

SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE *Uglies*
AUTHOR Scott Westerfeld
PUBLISHER Simon Pulse
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If you ask most scifi readers about young adult (YA) science fiction they will likely all say Robert Heinlein. He wrote *Farmer in the Sky*, *The Rolling Stones* and *Podkayne of Mars* among others. We own a couple of Westerfeld's adult novels but I would never have known to look for this series unless John Scalzi had made a reference to it in his excellent blog *Whatever*.

In this, the first installment of a trilogy, Tally is about to turn 16. That is significant since that's when everyone gets the "operation" which makes you pretty. Pretty means that you will look like a super model, all your previous blemishes and scars will be gone, and everyone who hasn't had the operation is an ugly. After the operation you live in a different part of the city and no one go back to the ugly side of town and uglies are not allowed to go to the pretty side of town. Another benefit is that you get to party all the time until you reach middle pretty and then you actually have some responsibilities.

All is well until Tally meets Shay who just happens to have the same birthday as Tally. They go on a "trick" one night to where the "rustie" ruins are. Shay tells Tally that there are people living out here who never had the operation and Shay seems to think she would like to join them.

Tally convinces her otherwise but on the day before they turn 16, Shay runs away and leaves Tally a note on how to find her. Tally decides to have the operation but instead is whisked to Special Circumstances who tell her that she has to betray Shay to get the operation. With no options, Tally chooses to go but things get interesting when she meets some of the people in the Smoke.

I really enjoyed this book. The prose is good, the characters well developed and the plot is well paced. I like the post-apocalyptic world Westerfeld has created and the ending is very satisfying even though it plays right into the next novel - *Pretties*. The clincher is that I am anxious to read the next book which I can't always say after reading the first book in a trilogy. This is good stuff for teens and adults but you will probably have to look in the YA section of the bookstore to find it.

Rating 
The rating consists of five star-shaped icons. The first four are gold and the fifth is grey, indicating a 4.5-star rating.