

# **CINDER**

## **BY MARISSA MEYER**

### **FEIWEL & FRIENDS, 2012**

#### **Synopsis**

Orphaned cyborg Cinder lives in future Asia, in New Beijing, at a time when a plague ravages an overcrowded planet and condemns its victims to death. Although she is a gifted mechanic, Cinder's cyborg status relegates her to being a second-class citizen. Because her adoptive father and sole protector has succumbed to the plague, Cinder lives with her stepmother, Adri, who reviles her; her stepsister, Pearl, who regularly degrades her; and her stepsister Peony, with whom she is friends. Her only other friend is the family's droid, Iko.

Cinder works in the local marketplace, hiding her bionic hand and foot from everyone, fixing broken machines. In secret, she works on a car that will help her escape from her difficult life. Cinder's life changes when she meets Prince Kai, who brings her his personal droid to fix. Shortly thereafter, Peony contracts the plague, and Adri blames Cinder. Subsequently, Adri "volunteers" Cinder for experimental vaccine research.

While at the research facility, a clue to Cinder's mysterious past is revealed, and she is catapulted into the royal world of Prince Kai. Prince Kai is betrothed to the Lunar queen, Levana, and it is for this reason, Cinder tries to avoid Kai at every turn. When she learns of Levana's plot to destroy earth and everything on it, she embarks on a mission to save earth from the Lunars while simultaneously wrestling with her growing feelings for the prince.

#### **Hooks**

- What does it mean to be human? Is it about what we're made of physically and how we function or is about how we think and feel—whether we are sentient beings? If you believe being human is about what we're made of physically, can someone who has bionic parts still be considered human?
- What kinds of abilities might we want to develop in future technology? What enhanced physical or intellectual skill would you like to have today if you could be "implanted" with one?
- What is propaganda? Is it ok for a government or institution to use propaganda? When should the people of a society question what information they're given? Should people be able to defy or work against an elected official?

- Do you think that you could sacrifice yourself for the sake of many? Imagine there was a cure for a fatal disease, but finding it would cost you everything--it would completely ruin your life. What would you do?
- Who do you think has a harder time adapting to a newly blended family: a stepparent or a stepchild? How might do you think you would cope if your widowed parent was to remarry, and then die, leaving you to be parented by someone you don't love, or who doesn't love you?

## About the Author

**Marissa Meyer** was born on February 19, 1984 in Tacoma, Washington. During her childhood she became an aficionado of "Sailor Moon" and was turned onto fan fiction by her best friend. She wrote fan fiction under the pseudonym Alicia Blade, and her novelette, "The Phantom of Linkshire Manor," was published in the gothic romance anthology *Bound in Skin* (CatsCurious Press, 2007).

Meyer received her Bachelor's degree in Creative Writing and Children's Literature from Pacific Lutheran University and went on to earn a Master's degree in Publishing from Pace University. Upon graduation, she worked as an editor in Seattle before becoming a freelance proofreader and typesetter.

Her first novel *Cinder* (2012) is the beginning of the Lunar Chronicles, which also includes *Scarlet* (2013), *Cress* (2014), and the just-published *Fairest: Levana's Story* (2015). Marissa Meyer revealed the origin of her first novel lay in her being a "fairy tale geek"; she spent considerable time tracing the origins of the most common Western children's stories. It is believed that the first version of Cinderella was written in China in the 9th century. For this reason, Marissa Meyer set her futuristic version in New Beijing, in order to "close the circle" and return the story to its origins. The decision to make Cinder a cyborg started from a hilarious thought: what if instead of losing a shoe on the palace steps, Cinderella loses a whole foot!

Today Marissa Meyer lives in Tacoma Washington with her husband, Jessie Taylor, and three cats (Calexandria Josephine, Stormus Enormous, and Blackland Rockwell III). A self-described book junkie, her favorite non-bookish things include Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, re-watching episodes of *Firefly*, and playing dress-up. She is also big on road-tripping, wine-tasting, hunting for antiques, and color-coordinating her bookshelves. Her home office is decorated with vintage fairy tale "treasures," including a 1940s Cinderella cookie jar. Her all-time favorite book is *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.

### Related Links

Marissa Meyer's official website, <http://www.marissameyer.com/>

Interview with Marissa Meyer, <http://us.macmillan.com/cinder/marissameyer>

## Connections

### Cyborgs/ Extraterrestrial Beings

- Crewe, Megan. *Earth & Sky*. Skyscape, 2014.  
Meyer, Marissa. *Cress*. Feiwel and Friends, 2013.  
Meyer, Marissa. *Fairest: Levana's Story*. Feiwel and Friends, 2015.  
Meyer, Marissa. *Scarlet*. Feiwel and Friends, 2014.  
Waggoner, Susan. *Neptune's Tears*. Henry Holt and Company, 2013.

### Fairy Tales/Adaptation

- Cross, Sarah. *Tear You Apart*. Egmont Publishing, 2015.  
Dokey, Cameron. *Before Midnight: a retelling of Cinderella*. Simon Pulse, 2008.  
Dokey, Cameron. *Belle: a retelling of "Beauty and the Beast"*. Simon Pulse, 2008.  
Hawes, Louise. *Black Pearls: a faerie strand*. Houghton Mifflin, 2008.  
Koertge, Ronald. *Lies, Knives and Girls in Red Dresses*. Candlewick Press, 2012.  
Marr, Melissa and Tim Pratts, eds. *Rags & Bones*. Little, Brown & Company, 2013.  
Thomas, Rhiannon. *A Wicked Thing*. HarperTeen, 2015.  
Valentino, Serena. *Fairest of All: a tale of the Wicked Queen*. Disney Press, 2009.

### Social Classes/Futuristic Rebellion

- Fama, Elizabeth. *Plus One*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2014.  
Hagen, Bethany. *Landry Park*. Dial Books, 2013.  
Roth, Veronica. *Divergent*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2011.  
Tayler, Kassy. *Ashes of Twilight*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2013.

### Stepfamilies/Fairy Tales

- Barrett, Tracy. *The Stepsister's Tale*. Harlequin Teen, 2014.  
Dickerson, Melanie. *The Captive Maiden*. Zondervan, 2013.  
Kantor, Melissa. *If I Have a Wicked Stepmother, where is my Prince?* Hyperion, 2005.  
Lo, Malinda. *Ash*. Little, Brown & Company, 2009.  
Masson, Sophie. *Moonlight & Ashes*. Random House Australia, 2012.  
Rasheed, Leila. *Cinders & Sapphires*. Hyperion, 2013.  
St. Crow, Lili. *Wayfarer: A Tale of Beauty and Madness*. Razorbill, 2015.

## Activities

### IN THE LIBRARY

#### Compare and Contrast

Compare and contrast the traditional story of Cinderella with *Cinder*, a story that is set in the future. How do Cinderella and Cinder differ? How are they alike? What do both stories have in common? What makes them unique? Is society better or worse today than it was in the past?

#### Design a Leg for Cinder

Design your own Cyber leg, including her unusual foot, for Cinder. How do you think her leg should look? Give reasons for your design.

### **Human or Robot?**

Cinder is a cyborg and many feel that it makes her less than human. What is the definition of a human? What do you think of Cinder? She has a mechanical leg and part of her heart. Does that make her a robot or a human? What are the strengths of each? What are Cinder's strengths?

## **IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **Music and Playlists**

Marissa Meyer has created a playlist of songs that she thinks best sets the mood for her novel, *Cinder*. Create your own playlist that you think best gives a feel for the book. What titles did you add and why? Before beginning your own playlist, please see the link below for Marissa Meyer's playlist.

<http://www.marissameyer.com/extras/playlist/>

### **Mechanic vs Robot**

Cinder is a mechanic and can fix just about anything. She has a robot that is also a servant. Cinder has to fix her robot often. How would you fix her robot so that she works all of the time? What tasks are robots well suited for? Do some research to discover how robots are helping with housework today and the plans for the robots of the future to help in individual households.

### **Book Cover Redesign**

*Cinder* is inspired by Cinderella. The book cover features Cinder's cyborg leg and red high heel shoe, a take on Cinderella's glass slipper. How would you redesign the book jacket for Cinder? Be creative and also write a paragraph explaining why you have chosen to represent the book in the way you did.

### **The Girl with the Cyborg Leg Blog**

Miranda Cashin is a real-life girl with a cyborg leg. She writes a blog titled "The Girl with the Cyborg Leg." Read her blog and send her an email at: [miranda.cashin@gmail.com](mailto:miranda.cashin@gmail.com)

<https://thegirlwiththecyborgleg.wordpress.com/she-sounds-cool-id-like-to-contact-her-3/>

# **ELEANOR & PARK**

## **BY RAINBOW ROWELL**

### **ST. MARTIN'S GRIFFIN, 2013**

#### **Synopsis**

*Eleanor & Park* is a coming of age, romantic story of two unlikely protagonists who first meet on a school bus. Told in alternating chapters, it chronicles the growth of their relationship from acceptance, to friendship, to love and devotion.

Park reluctantly allows Eleanor to sit beside him on the bus, despite her outlandish outfit and bright red hair. New to the school and already an outcast, Eleanor has just moved back with her mother and siblings after being sent away by her stepfather to live with foster parents for a year. Eleanor is estranged from everyone.

Park, a lifelong member of the community, discovers Eleanor looking at his comic books and brings more and more titles on the bus for Eleanor to look at. He brings music for her to listen to. Slowly they build a relationship despite the trouble Eleanor has with the girls (especially Tina) at school and her stepfather. They fall in love. Eleanor even wins Park's mother over to her side.

Who is writing nasty things on Eleanor's books? When will Park learn to drive a stick shift and earn his driver's license? Things come to a head when Eleanor discovers that her stepfather has been writing on her books, not the girls from school as she thought. With his father's approval, Park drives Eleanor to her uncle's house—and safety—in Minneapolis.

*Eleanor and Park* is a charming, realistic love story that reads like the truth; a modern-day Romeo and Juliet.

#### **Hooks**

- Have you ever made a friend because you like the same music or books? Share your experience.
- Do you read comic books? Share your favorite comic books and explain why they are amazing.

- How does your hair color or style affect how others view you? Have you ever changed your hair and felt you were different?
- Is it easier or harder to make friends when you are overweight? How does society view weight for young men and women? Is it easier to be an overweight teenager if you are a boy?
- Can boys be in touch with their feminine side at your school and not be immediately labeled as gay? Can boys as well as girls wear makeup at your school?
- Are there boys or girls at your school who at the top of the social “pecking order” (the “cool kids”)? How do they treat other students, particularly those who look different or are interested in different activities?
- How is school easier or more difficult for mixed race students? Share experiences.
- Who was your first crush? How is a crush different than being in love? Can first love last?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have? Share how these siblings drive you crazy or make your life better (or maybe a bit of both!)
- Do you know anyone with abusive parents? Is it possible for you to help? What could you do?

## About the Author

**Rainbow Rowell** claims she is only good at two things: reading and writing. She put these talents to work, taking Journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Upon graduation, she became the youngest (at 24 years old) and the first female to become a columnist at the *Omaha World-Herald*, where she worked from 1995 to 2012.

Her first novel, *Attachments*, was set in the newsroom. Her second, *Eleanor & Park*, came out in 2013. Also in 2013, another novel, *Fangirl*, was released. A contemporary adult novel, *Landline*, was published in 2014.

Born in 1973, Rainbow resides in Nebraska with her husband and two sons.

In 2013 a group of parents from a Minnesota school challenged *Eleanor & Park*, claiming the story was profane. Rainbow challenged the group by saying that this was the reality for many kids that come from difficult situations.

## Related Links

Rainbow Rowell's official website, [www.rainbowrowell.com](http://www.rainbowrowell.com)

## Connections

### Reinventions of Romeo and Juliet

Lu, Marie. *Legend*. Penguin Books, 2011 (First of three book series).  
Oliver, Lauren. *Delirium*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2011 (First in three book series).  
Meyer, Stephenie. *Twilight*. Little, Brown and Company, 2005 (First of four book series).  
Stiefvater, Maggie. *Shiver*. Scholastic, 2009 (First of three book series).  
Taylor, Laini. *Daughter of Smoke and Bone*. Little, Brown and Company, 2011 (First of three book series).

### First Love

Andrews, Jesse. *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl: A novel*. Amulet Books, 2012  
Asher, Jay. *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Random House, 2012.  
Chbosky, Stephen. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. MTV Books and Pocket Books, 1999.  
Forman, Gayle. *If I Stay. Speak*, 2010.  
Forman, Gayle. *Just One Day*. Dutton Books, 2013.  
Green, John. *Looking for Alaska: A Novel*. Dutton Children's Books, 2005.  
Green, Jon. *The Fault in Our Stars*. Dutton Books, 2012.  
Nelson, Jandy. *The Sky is Everywhere*. Dial Books. 2010.  
Nelson, Jandy. *I'll Give You the Sun*. Dial Books. 2014.  
Niven, Jennifer. *All the Bright Places*. Knopf, 2015.  
Schneider, Robyn. *The Beginning of Everything*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2013.  
Vizzini, Ned. *It's Kind of a Funny Story*. Miramax Books/Hyperion Books For Children, 2006.

### Young Adult Graphic Novels on First Love

Hinds, Gareth. *Romeo and Juliet*. Candlewick, 2013.  
Kim, Tong-hwa. *The Color of Water*. First Second, 2009 (First of a three book series).  
Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*. Top Shelf, 2003.

### Other Books by Rainbow Rowell

*Attachments*. Dutton, 2011.  
*Fangirl*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2013.

# Activities

## IN THE LIBRARY

### Favorite Quotes

Everyone seems to have a favorite quote from *Eleanor & Park*. Have students share their favorite; then, create a bulletin board with the quotes.

### Playlists

Have students create playlists of their favorite songs. If they are comfortable, post these lists online for access only by their classmates. Have students write a short paragraph describing what makes their music, or the musicians featured, special.

### Bullying

Talk about steps your class and school can take to prevent bullying.

## IN THE CLASSROOM

### Drawings

After reading *Eleanor & Park*, those with artistic inclinations seem inspired to draw Eleanor and/or Park. In particular, many look to the great quote about Eleanor's appearance: "She never looked nice. She looked like art, and art wasn't supposed to look nice; it was supposed to make you feel something." Ask students to draw the characters from the novel. If you want, show them the Pinterest page (<https://www.pinterest.com/rainbowrowell/eleanor-park-fan-art-other-awesomeness/>) with other fan drawings after they have created their versions.

### Comic Books

Have students read a variety of comic books and then create their own comic books.

### Fashion Sense

Eleanor has a unique fashion style, and Park is not the macho boy his father would have liked. Have students design clothing for Eleanor and Park.

### First Love

*Eleanor and Park* has been compared to Shakespeare's classic play *Romeo and Juliet*. Have students compare these two stories and discuss their similarities and differences. Then ask students to read other first love stories and see what these share in common with *Eleanor and Park*.

### Love Letters

Have students write a love letter to someone special in their life (it could be a parent, grandparent, sibling, or classmate). Have students spend time reflecting on what makes that person special prior to writing.



**Helping Kids**

There are many kids like Eleanor who don't have a stable homelife. As a class, decide how you can help kids in your community. Students could volunteer for tutoring at a local school or help out at The Boys and Girls Club nearby.

**Different Parents and Households**

Eleanor and Park's parents as well as home environment are vastly different. Have students compare the two households and parents using evidence from the novel.

# **MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR**

## **CHILDREN**

**BY RANSOM RIGGS**

**QUIRK BOOKS, 2011**

### **Synopsis**

Grandpa Portman told some pretty tall tales about growing up in an orphanage in Wales. He was the only one of his family to escape from Poland during World War II, and he had a number of photographs of peculiar children in his possession. Right before his grandfather dies, he beseeches his grandson Jake to "Find the bird. In the loop. On the other side of the old man's grave. September third, 1940. Emerson – the letter." These words made no sense to Jake. Plagued by dreams of the monsters he believes killed his grandfather, Jake is finally able to solve part of the mystery surrounding his grandfather's death when his aunt gives him a volume written by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Inside the book is a letter from Headmistress Alma LeFay Peregrine, from Cairnholm Island, Cymru, UK. Jake is convinced that this is the island where his grandfather's orphanage was located, and he sets off to find it.

First Jake has to convince his father to take him to Cairnholm Island, under the pretext of helping him with his book on the rare birds. Once at the island, his father sets off to identify birds, and Jake scouts for the home that served as the orphanage. The home he finds is in ruins, totally destroyed. At the local museum he finds out that the home was bombed by the Nazis on September 3, 1940, the date mentioned by his grandpa.

While moving a trunk upstairs in the abandoned house, it falls down to the basement and spills its contents of photos onto the floor. Suddenly he hears noises and a girl's voice calling, "Abe, is that you?" The pictures have come to life. He follows the girl, Emma, through the cairn into the bog land and pub where he has been staying with his father. But, it isn't the room above the pub that he knows in the present day--the people are all strangers. Jake realizes that he has traveled back in time to the fateful day, September 3, 1940.

Emma introduces Jake to others from the home, including Miss Peregrine, who identifies him as Jacob. Jake confesses that he is looking for her, and he realizes that the stories told to him by his grandfather were not fairytales, but the truth. He discovers that his grandfather had left the orphanage to fight in the war against the Nazis, despite Emma's

urging against this plan. He also finds out about “looping” and the fact that in this world, September 3, 1940 will repeat every day. Therefore those living in the loop are free to interact with the town’s people, comfortable in the knowledge that the next day all would be forgotten.

At the end of each day, Jake returns to the world of his father, only to return to Emma’s world during the day. His friendship with Emma and the inhabitants of Miss Peregrine’s home deepens, and he becomes more and more estranged from his father. Eventually Jake figures out that the letters his grandpa kept, were not letters from a strange woman, but letters from Emma.

Finally Emma reveals that Jake’s Grandpa’s special skill was being able to see the monsters, something that Jake realizes is his peculiar talent as well. He realizes that the monsters are real and that they actually killed his grandfather.

## Hooks

- Do you remember a story read or told to you by a grandparent or parent? What made the story special for you?
- If you could have a special talent, what would you wish for?
- If you could travel back in time, where would you travel and why?
- Have you ever had dreams with monsters in them? What did the monsters look like? Were you scared?

## About the Author

Born in Maryland during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, **Ransom Riggs** spent his early years in a 200-year-old farmhouse. Later his family moved to Florida where he attended the Pine View School for the Gifted and spent his youth swimming and writing stories on an old typewriter and in longhand on yellow legal pad. When he was a little older he received a camera for Christmas and became obsessed with photography. He started to take and collect pictures. Later still, he came into the possession of a half broken video camera and became fascinated with making films. He continues with his passion for writing stories, taking photographs, and creating films.

He attended Kenyon College where he studied English and then went to the University of Southern California to study film. While working on short films for the Internet and blogging on *Mental Floss*, he wrote *The Sherlock Holmes Handbook*, which was a tie-in with the release of the 2009 *Sherlock Holmes* film.

Next came *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children*, which combined his love of writing strange stories with a collection of unusual photographs. Ransom claims that after this experience he “... never looked back.”

### **Related Links**

Ransom Riggs’s official website, [www.ransomriggs.com](http://www.ransomriggs.com)

## **Connections**

### **Being Different**

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Story of a Part-Time Indian*. Little, Brown and Company, 2007.

Green, John. *An Abundance of Katherines*. Dutton Children’s Books, 2006.

Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*. Dutton Children’s Books, 2005.

Morgenstern, Erin. *The Night Circus*. Doubleday, 2012.

Plum-Ucci, Carol. *The Body of Christopher Creed*. Harcourt, 2000.

### **Ghosts**

Black, Holly and Larbalestier. *Zombies vs. Unicorns*. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2010.

Legrand, Claire and Watts, Sarah. *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2012.

Oppel, Kenneth. *Such Wicked Intent*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.

Winters, Cat. *In the Shadow of Blackbirds: A Novel*. Amulet Books, 2013.

Yovanoff, Brenna. *The Replacement*. Razorbill, 2010.

### **Monsters**

Stiefvater, Maggie. *The Scorpio Races*. Scholastic, 2013.

Kittredge, Caitlin. *The Iron Thorn*. Delacorte Press, 2011.

Yancey, Rick. *The Monstrumologist*. Simon & Schuster, 2009.

Gilman, Charles. *The Slither Sisters*. Quirk Books, 2013.

### **Orphans and Kindertransport**

Stephens, John. *The Fire Chronicle*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2012. (Book two of a three book series).

Hodge, Deborah. *Rescuing the Children: The Story of the Kindertransport*. Tundra Books, 2012.

Fox, Annie and Podietz, Eva. *Ten Thousand Children: True Stories Told by Children Who Escaped the Holocaust on the Kindertransport*. Behrman House, 1999.

## **Other Books by Ransom Riggs**

*Hollow City*. Quirk Books, 2014.

*Library of Souls*. Quirk Books, 2015.

*The Sherlock Holmes Handbook*. Quirk Books, 2009.

*Talking Pictures: Images and Messages Rescued From the Past*. It Books, 2012.

## **Activities**

### **IN THE LIBRARY**

#### **Monsters**

Have students talk about the dark monsters in the story, and then ask them to create their own monster. This can be a drawing or writing exercise. Additionally, you can have three students work on drawing one monster; start by folding a long, piece of paper in thirds. Then, ask each student to draw one portion of the monster (head, torso, or legs) without seeing the work of the other students. The final monster will showcase the creative styles of three different students.

#### **Sharing Family Stories**

At the heart of the relationship between Jacob and his grandfather are the stories they shared. Encourage your class to share a favorite family story—whether it is humorous, silly, or touching. Decide if the stories will be shared orally or in writing. If the stories will be shared orally, give students tips and techniques for oral storytelling.

### **IN THE CLASSROOM**

#### **Photography and Stories**

There are many amazing, interesting, and sometimes creepy photos found in the book found by Ransom Riggs at garage sales or in attics. Encourage your students to experiment with creating “peculiar” children in a variety of ways. They can take photos of themselves or their friends with their phones and then digitally enhance them (make sure to talk to them about interesting clothing to wear and props to use). There are a variety of apps out there; most students will already have a favorite app. Alternatively, students can find old family photos, copy them, and then make them otherworldly by using scissors and glue. After creating, finding, or altering a photo, have students write a short creative piece about their photograph. What special talent would their “peculiar child” have?

#### **Learning Photography**

Find a local professional photographer to come to your class and talk about the basic principles of photography (the rule of thirds, foreground vs. background size, etc).

### **Time Travel**

Have a class discussion on the benefits and disadvantages of time travel. Then, have students select a period in time they'd like to visit. Finally, ask them to write a persuasive essay about why the time period they've selected to visit is the most worthwhile.

### **World War II Research**

Have students pick an aspect of WWII as related to the United Kingdom to research. Allow them to choose the type of final project to present: research paper, PowerPoint, video, PhotoStory, ThingLink, etc.

### **Island Research**

Islands are mysterious and unique places. Ask students to select an actual island in the world to research and then share their research through photos with the class. Make sure no two students select the same island.

### **Other Websites with Activities for the Book**

For other helpful ideas, see the list of activities created by Karen Jensen at School Library Journal's website,

<http://www.teenlibrariantoolbox.com/2011/07/share-it-miss-peregrines-home-for-peculiar-children/>

You can also look at the discussion questions created by Learning to Give, [http://learningtogive.org/teachers/literature\\_guides/teen/MissPeregrine.asp](http://learningtogive.org/teachers/literature_guides/teen/MissPeregrine.asp)