creating an interesting mythology, and in constructing a couple of very memorable characters (Magnus Bane, etc.) It fails in its language, its style, which careens from painfully hipper-than-thou to melodramatic and back again, and its two leads. Quick word about the story: this is the tale of sixteen year old Clary Fray, an ordinary girl who one night stumbles upon a group of Shadowhunters, demon killers if you will, as they dispatch a hellspawn. Before long, she and her best friend Simon are on the run with the Shadowhunters, including closeted Alec, haughty Isabelle, and the dreamiest dreamboat snarky angel tortured soul Adonis wot is dreamy, Jace. Clary runs around with these folks looking for her kidnapped mother, discovers a world of supernatural creatures and a surprising heritage she never suspected, and engages in a 'love triangle' that holds no tension because we know whom she'll pick. Though there is a nice twist at the end. More on that

later. The good: I felt like a teenager again while reading this. The overdramatic angst, the wonder, the flush of first love/infatuation, it all came right off the page. And I'm serious, for that Ms. Clare deserves much praise. Also, I enjoy the deep incorporation of everyday Manhattan into the story. The bad: the logistics of this world make little sense. I have a problem with Urban Fantasy worlds where there are a myriad of strange, immortal, powerful supernatural creatures who hide out from the much weaker humans. It seems like Manhattan alone is teeming with supernaturals, which begs the question: why aren't they running the show? There isn't any reason, really. I get the feeling that Ms. Clare is a fan of Joss Whedon. I'll tell you why. The hipper-than-thouness I mentioned earlier? That is classic faux-Whedon. The man has pretty much perfected the art of the pop culture quip and savvy snark merging with supernatural banter. But Mr. Whedon is easy to imitate and hard to imitate well. The constant, CONSTANT quips and quirks and snarks will exhaust you after a while. Why don't these people just talk to each other? And then they do. The purple prose, good lord, it is so very purple and so very, very melodramatic. Apparently all Shadowhunters come from this place called Idris. I could not figure out 1. if Idris was in another dimension or off the coast of Scotland or something; 2. how everyone got there; 3. why they all apparently dressed and spoke like Shakespeare in the Park, and if moving from Idris to Brooklyn makes for a culture shock. Nobody speaks; they DECLAIM. Especially the villain, who pops in at the tail end with, admittedly, a great plot twist. The ugly: meet Clary Fray and Jace Wayland. They might call to mind another famous YA couple, Edward Cullen and Bella Swan, except that Edward is more charming than Jace, and Bella has more personality than Clary. I am not kidding. At. All. For all Edward's stalker creep mode, at least he treated Bella with courtesy (when not treating her like a child). Jace gets points in the 'doesn't keep Clary from her friends' department, but he's rude, inconsiderate, charmless and aggressive for no real reason. And Clary...likes to paint and has red hair. I have never in my life read a heroine who made less of an impact. Even if Bella Swan is warped and twisted and psycho, I REMEMBER her. Sure, Clary is a better, more independent person than Bella and can live her life without a man...mostly. But Clary is a cipher, a paper mask of a human face with the eyes cut out, so that the reader can put the mask on and listen as Jace lovingly berates her. Love, it is so twu. I am going to stop this review a moment for a quick chat about this particular couple, and why romances like this and Twilight really irk me. Ladies, I know we all love a rogue. A madman. Someone self-possessed and witty, someone who wants to verbally spar with us, someone passionate and intense. Mr. Darcy, Heathcliff, Mr. Rochester, Benedick, all those great classic heroes. Except that Mr. Darcy wasn't really a jerk, he was just shy, Heathcliff was a real psychopath, Rochester had...issues, and Benedick was really a nice guy. But I digress. There's this

weird thing going around in some of these YA couplings where abuse and unhealthy obsession are seen as the goal. Maybe Jace isn't a psycho a la Cullen, but he's rude, he's mean, he's not particularly witty or funny or charming (some character calls him 'charming' at some point and all I could think was WHEN?!), he treats people badly for no real reason, he's self-obsessed, and he and Clary 'fall in love' after snarking at each other for forty eight hours. Remember that love triangle? The other contestant is a handsome, good-hearted, funny guy who loves Clary, and has since they were kids. And she treats him like he doesn't exist when the Angel appears. I know it's the female fantasy to redeem a bad boy/change his world/be wanted by a smoldering, passionate man. But let's switch roles for a second. Our story is about a handsome young man caught between two women. One is a girl he's known forever, his best friend, maybe not the best looking but bright and funny and warm and genuine, who knows him and who loves him for who he is. The other is a supermodel looking who's sooo good at everything, treats him badly, treats his friend TERRIBLY, and makes the boy forget all about his friend after he and the supermodel start making out...in his room, because he forgot his lifelong friend was there. He forgot all about her. Broken-hearted, the smart girl realizes their friendship means little, and the hot mean girl wins the guy because she is hot and mean. Is this a yummy romance? Or an utter tragedy? Food for thought, that's all I'm saying. The cool plot twist at the end, that Clary's real father and Jace's real father are the SAME EVIL VILLAIN MAN, MAKING THEM VILLAIN SPAWN AND *BROTHER AND SISTER* definitely puts an interesting spin on the developing relationship. I just hate this kind of romance, folks. I'm not going to go overboard and say things like 'think of the children, the developing female minds, oh no!' You're not going to end up married to an abusive jerk because of this book. And I know that what looks good at sixteen and what looks good ten years on will be vastly different. Cards on the table: I just don't get it. I take it back. I get why, at sixteen, Clary would be into this guy. But the author's presenting him as HER ONE AND ONLY, and that is where I get lost. Inexperienced teenage hormones so rarely lead to the one true love. Really. And...that's it. If you like this, this is what you will like. It's not terrible. I like some of the world building, some of the characters, the use of Manhattan. It IS a first novel, and I'm sure Clare's style improves. But I don't get how this world really operates, it's too long, and I hate Jace and Clary. I mean, HATE them. Still, different strokes for different folks. But the next time you pick up a delicious romance with a girl choosing between a hot jerk and a kind guy, and you're going for the jerk...switch the genders for a minute. See if it still holds the same oomf. I'm just saying.

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