



# Phoenix Rising

*Bryony Pearce*

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In a future world where fossil fuels have run out and democracy has collapsed, an outlawed pirate crew fight for survival on their ship, the Phoenix, kept afloat by whatever they can salvage or scavenge on the debris-filled seas. Toby has never known anything other than life onboard the Phoenix and he's desperate for adventure. But when trouble comes hunting the Phoenix down, Toby realizes that what you wish for isn't always what you want. He meets beautiful Ayla from the Banshee, a rival pirate ship and sworn enemy of the Phoenix, and his world is thrown into disorder. How can he know who to trust and what to believe? The future rests on him making an impossible choice...A gripping novel, perfect for fans of Anthony Horowitz, Eoin Colfer and Suzanne Collins.

## Phoenix Rising Details

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Author : Bryony Pearce

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# From Reader Review Phoenix Rising for online ebook

## Alex says

In a not so distant future the world suffers from a mega volcano that changes the way everyone lives. Toby has grown up on the pirate ship Phoenix that his father the captain built. The pirates circle the world trying to find salvage that they can barter or sell.

When his dad is captured, Toby finds help from an unlikely ally.

3.75

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## Mieneke says

Bryony Pearce's last book, *The Weight of Souls* was one I enjoyed tremendously, so I was looking forward to reading her next book. What made *Phoenix Rising* even more interesting was that it is a departure from what Pearce has written previously; both *Angel's Fury* and *The Weight of Souls* were supernatural YA stories, where *Phoenix Rising* is very much a dystopian narrative. The future Pearce evokes for us is bleak and its causes are frighteningly plausible.

Pearce's world building is fabulous. She sets up the timeline quickly and innovatively through a four-page spread of newspaper clippings, that quickly inform us about the biggest causes for the collapse of society as we know it today. These causes range from humanity poisoning the Earth to natural disasters. I really liked this way of giving the reader what amounts to a considerable info dump in a very concise and elegant manner. Pearce also clearly thought through all the effects of what happened and what the consequences would be, for example the fact that humanity would become photosensitive when existing in a perpetual gloom due to ashes in the atmosphere. These details are dropped in the narrative without great bombast, but they are there for the finding and I loved that.

Within this changed world and changed civilisation, Pearce positions her narrative mainly on the Phoenix, a ship that contains a society in miniature and shows the breadth of experiences different people had after the collapse in the stories of the crew members. I adored the diversity of characters and experiences onboard the Phoenix. Uma, Marcus, Dee and Nisha were all great, but my favourites had to be our protagonist Toby and the youngest member of the crew, Hiko. Toby is interesting because of his position on the ship. On the one hand he is crucial to the running of the Phoenix as he is the engineer in charge of the all important boiler that creates the steam to propel the Phoenix forward and on the other hand he is the protected son of the Phoenix's Captain Barnaby Ford.

Part of the narrative is Toby coming to grips with his desire to break free and be considered an adult and be respected in his own right, a struggle that is most clearly reflected in his interactions with the villainous Crocker and Peel. While I really didn't like these guys, Pearce manages to make them sympathetic in a rather roundabout way, which I appreciated a lot as it served to showcase Toby's growth throughout the narrative. Another way his growing maturity is shown is his bond with Hiko. He feels responsible for the younger boy and both protects him and allows him to shine by giving him responsibilities of his own. Toby is always shadowed by his parrot, Polly, who is far more than a simple parrot. She's an advanced AI, who serves as Toby's guardian and friend on a ship where he has long been the youngest member on board without any playmates of his own. I absolutely loved Polly and her hectoring ways. I know she was an AI in a robotic body, but she felt real and fully developed to me.

My one complaint with the narrative would be that the entire book was told from Toby's perspective. From the flap text, and the publicity campaign, it was clear that there were two sides to the story, that of the Phoenix and that of the Banshee, so I'd expected to get at least some of the story from Ayla's perspective. Instead we only see Ayla through Toby's eyes. Being confined to a Phoenix point of view also means we only learn the true nature of the enmity between the Phoenix and the Banshee relatively late in the book. To be fair, I just really loved Ayla, so my desire for her viewpoint stems from the desire to spend more time with her as well.

I really enjoyed *Phoenix Rising*. As a YA novel it sits somewhat at the younger end of the scale in my opinion, without losing any of its complexity. Pearce manages to infuse a lot of interesting and thought-provoking themes into the books about politics, climate change and what happens when those two collide. I can't wait to continue Toby and Ayla's adventure in the next book and to see if my decision to remain #BansheeCrew will be justified. If dystopia is your cup of tea then you should definitely check out *Phoenix Rising*.

This book was provided for review by the publisher.

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### **Rena says**

My 14 year old son loved this book!

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### **April says**

Decent post-apocalyptic middle grade adventure.

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### **Kirsty-Marie Jones says**

2.5 First half was boring, second half picked up. Just a bit...boring.

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### **Sahina Bibi says**

Thank you firstly to Stripes Publishing for involving me in promoting this book, from a signed review copy to putting me in the blog tour - more content can be found on my blog, such as author interview, a guest post from the author as well as the other tour stops on the blog tour.

Now on to the review we go! I'm going to start by saying that I was recruited as #TeamPhoenix whoop whoop but fear not my review does not take me away from my loyalty ;) Anyway here we go!

Phoenix Rising begins with some illustrations and newspaper clippings that foretell the slow demise of the world as we know it. Banks are collapsing, war over oil, power blackouts across the world, chaos brewing everywhere we look. Sound somewhat familiar? (and devastatingly scary). This has become the future of the world we're living in, civilisation is on the brink of disaster and in the midst of all this, is where our story

really starts. I also love the way the newspaper clippings were used to give us a snippet of each of the things that have lent a hand in bringing down the free world - a nice touch to unload information without overloading.

I felt like there was a real effort at diversifying the characters, and for some reason in my head I kept imagining this ship as an Arc, with the people on it being one of each kind just waiting for the end of the world LOL don't judge me, it's my imagination, hard to control. Toby's point of view guides us through the narrative as his narrative is the main one. I enjoyed being in his head and seeing things unfold from his point of view, seeing him mature as he battles his inner and outer demons - but as a reader I would have liked to see alternating points of view between him and Alya. See the same events through both their eyes which would have balanced out the different interests of these characters well and drawn on their individual characteristics and experiences in how they see things. Also, am I the only one who wants an individual book on almost every other character just to find out more about their background?! Especially Hiko. I just wanted to gather him under my arms and shoot daggers at anyone that comes close. Alya was pure kick-ass, I resonated with her on some personal level, how determined, feisty, no nonsense she was.

For me, what I enjoyed most about Pearce's story was the way that this is all a possibility. With the endless amounts of dystopian books and countless movies that foretell the end of the world, I feel like Pearce's perspective of looking at what would happen after the collapse of the real world rather than how it happens, has lent us readers a hand in discovering alternate realities of what could happen. We very may well end up on individual ships, battling it out for resources with survivors, who really knows?! This isn't just a book about government corruption and the subsequent rebellion and uprising of its people - but this is a book about a true horror, when our world can no longer find a way to function and collapse around us. Loyalties are tested, humanity is called into question and I think that's what I truly enjoyed about the story.

With a strong yet steady pace that has moments of hitching our breath, I found myself immersed completely in the book - which is saying a lot for someone who rarely reads steam-punky books let alone anything that involves the word pirate - but don't be put off by that in the slightest, because this story is more about loyalty, bonds and relationships, tested in times of hardship. In terms of audiences, I feel like this could fit into the range of young teens to older readers and shouldn't really be bound to just one category. There are many elements to this story that can appeal to all kinds of readers and Pearce's writing and storytelling allows for us to dive into the story easily.

With another book in the works as this is a series, I honestly can't wait to see what happens next because if you've read the book, you'll be itching like me to get your hands on the next instalment. For the time being, this is Sahina, #TeamPhoenix, over and out!

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## **Dusty Griffin says**

Phoenix Rising follows the story of teenage pirate Toby Ford and his travels aboard the Phoenix in a world of garbage-filled seas and blinding sunlight. Years before the story starts, the world had run out of natural oil, bringing the governments and corporations into chaos as they fight for power and resources. While all of this happens, a supervolcano erupts, bringing the world into darkness caused by ash clouds. Along with this, the Earth's seas become so salty that it becomes near impossible for life to inhabit on it.

Toby Ford is doing his regular duties on the Phoenix, which are maintaining the boat's boiler room to make sure the paddles keep rowing. One day, he finds a piece of scrap out on the ocean, an airplane that may be filled with valuables. He and the Phoenix's crew don't know it yet, but this one salvage mission will bring problems for them in the future, mainly when against rival ship the Banshee.

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I hate this book.

I'll be blunt when I say most of this book did not float well with me, which is rather disheartening because the plot had so much potential to be good. Sadly, it did not live up to such a great idea.

There is a LOT of world building within this book, but it ends up useless when I don't care about anything that happens in the said world.

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There are multiple characters mentioned throughout the story, most of which have little to no personality. The man Toby saves in the prologue, Marcus, has so little personality that it surprises me that his rescue was even given any recognition. With this fatal flaw, whenever a character dies in the story, it just feels like background noise.

The characters that DO matter (Toby, Ayla, Nell, Barnaby, Polly, and Hiko) are just tropes upon tropes.

Toby is Thomas + Peeta + kind-hearted male dystopian protagonist number 150 - any common sense these people had that helped them survive such harsh conditions. Ayla is Katniss + Tris - anything that made them interesting. Hiko is any kid dystopian character that dies in the end but doesn't die. Polly is probably the only interesting character, which isn't saying much because she's a robotic parrot with a personality.

For a dystopian novel that constantly talks about battles aboard rusting ships surrounded by toxic waters and robot birds, it feels BORING. The first half simply drags on for too long for what is supposed to be an intense battle between two rival pirate groups. Even when the main characters reach a new port town, the story only picks up around the near end of that whole ordeal.

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Even worse is the formatting of this book. AT times, there are moments where you would see typos such as:

"Toby f0idg0ted."

The formatting of this book irritates me to no end, which doesn't help the case for this book at all.

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Overall, Phoenix Rising is a boring book that only manages to be interesting for the twist. Although it is a GREAT twist, I feel like it does not serve this wreck of a book justice. It's clear the author put her heart and soul into this book, especially considering the map of the Phoenix + the news article clippings before the prologue. Sadly, they only make a rotten meal slightly more bearable.

Overall, Phoenix Rising gets 3 crackers out of 10.

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"Toby f0idg0ted."

- Bryony Pearce, Phoenix Rising

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## Milliebot says

This review and others posted over at **my blog**.

A middle-grade book about pirates in a post-apocalyptic setting? Sign me up! When I initially requested this book I thought it would give me Shipbreaker vibes. Unfortunately, I was disappointed on all counts and wish I'd just re-read Shipbreaker.

My biggest issue with this book was my inability to picture most of what was going on. The bulk of the story takes place on the ship and the trash-filled sea and I couldn't clearly picture either. From what I gather, a series of natural disasters destroyed the society as we know it and knocked out much of our technology. The sun disappeared for a few years, but now it's back. The ocean has some sort of deadly levels of salt or acid or something and it's full of trash and old vehicles and all sorts of stuff that pirates could salvage. None of this information gave me a clear picture and it felt like disaster overkill.

The Phoenix is mostly wood, I think, but maybe also had some metal parts and the bridge is made of glass (not sure why that'd be beneficial, but what do I know?) It has two different types of engines, one for traditional fuel and another for combustibles, and it also has paddles. There is a diagram of the ship at the beginning of the book but when it came to trying to imagine the characters navigating the ship, I simply couldn't do it and just imaged the deck of a basic, ye olde pirate ship.

Pair my confusion with the fact that next to nothing happens for the first 50% of the book and I was ready to call it quits. I primarily kept going because I requested the book and the writing isn't bad, it just didn't capture my attention and I think perhaps the book was taking on too much at once. Even with the low level of action at the start of the book, the characters didn't feel well developed either.

The crew of The Phoenix is forgettable. The captain is kind but firm and dedicated to his ragtag crew of semi-criminals. Various crew members are mentioned throughout the book – some more than others, and they seem to either like Toby or dislike him. There's a pair of bully brothers, who I think are much too old to be tormenting and threatening the fourteen-ish-year-old son of the captain. Toby feels much younger than his age and is more caring and trusting than I think a child who grew up with a hard life at sea, amidst a ship full of wanted men and women, should be.

There's even a mechanical parrot who goes by the clichéd name of Polly. She was apparently created by the captain before the world completely fell apart and though I think she's supposed to add a steampunk feel to the novel, she felt magical instead. She has a metal skeleton and many of her abilities are explained with her "biomass" something-or-other and she has real feathers and looks real, but she needs to vacuum up pellets (of unknown substance) for power. She can store and download information like a computer and her personality is "cares for Toby."

No one on the rival ship really matters except its captain, Nell, and her daughter and second in command, Ayla. Nell is mean, bent on vengeance and not very violent considering she's so ruthless and her crew is supposed to frighten the pants off everyone else. Ayla is pretty, smart, good with a sword and doesn't require her head shaved and a skull tattoo like every other crew member (male or female) likely because she's the captain's daughter and Toby's potential love interest. Despite her purported awesomeness, I didn't understand why she was chosen as second in command as a fifteen-year-old and I didn't peg Captain Nell as one for nepotism.

The plot picks up somewhat at the end, but based on the opinion I'd formed of Toby I didn't find his role in a rescue mission believable. His relationship with Ayla is an awkward back and forth of trust issues and unwarranted care for each other and I kept forgetting they were teens because they behaved more like ten-year-olds. The stakes felt low because I had no connection with any of the characters and there was some info-dumping that could have fleshed out the characters some, but I was too tired to care at that point.

I think Pearce was trying to cram too much into one book and as a result, the world-building, characters and plot all fell flat for me. This book is clearly a setup for the next in the series, but I won't be continuing.

I received this book from Sky Pony Press in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Amy says**

A book labeled as junk-punk? That is a must read! I found myself immediately immersed in this original story. The juxtaposition of being set in the future, after a super volcano eruption has changed the world and the oceans are literally filled with floating junk, and pirate ships is pretty awesome. The Phoenix crew is like family and when Toby, the captain's son, runs into some trouble the crew help each other to escape. Full of adventure, science/inventions, and a tiny bit of romance, this is an action packed story that lots of kids will enjoy.

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### **Kate Woodroffe says**

A young adult book officially but I found it gripping and very entertaining. Bryony Pearce paints an intricate picture of a dystopian future of pirates struggling to survive afloat on a poisonous sea (the salt). The attention to detail is high and the story gripping. I read it while off sick from work and went straight on to read the sequel immediately. Have since recommended to all my friends with older kids

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### **Andra says**

A great read! For more Steampunk Reviews and Guest Authors, Check out Unabridged Andra's Steamy Saturdays!

As an avid reader, I have the opportunity of reading many, many books. This is a great problem to have; I don't deny that. However, when you're reading anywhere from 2-5 books a week for fun, plus 1-2 per week for work, it takes a really strong showing for a book to really stand out and keep your attention. Phoenix Rising was that book for me.

Bryony Pierce doesn't waste time in setting the scene, as we start out with a spotlight on our MC Toby in the place he feels most at home; the boiler room on the salvage ship the Phoenix. As he struggles to fix a steam leak we're given a lot of recap and character history, all mixed together with a lot of complicated steam-related science. Add in an exciting salvage project and the potential for enemy pirates stealing their prize, you get a TON of action in the first half of the book.

For a short while, I felt lost against the plot. It seemed as though I alone didn't understand what was happening, as the book kept chugging along and almost didn't let me catch up. There were a ton of characters, and it's sort of a pro/con that everyone had a backstory and life of their own. It made it hard to suss out the primary characters from the secondary, but I suppose that's a good thing. It means that even if they were C-list characters you got to know them by name and started to care for them (or hate them) just a little bit. I admit that I was overwhelmed; however, if you stick with it and keep going, your brain patches together a whose-who of the motley salvage crew and you really start enjoying them as the family they are.

As this is a Young Adult book, you can bet your clockwork a\*\* that there's going to be a star-crossed love interest! Enter Ayla, the second-in-command of the Banshee, whose captain will stop at nothing to seek revenge upon the captain of the Phoenix. As opposed to Romeo/Juliet stories as I pretend to be am, Ayla was a very powerful character. She's larger-than-life, kicks butt better than the boys, and is positively lethal with a knife. No wonder Toby falls for her, especially as she's the first girl his age he's ever met. Without giving you too much details, their story gets predictably sappy and full of teenaged angst at the end of the book after a particularly gut-wrenching twist, but in spite of the melodrama, I enjoyed seeing their relationship grow as the plot continued to charge forward around them.

I took a look at some other reader's reviews for Phoenix Rising and found that the main complaint was about the technology being too technical and confusing. Well...those ladies must not have read much steampunk, because most of the technology, gears, steam-boilers, Artificial Intelligence, etc. is not uncommon in really any other steampunk book I've read. I felt that the pseudo-science that Pierce applied to her tech was very believable. I mean, we are looking at a futuristic wasteland. The combination of industrial technologies with solar and computer tech was interesting and fun, and did a great job of setting the scene as this poisonous, trashy wasteland.

I am giving Phoenix Rising a resounding 4.5 Keys! The world-building was astoundingly and realistically crafted to show a world that could very easily be ours one day. I docked a few points because near the end, the suspense between Toby and Ayla turned got too melodramatic for my tastes, as well as those few key details kept from me as a reader at the beginning of the book, but overall Phoenix Rising is a wonderful adventure. There's action, battle, a mystery, and a clear future for this story as a series. I for one cannot wait for book two to come out!

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## Someone says

The idea of the book is very interesting, with many interesting things in the story keeping the reader hooked, wanting more of the story. Really well executed and the characters and events feel real. 10/10 would recommend.

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## Shanna\_redwind says

I picked this book up because I liked the theme of salvaging to survive, and I couldn't put it down. I just kept telling myself just a few more pages until I just gave up and finished it in a day.

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## Jaina Rose says

This review is also available on my blog, [Read Till Dawn](#).

This actually has an even cooler premise than I thought it would going in. I guess I didn't read the description very carefully, because I saw "pirates" and thought "historical fiction." You know, like Blackbeard and shanghaied pirates and the Jolly Roger and all that stuff? Well, it turns out that *Phoenix Rising* is definitely nothing like that. It has the Jolly Roger, sure, but that's where any similarities to historical pirate stories ends. This book actually tells a story set in a bleak future where fossil fuel supplies have dried up, the sun was entirely blocked by atmospheric gases for several decades, and the oceans have become cluttered full of garbage from ancient garbage dumps that broke apart during land shifts. Toby lives on a pirate ship full of pirates wanted for various (non-violent) crimes, and they move through the water by burning wood and using whatever scraps of natural gas they can find in the junk that fills the ocean.

It's actually an amazing premise, isn't it? I love the way it blends historical pirate culture, modern environmental crises, and predictions of how things could devolve once nations start fighting over resources.

All that to say . . . I didn't like the book quite as much as I'd hoped I would. It's got gobs of semi-minor characters everywhere, and I had a terrible time trying to keep them all straight. Several of those characters die throughout the book, and more random people we don't even know die as well. Even the two main characters, both of whom are about fourteen, kill multiple people throughout the book. I can be okay with death, when it's realistic and contributes to a story, but I just didn't like the way people skated past all the deaths. Toby never struggles with what he's done, not really, and I just needed to see him do that in order to believe in him as a character.

As for Ayla, she's not in the book as much as you'd think from the description. She shows up about a third of the way through, actually. I think she's supposed to be a tough but lovable character, one of those "enemies with a heart of gold." Unfortunately, I never really bought that conception of her character. Ayla seems like a troubled soul, and I do wish her greater happiness in the future, but I don't really see her as an innocent in this story.

I assume there will be a sequel, since the story has a pretty open ending. If one does come out in the future, despite not falling completely in love with *Phoenix Rising*, I would definitely still be interested in reading it and discovering what happens next. I'd also like to see the conflicting politics of the land countries explained in more detail, because we only get a quick sketch of them in *Phoenix Rising* but it sounds like they could be really fascinating. Until then, though, I'm content to pass my copy of *Phoenix Rising* along to my local book swap.

Disclaimer: I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Cait • A Page with a View says**

It's just written too poorly for me to care and the plot isn't saving anything.

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