

## ***Worldshaker* by Richard Harland**

Colbert Porpentine had his life mapped out for him. He was his grandfather's chosen successor; the future Supreme Commander of *Worldshaker*. Although still a student, the time had come to begin his initiation into this heady responsibility. That was, until he met Riff.

Riff was a 'Filthy'. She didn't belong in Col's world and yet there she was in his cabin. She was from Below and 'Filthies' were never allowed above, unless they had been *changed* into 'Menials'. They were good for nothing and contact with them meant you were tainted. Col could have, should have reported her, but he didn't and that decision was to change everything.

*Worldshaker* is a fantastic book. Set in a kind of parallel universe, where Queen Victoria III is on the throne and all the great nations have taken to living in gigantic Juggernauts that continually roam the earth. The author conjures up a world that the reader can almost recognize and yet is so alien. A world of iron and steel, corsets and perfume, manners and position with just a hint of madness. It could be set in the future and yet Richard Harland has fixed it in the past, reminding me of the work of Jules Verne (think *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*) or H G Wells.

He also explores the issues of class distinction and the abuse of privilege, bullying and betrayal, and the circumstances that push people to take extreme actions. This is a book for older students and would be good to explore alongside the likes of *1984*, *Animal Farm* or the film *Gattaca*. A very entertaining read—I loved it.

**Debbie Williams, Mountain District Christian School, Vic**

*Worldshaker* is a fast-paced, unique, entertaining and engaging novel by Richard Harland. It keeps the reader enthralled from the first page to the last and eagerly awaiting its sequel (yet to be published) titled *Liberator*. The novel fits into the fantasy/speculative fiction sub-genre of *Steampunk* (Cyberpunk) which features real or imagined technological advancements of gadgets and steampower set in an Industrial, Queen Victoria styled era.

The story features a teenager named Col who lives in the Upper Decks of the juggernaut (mobile city as big as a mountain) called *Worldshaker*. He belongs to an elite family and is chosen by his grandfather to be the next Supreme Commander. Everything seems perfect for him until he meets a female 'filthy' (Riff) from the lower decks. The novel explores the society and class structure on the juggernaut as Col becomes more and more involved in the filthy's rebellion so that he ends up going against everything that he knows and thought he held dear.

*Worldshaker* is written well and draws the audience into its pages – even an audience that may not be too enthused about this particular genre. The characters come alive on the pages so that the reader can almost feel that they know the people in the novel personally. The novel would be an engaging read for teenagers and could be incorporated into many different units of work. It explores issues not only of speculative fiction but also adventure, justice, rebellion, European colonisation, subjugation of the 'other' and retro-futurism/alternative history.

If you visit Allen & Unwin website you will find both printed and spoken extracts of the novel as well as a link to a brilliant pdf teachers guide with some great activities to accompany teaching the book. Link - <http://www.allenandunwin.com/default.aspx?page=94&book=9781741757095> Also at the site - <http://www.richardharland.net/worldshaker/WS.index.htm> you can find some important information on the features of the world in *Worldshaker* as well as Richard Harland's very useful writing tips.

**Gersha Shteyman, Kesser Torah College, NSW**