



Viral Nation

Shaunta Grimes

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After a virus claimed nearly the entire global population, the world changed. The United States splintered into fifty walled cities where the surviving citizens clustered to start over. The Company, which ended the plague by bringing a life-saving vaccine back from the future, controls everything. They ration the scant food and supplies through a lottery system, mandate daily doses of virus suppressant, and even monitor future timelines to stop crimes before they can be committed.

Brilliant but autistic, sixteen-year-old Clover Donovan has always dreamed of studying at the Waverly-Stead Academy. Her brother and caretaker, West, has done everything in his power to make her dream a reality. But Clover's refusal to part with her beloved service dog denies her entry into the school. Instead, she is drafted into the Time Mariners, a team of Company operatives who travel through time to gather news about the future.

When one of Clover's missions reveals that West's life is in danger, the Donovans are shattered. To change West's fate, they'll have to take on the mysterious Company. But as its secrets are revealed, they realize that the Company's rule may not be as benevolent as it seems. In saving her brother, Clover will face a more powerful force than she ever imagined... and will team up with a band of fellow misfits and outsiders to incite a revolution that will change their destinies forever.

Viral Nation Details

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From Reader Review Viral Nation for online ebook

Anne says

Thanks to NetGalley for a copy of this book.

A dystopian time-travel story with an autistic girl as the main character?

My first thought was, "**Wow!**", and my second thought was, "**Wonder if the author can pull it off?**". Well, she did.

Congratulations, Ms. Grimes!

There are a lot of us out there who know and love people on the autism spectrum. It's a mysterious condition that strikes without much rhyme or reason, and can range from debilitating to just a bit quirky. And even if you think you've never met someone with autism, you're probably wrong. Remember the weird kid with no social skills who sat behind you in middle school? Think about the kid you knew that randomly cleared their throat or made humming noises? Maybe they constantly pulled at their clothes and never looked anyone in the eye? Made strange jokes that didn't make sense? Or maybe they just never got the jokes that other people made.

You've met someone. At some point.

But with autism comes a range of other abilities that can be strikingly brilliant. Photographic memories, musical savants, artistic geniuses, and off the chart intelligence are some of the side-effects of autism. Not always, but sometimes.

In Clover's case, she can recall anything she's ever read. Nice, huh? Wish I could do that. But with the good, comes the bad. She is easily overwhelmed in situations, certain textures bother her (the seam in her socks, tags, etc.), and social situations are hard for her. She's wary of other people because she can't read facial expressions, and she's been burned over and over again by cruel kids who have made her the butt of their jokes.

Can you imagine if you couldn't understand when someone was being sarcastic or giving you a backhanded complement? School is hard enough, but not being able to tell a bully from a friend? Nightmare!

In this version of the future, a virus has wiped out the majority of the population. A cure was found, but it needs to be taken daily (or at least every few days?), otherwise the symptoms will reappear. The suppressant was only found after a scientist discovered a portal that allowed him to travel two years into the future. He recovered a vial of the future cure, brought it back, reverse engineered it, and saved the day. Now time-travel is used to find out future problems and prevent them before they happen. In fact, murderers are executed before they have a chance to commit the crime. Hmmm.

Clover was only a week or so old when the cure was found, and her brother, West, was a toddler. Her mother contracted the virus at the hospital, and was dying painfully when her husband overdosed her on pain medication to spare her further suffering. He fully expected both him and his two small children to be dead within days, and was only hoping to survive long enough to care for them so that they wouldn't die alone. In a cruel twist of fate the doctor arrived at his doorstep with the cure moments after he euthanized his wife. He could never forgive himself for her 'murder', and slowly began withdrawing from his children. He eventually left them in the care of a neighbor, and took a job as an executioner.

In the present, Clover is getting ready to enter a prestigious academy because of her off the chart academic scores. West has put everything on hold to take over as Clover's caretaker and ensure that she didn't end up

in Foster City. Now that she's finally leaving home, he can get on with his life.

Except it doesn't go down that way. Clover has a service dog, Mango, that helps her cope when things get too overwhelming. When she goes to her interview at the academy, however, the headmaster realizes she's autistic, and tells her they don't allow animals. There's no way Clover can function without Mango, and the headmaster knows it. He then sends her to the Time Mariners, where the rather creepy man in charge informs her that she has been 'drafted' into their service. She's given a few strange instructions, and then thrown into the exciting world of time-travel.

Ok. It's not really all that exciting. They kind of just go and pick up information packets at drop points...

Everything is going relatively well until she goes on a mission and encounters a young man who breaks the rules. Everyone knows that if they see a Time Mariner, they are supposed to turn away and pretend they aren't there. But not only does this guy approach her, he gives her a piece of paper...and then kisses her! It's the fact that he knows how to kiss her without setting her off that convinces Clover to take his message and hide it. When she returns from the trip, she opens the letter and finds an execution order for West, for the murder of the girl he's secretly in love with. She *knows* West. She *knows* that he wouldn't kill someone. And there's no way she's going to sit around and wait for him to be arrested. Her only option is to go *waaaay* outside her comfort zone to save him.

This sets off a chain of events that turns everything they know upside down. It seems their entire society is built on lies...

I have to admit that I was drawn to this book because of the autistic main character. However, it turned out to be a very solid dystopian novel. I also thought the relationship between West and Clover was realistically written. West wasn't happy that he had to stay with Clover instead of doing the things he wanted, but he stayed anyway. He's not some kind of a saint, but he loves her. I also thought it was great that Clover had a love interest. Very sweet, and totally appropriate.

While the idea of a world built of secrets and lies is nothing new to the dystopian genre, the characters are interesting enough on their own to keep this story fresh.

If you're looking for something different, don't miss out on this book!

This review can also be seen at <http://www.addicted2heroines.com/2013...>

S. Policar says

I received this book as an Uncorrected Proof Print Copy from the author. I will speak nothing of any errors my copy may or may not have since it is uncorrected.

I liked this book A LOT. It's much different than any other post apocalyptic stories I've read or seen. At the same time it holds small similarities to some of the better known ones, but those similarities are so small they aren't really important.

This author's writing style is quite flawless and the characters and the scenes jump from the pages into your mind before you've completed the first paragraph.

The Author has captured the potential of an Autistic Savant almost flawlessly, and for the little time you spend in Clover's world, you feel just as she does. The talent to write any disability, especially a mental one

is a rare gift I've only seen from a select few authors.

This story will make you blink more than once in surprise as the story takes some very unexpected twists and turns. These surprises of course make the reader have to read more to find out what happens.

This book has everything! A virus that kills off most of the human (and animal) population, time travel, friendship, trust, adventure, and edge of your seat thrills. I absolutely love this book and eagerly await the next one!

If there were any errors in this Unedited Proof..I found none.

All I have to say in regards to this book is VIVA LA REVOLUTION!!!!

I give this book 5 of 5 paws

Reviewed by

S.Cu'Anam Policar

Freaky Fiction Writing Author

Around the Universe Book Tours Apprentice

Fae Books Tour Host/Reviewer

Girls <3 Books Tours Host

LadyAmber's Book Tours Host

B3 Book Tours Host

I Am A Reader Not A Writer Blog Tour Host

Whitley Birks says

Read this review and more at Whitley Reads

This book was provided for free by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

My Reaction: This book started out as a fascinating and emotional read. The development of the dystopia was (mostly) believable and resulted in a well-crafted totalitarian regime. The book started to lose its punch, however, when plot got mired down in unanswered questions and “this thing happens just because” type plot points. I was also very disappointed in the portrayal of the autistic main character, Clover. The ending left much to be desired. Since I read it as an ebook and didn’t pay attention to the progress bar, it snuck up on me due to the utter lack of a climax. The book simply...ended.

Highlights:

- The world-building, for the most part, was great. There were a few places that could have been tightened up (seriously, the casinos? What was the point of having tricks and gimmicks specifically designed to pull in more money when there’s no money involved?), but overall it was excellent.
- The HUGE notable exception to the good worldbuilding was Foster City. In this world of a decimated

population, where there's places that are literally in danger of being wiped off the map due to low population numbers, you'd think that taking care of orphans would be a big deal. They're the future of the species, and every bit of genetic material counts. Not in this world, where all the orphans are taken care of by abusers, rapists, and murderers and no one cares. For no reason. There is abuse in the foster care system right now, but then again, it's not "most" of the foster parents doing it, and right now we're not scrambling to rebuild our population and in need of everyone we can get.

- The other exception: what happened to the rest of the world? We know what happened to America, but nothing outside of that. Even the only war we hear about it is a civil war. Did we nuke every other country off the map before the virus started?
- The time travel was not used to its full potential. Though it was something of a dynamic system, a lot of the times it was discussed, the characters treated it like a stable time loop.
- The kids didn't spend much time finding out anything, they just stumbled around until people told them stuff, or until their future selves told them stuff. And even then, people would stop talking halfway through a conversation just...because. Then the plot would drag on a little longer and take them to the next half conversation.
- Clover's autism was great at the start. I was excited to see an autistic character on the high-functioning end of the scale, one who could say "look, I have this condition, but I'm not a pity-party; just let me work." I was all kinds of on board. And then...it started to fall apart. Mostly because it didn't feel like the author had the guts to really do it honestly. There were many mentions of her not liking to be touched, but then "for some reason this time it was okay." Only that line popped up *every* time someone wanted to hug her. We never really got to see her deal with the social problems of having autism outside of a few "clean" quirks, and any symptoms or problems of autism were either ignored or only mentioned right before we find out they don't apply this time.
- You can't use the old stand-by trope of "for some reason she got a bad feeling from the bad guy" when your main character has a disorder that makes reading people all but impossible. You just can't. It's a terrible trope anyway, but it's terrible squared here.
- And the final nail in the coffin was the reveal that autism gives people special time-travel powers. We have all sorts of tropes where people with disabilities will be given some "power" or ability or Daredevil-senses to make up for it, they're all insulting, they all need to stop.

Jamie says

Originally read July 2013

Re-read June 2016

Well done, Shaunta Grimes. This is the first book I have ever read by her, and I don't plan on it being the last!

She quickly draws you in with a great prologue where a virus has broken out and most the the US population is dying. Suddenly there is a cure! But for many, it was too late. Each state was reduced to a single city worth of people. In the state of Nevada, only 20,000 remain, many of them children. Yikes! What a way to start, right?

Jump up 16 years to young Clover (16) and her older brother, West who is her guardian. These are our main characters and they are very well done. The relationship is strong and easy to relate to. Clover is autistic and the author did a superb job capturing that. The lack of touch, need for space and quiet. The reactions to

sudden movements, etc. Due to the autism she has a dog, Mango, who is just the sweetest thing and I want to take him home myself. She is very articulate in her wording which I found quite interesting as well. West is protective and kind, always putting his sister above his own desires. One cannot help but like him. Their father is one I have not quite made up my mind about yet. His choices in life are a bit odd and I feel I am missing something there. Oh and I cannot forget sweet Mango, her dog. Very loyal and intuitive!

The world is vastly different and well done as a post-apocalyptic society. With a cool twist. Certain people can go two years into the future to see what is happening. It is how the cure was found in the first place. They go to the future for updates and to learn and crimes to stop them before they happen. Some other shocking revelations will change everything Clover knows.

While I enjoyed this book, I did notice some small plot discrepancies that I hope will be explained in the next book. Also I really, really wanted to know about the rest of the world. Was this a US only virus? If so, why? What about Canada or Mexico especially since they are right next to the US? Nothing. The only reference we have is in the plot summary but nothing in the actual story. To me, that was important to the world building an a fairly big miss.

So beside the above mentioned flaw, I found this book to be quite well done, relatively realistic to follow, great characters and concept. I hope the next book brings out more of the other characters, such as Leanne, Jude, etc more. This was not a book easy to put down. Once you start, you just want to keep going. The pace is never ending. We are constantly being feed more pieces of the story and this world. It leaves you craving to know what will happen in the next book.

Special thanks go to Penguin Group through Netgalley for my original eCopy. Right after I requested the title I also won a print copy on Goodreads, hosted by Marissa. So lots of thanks to everyone for these! Book was given free in return for a fair and honest review.

Cora Tea Party Princess says

This wasn't really my cup of tea.

I didn't click with the writing style, it didn't engage me. So from the start I didn't enjoy it. That said, when the end came I tried again and again to turn the page. It felt like it finished too soon and I wanted to read on as I'd started to like it and even enjoy it. The ending was SO abrupt.

I don't like complex time-travel in books, and this has it in spades. I just get super confused and start over thinking EVERYTHING. Add to that that there wasn't much explanation of the complexities of this brand of time-travel and I was sitting scratching my head like a confused monkey.

But I did like the characters. I liked Clover and how she struggled so much and grew throughout the book. She was a really strong character. I liked her voice. The conflicts the characters faced were pretty good too. The situations were pretty scary in some places. And terrifying in others.

The best part of this book, for me, was the final 15%. Out of all of the book it's the bit that gripped me and

made me turn the pages faster.

The worst bit of this book was the killing of all would-be criminals except for child abusers. Just thinking of it makes me sick.

Thanks to Net Galley for a copy of this. I think I would read the next book because the ending of this one picked up so much.

Rabidreading says

Find this and other reviews @ The Demon Librarian

When I read the blurb for VIRAL NATION, I was intrigued. YA dystopian and sci-fi, together in one book? Sounds good to me! Then I read the sample chapters (you can find them here). After I got over my initial "holy wow" reaction, I practically fell over myself in my haste to add the book to my TBR list.

It was every bit as good as I hoped it would be. Better, in fact.

VIRAL NATION begins sixteen years after a devastating virus swept the country and destroyed the world as everyone knew it. Survivors are few, conditions are harsh, and almost every aspect of life is controlled and regimented. It's a bleak existence for many, to say the least, and some of what I read shocked the hell out of me. There were several points in the story when I was so appalled and pissed off on the characters' behalf, I was ready to start a revolution myself.

But for every dark tunnel, there is a light, and in VIRAL NATION, that light is Clover, West and Jude.

Let's start with Clover. The blurb describes her as "brilliant". I have a different word for her.

AMAZEBALLS - and trust me, my friends, she is. She's one of those characters who grabs your hand and doesn't let go until you've turned the very last page of the book - and even then, she stays with you. There was so much about her that impressed me, from her genius mind, to her indomitable spirit, to her courage in the face of near-impossible odds. She just blew me away.

Clover's older brother, West, is equally impressive. When the story begins, he is torn between brotherly duty and a young man's natural desire to strike out on his own. Clover's acceptance into the prestigious Academy grants him a new lease on life - until everything goes wrong, and suddenly, he and Clover are thrown into the deep end of a shark-infested pool. West's whole world is turned upside down, and the way he handles it, well, it speaks volumes. He's a keeper, folks. One of the good ones.

Speaking of brother and sister, the authentic interaction between Clover and West deserves a special mention. Yes, they squabble like any siblings do, but the love between them shines through in every scene. Their relationship is, in many ways, the beating heart of this story, and Shaunta Grimes conveyed it beautifully.

Last but not least, there is Jude. When he first appeared in the book, my reaction was, "hmmmm, I wonder...", and when he showed up again, a little later, I was completely bowled over. I mean, DAMN, could he get any more awesome? There's something so wonderfully understated about him, a quiet but commanding "presence" that makes you sit up and take notice every time he is on the page. He's amazing with Clover -

with everyone, really - and I spent the whole book crushing on him.

The action of the story is on the subtle side. You won't find any big explosions or crazy chase scenes within its pages, but don't worry, there are more than enough twists, turns, and surprising developments to keep your heart pumping. And it's only the beginning. This is a series, after all, and I am beyond excited to see where it goes.

VIRAL NATION is not a book you want to miss, my friends. Take my advice and add it to your list today.

Faye, la Patata says

Ok, premise-wise, *Viral Nation* isn't really *that* original — a virus has struck the world and left a majority of them dead and crippled. One day, a cure was found because man has discovered time travel, and the crisis was averted. Now what we have is a thriving community where everyone is at the mercy of a particular corporation as they need their suppressants to go on living. We have a plot where things aren't really what they seem, and there are shadows lurking in the backdrop, eager to have more power, and will stop at nothing to get it. It's not really a new thing; I've read similar themes before. The only difference is some of those were executed better.

I'm really sad about my rating. I enjoyed this book for the first 50-60%. Even though it's not original, I thought the prose and narration were pretty well done. Yeah, some things would need a bit more exposition, but what was there was enough for me to really like it. After that mark, though, things started becoming less fun and dark, and becoming more contrived and absurd. You know the feeling where you think it could've worked out if it only weren't for this and that? Yeah, that's how I feel basically. And there are a lot of questions. A LOT.

Clover, the main character, was pretty cool. I was a bit worried when I found out she was autistic, because something like that could easily be screwed up if you don't build up her character enough and you make her inconsistent, but I think the author wrote her personality and mannerisms well enough for me not to call bullshit. As expected, Clover's extraordinary. She has this ability to memorize and remember everything she's seen. She easily gets panicked and cries out whenever someone touches her. She hums, and rocks herself when she's feeling anxious and about to blow up. I really liked how she didn't let her condition get in the way of her dreams. She can stand on her own and doesn't take bullshit from anybody.

I liked Clover's relationship with her service dog, Mango, and with her older brother, West. Their loyalty and care for each other were very heartwarming. You can really tell from their interactions with each other that they've come from a long way. To be honest, I don't see much well-crafted sibling relationships in Young Adult as good as this one, so that's a plus.

But the romance... wasn't that great. Both of their romances felt forced in order to fit with the plot, and very random. I didn't think it was developed very well. Take Clover and Jude's romance, for instance. Clover went two years into the future, and the older Jude there kissed her. She comes back, she tells him they kissed, and after that they're all lovey-dovey and "I'll protect you!" **This led me to think that the romance only happened because she became aware it happens in the future, and in their timeline, I**

didn't really see any scenes with both of them that could really justify their love for each other, and their having knowledge that it does happen somehow in two years doesn't really count. West and Bridget's romance, on the other hand, was even more contrived. Perhaps because as a character, we don't really get to see Bridget much, so I didn't feel that connected or involved with theirs. But like Clover and Jude's, they didn't have enough scenes that made me feel their love for each other was believable. They spent some time in the sick bay, some time in a ranch, and then "I love you! Be careful!" "I love you, too!" ... Come on, dudes and dudettes. It's gotta be more real than that.

The world-building needed some work, too. There were a lot of things that weren't really clear with the city they live in. I also really lament the fact the book didn't give us an overview of what happened with the rest of the world. Did only America survive? Did they share the cure with the other countries? How is it outside? It was very limited. **The time travel aspect felt underdeveloped, too.** So people go to the future, get data from there, come back and make adjustments according to what they found out. I was wondering... if they're so keen in changing the future, why won't they just go back to the past and prevent the virus from happening in the first place? Aside from that, I don't think they used this time travel thing enough. The heroine uses it twice and that's it. I mean, it's obvious that it's such a big deal in this world, so why give it less exposure than it deserves? There's so much potential in the concept, but they only used it for "Oh, what happens to me in the future?" "Am I still alive in the future?" "Oh, this person murders this person in the future!"

facepalm

Guys, I think you need to get your priorities a little straighter here, yes?

And the band of heroes... ugh. You see, there are some side characters here. And apparently, they have a bigger role in the future (of course). The book tries to portray them as the next heroes, but they only appeared to me like a bunch of clowns. I mean, how am I supposed to believe they'll change the world when they don't even do anything? All they do is sit down, and wait for others to tell them what to do, data that of course comes from *ding ding ding* the future! Like, guys. If you're gonna be heroes, at least do something honorable by yourselves... how you'll become this and that in two years or more is really baffling as y'all act like schoolchildren. There were so many inconsistencies at this part, and that's why after the 60% mark, I started enjoying it less and less.

I think this book still has a lot of potential, and I'm hoping the next instalment will work on that one. Yeah, it went downhill after a while, but I'm not losing hope. Not yet, anyway. I'm still interested enough to know what'll happen next, and I hope the sequel will finally play its cards right.

Final verdict: 3 / 5 stars

An ARC was provided in exchange for an honest review. This did not influence my thoughts in any way.

Kathylill says

Viral Nation by Shaunta Grimes (you can also read it on my blog <http://litslut.wordpress.com/2013/06/...>)

Hell, this book is a ride on a wild horse. In this complex dystopian novel you have it all: a deadly virus that took out most of mankind, chilling villains that seized the opportunity and 16 years later control every aspect

of life, young freaks and homeless kids that grow up to be the resistance and time travel. Well there's that and then some more.

All I can say about this novel is that it is masterfully done. You have a complex world, with fascinating characters, a suspenseful and fast paced story full of friendship, family and love. Clover is not your typical heroine. She is far from being badass; she is small on the verge of seeming childlike. Shaunta Grimes did pull it off to make Clover not only believable and realistic with all her autistic disability but also to make her utterly likable and unique. Her different way of thinking and behaving is refreshing.

Back to the setting: There's only so much that can befall mankind and lead to it's almost extinction. In case of Viral Nations there was a virus that killed a lot of people, there was a vaccine but almost too late, there's The Company who since control everything and everybody by any means. But the author doesn't stop at this almost cliché dystopian scenario but drops interesting twists and turns throughout the story. Time travelling has me hooked since "Back to the Future". And I found it rather fascinating to follow the thoughts of a 16 year old autistic girl who tries to understand it. They were not very far from my own. I loved the steampunk concept of time travelling with a very old-fashioned submarine exactly two years in to the future. Those time travels gather information from the future to apprehend criminals in the present based on the gathered foreknowledge. It reminded me very much of the movie Minority Report.

There is so much that sets this novel apart from other dystopian fiction. The autistic heroine with her bulldog "Mango", the time traveling, the retro-futuristic inventions and steampunk approach fit all wonderfully together and create an overall very entertaining read.

With thanks to Netgalley for providing me with the ARC of this book.

Elizabeth "Liza" says

Just wow! I'm a lover of the dystopian genre and I really loved Viral Nation. What a fast paced, complicated and riveting read!

Let me start by telling you how hesitant I was to read this book, I wasn't sure that I would understand the mindset of an autistic character, but I need to worry as Ms. Grimes is a master of characterization. Clover is brilliant, and has autism. She has dreamed all her life going to the Academy, but during her interview, something goes wrong and she is sent to the 'Company'. Clover's character is fascinating to read about. The inner workings of her mind and her triggers and difficulties are understandable and part of her. Believe me when I tell you that her condition is in no way a disability. Mango is Clover's dog and he's been trained to help her.

West is so good. He has sacrificed a lot to keep Clover stable and safe, and although he might resent it a little bit, I think he resents more his dad for leaving them on their own. West is really smart, loyal, a natural leader, and very loving. I really admire him for what he did and still does for his neighbor, and almost mother Mrs. Finch, for his friend Isaiah, for Clover and even for Bridget.

Now, let me introduce you to the Freaks; that's what they call themselves in the book, really! Jude is great and I hope he grows to be an asset to the revolution. Phire, Emmy, Christopher, Geena and Marta round up the rest of the Freaks, with the exception of Bridget, which accidentally falls in with this bunch.

Ned Waverly is plain crazy, all I'm saying.

James, West and Clover father is haunted by a decision from his past that crippled him as a father. I really can understand his pain, BUT is just not right to leave his children to suffer because of it.

The plot is complicated, a tale of domination of the 'Company' after a host of natural disasters and disease. What they did to the surviving population and most of all, the children was despicable, and I'll stop there because I don't want to spoil it for you. I really can't understand how the world turned out to be so messed up in such a short period of time! To add to the overall confusion of the characters, is the brilliant addition of time travel through a portal that looks two years into the future. The story is enveloped in a sense of mystery and suspense that had me reading non-stop until I reached the ending. This causes all sort of confusion of what was and what will be as time loops develop quite often. The story is told in the third person, from James, West and Clover's points of view. This gives us a clear outlook of what all the characters are going through at different points of the story, especially when the characters are not together. The writing is really good, flows freely and it's easy to read.

Overall, *Viral Nation* is a great addition of the YA dystopian genre, one full of twists and turns and a testament to Ms. Grimes imagination. I can't wait for the next book in the series and see what's in store for the Freaks!

Sarah says

As I neared the end of this immensely readable book, I suddenly realised with horror how few pages there were left. No! Page 290 already? I didn't want to leave the characters I had grown to love and the intriguing future world, or have to face the end of the story. This is, for me, what makes a good book great.

The cover is misleading – with the tough-looking lone girl and her dog, against the burnt-out landscape, it seems to be a post-apocalyptic adventure, possibly promising a trek across a devastated America. In fact, it's a sophisticated blend of time-travel and dystopia, set in a believable future world. The inclusion of an autistic heroine is a welcome nod to diversity (sadly there's not enough of it in YA genre fiction) but it's not a book about being autistic. For this reason alone it should be in every school library. I can think of numerous ASD students I've taught who like this genre and would enjoy having a character they can identify with. (view spoiler)

The twists are satisfying and mostly unexpected (view spoiler). As usual with time travel, a huge suspension of disbelief is required to accept the concept of the 'portal' (but this is arguably the most plausible option compared to a time machine or some kind of psychic astral travel); and the inevitable paradoxes which occur. Gaping holes tend to appear in the plot; they are explained away here as 'time loops', which become a convenient dumping ground for loose plot threads. Our heroes find out about future events and change their actions, resulting in whole parts of the story never actually happening and being dismissed as the fast-paced plot rattles on. It's a credit to the writing that I actually bought into all this and felt that the world building was never less than credible.

Yes, there are a lot of characters and some are inevitably more developed than others, but they all had resonance. They are nearly all resolutely good or bad, but convincingly so. I was hooked from the scene when Clover arrives at the Academy, only to face the girls who bullied her at school, and then face rejection

by the principal. My heart broke for her as she pleaded to be allowed to stay – the emotional realism of the scene was what made me realise this book was something special. (view spoiler) Romance is touched upon but never dominates the plot, and is sensitively and believably handled, given that Clover has issues with physical contact and social skills. I would have liked it if there was more moral conflict, with characters forced to make tough decisions, but hopefully that will take place in book two. I will be eagerly awaiting the sequel.

Tammy says

4 1/2 stars*******In a word:** a unique dystopian world, a fierce and loveable main character, a group of Freaks that might change the world, written in simple and lovely prose.

He shook a dozen small white pills from the bottle. She wouldn't be able to swallow them; her throat hardly let sips of water through. So he crushed the pills into a fine powder with a gray stone mortar and pestle that they'd bought on their honeymoon in Cuernavaca.

It seems like I've been waiting forever to read *Viral Nation*, and now that I've finished it, I'm feeling a little sad. Grimes creates a vivid and sharply focused dystopian world that I loved being lost in, if only for a little while. Dystopians are nothing new these days, and some of the elements of *Viral Nation* are familiar, but the story has an irresistible combination of careful world building, wonderful characters, and a worthy goal for those characters to aim for. All these things together make this story fresh and are the reasons I'm sorry I've finished reading this book.

The story begins as a ravaged United States is trying to recover from a deadly flesh-eating virus. It's been over sixteen years since millions of people died of the virus and a cure was discovered. Now the survivors live in walled cities to keep the virus in check, and are administered daily doses of the vaccine to keep it from coming back. In the city of Reno, Nevada, sixteen-year-old Clover and her older brother West live inside the walls, eking out a hardscrabble existence by living off weekly government-issued rations and going to the Suppressant Bar to get their daily injections. West's dream is to become a guard for the Company, a job that would give him a higher status and more rations, but he's sacrificed this dream to stay home and care for Clover, who has autism and isn't yet old enough to take care of herself.

One day Clover receives an acceptance letter from the Academy, a school that only takes in the best and brightest. Her test scores are off the chart, which makes her a perfect candidate, but when Clover goes for her interview, she is told that she'll be better off working for the Company as a Messenger, someone who travels to the future through a portal at the bottom of Lake Tahoe in order to bring back news from the future. Clover is confused by this sudden change of plans, but does her best to learn her new job. But when she meets a boy from the future who gives her shocking information about West, Clover's orderly world is turned upside down, and she must leave her familiar life behind in order to help West, and possibly start a revolution that will free the citizens of Reno from the oppressive Company.

It's hard to decide which part of this story I loved the most, but I guess I'd have to say the character of Clover is probably my favorite. Clover is autistic, but she has a support system that helps her cope with everyday life, including her brother West and her adorable service dog Mango. Clover is very blunt when she speaks, and often says the wrong thing in certain situations. She is also wary of being touched and tries to keep others at a distance. But somehow these gritty qualities give her a lovable personality, and I was rooting

for her from the first page to the last.

Her bulldog Mango is a steady presence in Clover's life, and he's been trained to read her mood swings and offer his own brand of doggy comfort whenever Clover is stressed. I loved that the author lets Mango act as a supporting character rather than taking over the story, which could easily have happened. Although I do admit I would have liked to see more interaction between Mango and Clover, and at times I felt that Mango was only a prop in the story, I grew to appreciate the subtlety and beauty of their relationship. They are so attuned to each other that a simple hug or lick on the hand is all they need to show their love.

Grimes brings some new world-building to the table and gives the tried and true dystopian about killer viruses and walled cities some new life by adding time travel to her story. I loved the fact that the portal to the future is at the bottom of Lake Tahoe, and that this portal opens up into a world exactly two years in the future. Using a similar idea to Philip K. Dick's *The Minority Report*, Messengers travel through the portal to gather information about the future and bring it back to be analyzed, in order to catch future criminals before they can commit any violent crimes. Other ideas like the Bazaar, where people go to gamble for their rations and Foster City, a horrible place where children without parents are sent, were so interesting and added an extra layer to the story for me.

Grimes begins each chapter with a quote from a U.S. President, quotes about freedom that ironically echo the state of affairs that the U.S. has found itself in, and when Clover and her friends discover these quotes on the internet, they uncover a deeper meaning behind them. I loved the themes of questioning authority in order to preserve human freedoms and being brave enough to change things when they aren't working.

All this is told in the author's simple yet effective prose that belies the dangers and complexities of life. My only complaint is that some of the time travel elements confused me. I think the concept of time travel is head-scratching to begin with, but I did finish the book with lots of questions about how things worked: What exactly did the Time Mariners and Static Mariners do? Why did going through the portal cause people to lose their memories? And how exactly does talking to someone in the future change the past? I wanted more details about how this portal worked, and hopefully the author will delve into it more in the next book.

Grimes wraps up her story with a nail-biting and emotional ending and sets things up for book two, which can't come soon enough for me. Once you enter Clover's world, you won't want to leave, I promise!

Many thanks to the publisher for supplying a review copy.

Nicole Hewitt says

This review and many others can be found on my blog - Feed Your Fiction Addiction.

Viral Nation was a really compelling dystopian novel that takes place in a future where most of the population of the world has been wiped out by a virus. Those remaining are led by The Company - an organization that provides everyone with daily doses of the vaccine and prevents crime via time travel. The Company employs people called Time Mariners who travel two years into the future. Any violent crime that is committed in the future is reported and the criminal is executed in the present, thereby preventing the crime from ever being committed.

What I loved:

Clover.

The main character of the book is Clover, a 16-year-old autistic girl who is incredibly intelligent (bordering on savant), if somewhat socially inept. I loved reading the book from her perspective because her viewpoint was often skewed in very interesting ways. Her perception of the world is different than the average person's and it made for a unique read!

Criminals executed based on future crimes.

No, it's not that I really like executions, but I thought that this was a very interesting and unique concept. What if we really could stop crimes before they even occurred? If someone was found guilty of a crime in the future, would it be so wrong to punish them for it in the present? It brought up some complex questions. I also liked that the characters all saw the positives of this system and didn't really question it until it directly affected them (I won't say exactly how).

The idea of Time Mariners, whose job it was to bring back future news was also very distinctive.

The mystery of the vaccine.

There is a mystery about what the vaccine actually does and if it is actually necessary. I don't want to say much about it because I don't want to spoil it, but I thought that this mystery added a lot to the overall storyline.

What I didn't love:

The time travel.

Wait, I actually did like the time travel! But it sometimes added confusion to the book with time loops and people who learned things in one timeline but then couldn't unlearn them when the timeline changed, etc. This is kind of a general problem with time travel that can't really be completely avoided, though. And, at least in this book, all of those problems were acknowledged rather than ignored.

The romances.

There were two romances in this book, both of which felt like plot devices rather than actual romances. There was very little emphasis put on the romances, which would be okay except that it caused me not to believe them. Now, to give the author credit, Clover's relationship is actually two years in the future, so it makes sense that it's not really developed in the present story. However, the romance between Clover's brother West and his longtime crush Bridget just feels thrown in to serve the plot (so that Bridget will go along with everything that happens) and it seems very sudden and forced to me. I'm hoping that the romantic elements are explored further in future books.

Overall, I was very intrigued by Viral Nation and will definitely read the next book in the series to find out what happens to Clover, West and company. I thought that this was a unique dystopian novel and would recommend it to fans of the genre. 4/5 Stars.

Disclosure: This book was provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. No other compensation was given. All opinions are my own*

C.G. Drews says

Being a bit of a YA dystopian junkie, I jumped at the chance for this ARC from NetGalley.com. I've devoured the hot favourites, like LEGEND by Marie Lu and STARTERS by Lissa Price. I think VIRAL

NATION is a smooth combination of LEGEND and STARTERS.

The book is split narrative between brother and sister duo – West and Clover (awesome names!). West is the older, protective brother, who's sacrificed his chances at a higher education so he can look after his little sister. Clover is 16 and is a high-functioning autistic. She's detached from reality, but so relatable. Writing about disabilities is something I don't see often in YA (especially dystopian). I loved the way the author portrayed Clover. She had a different way of thinking and acting, and it made her completely lovable (just don't touch her or she'll punch you) and relatable. Top marks to her character!

West made the perfect older brother, capable but fallible. I thought his little romance with Bridget was a little under-done though. We only sniffed at what might be a deeper relationship. I definitely don't believe every book has to have a romance, but this felt too half-and-half. Undercooked?

The writing was clear and concise. I zipped through the book in only a few sittings (thanks to my handy-dandy e-reader) and had a few laughs as well as some appreciative sniffs at the touching moments. But the plot lacked. Nothing new. I was waiting for the BANG that would change it from the other dystopians, but, while it had some seriously good twists at the end, I didn't get the surprise I was looking for.

Screaming for a sequel, VIRAL NATION gives you a different angle on dystopian – with all the bells and whistles of its genre, with characters ready to launch their rebellion with a serious punch.

Anna says

Clover Donovan is 16 and autistic. Ever since she can remember it's been her dream to attend the Academy. She is accepted and then turned down when they learn she needs her service dog, Mango with her. Instead she becomes a Time Mariner. In one fateful mission she learns her brother, West is in danger. She knows she'll have to go up against some powerful people, but she must save him.

Brilliant storytelling!! Viral Nation is an excellent read. A story of many things, but mostly of time travel, doing the right thing and revolution. I was absolutely enthralled with this story, it's one of the most original and intriguing stories I've read this year. Readers will find themselves rooting for Clover and her friends. She is quite an exceptional character. Shaunta Grimes has created frightening world, but I loved visiting it and can't wait to visit again. A must read for Dystopian fans.

Vilde says

Received through Goodreads First Reads Goodreads First Reads

This could easily be a messy read, but it manage to weave together the elements, like dystopia, virus and time travel, into a fantastical and intriguing dystopian read. I particularly enjoyed the dynamics between the characters: especially the brother and sister relationship between Clover and West. The premise and the characters was executed well with a complexity I hope will be explored more in depth in the sequel, which I'm definitely on the ride for.
