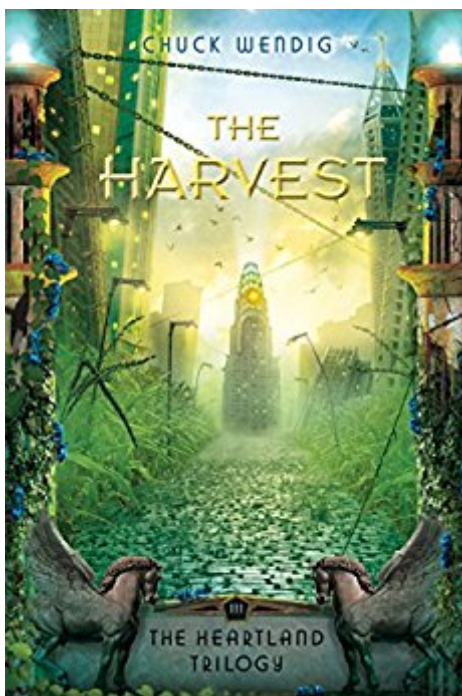


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The Harvest (The Heartland Trilogy Book 3)



Synopsis

Blood will water the corn...It's been a year since the Saranyu flotilla fell from the sky, and life in the Heartland has changed. Gone are the Obligations and the Harvest Home festivals. In their place is a spate of dead towns, the former inhabitants forced into mechanical bodies to serve the Empyrean and crush the Heartland. When Cael awakens from a Blightborn sleep, miles away from the world he remembers, he sets out across the Heartland to gather his friends for one last mission. As the mechanicals, a war flotilla, and a pack of feral Empyrean girls begin to close in on the Heartland, there isn't much time to make their next move. But if they can uncover a secret weapon in time, Cael and his friends might just find themselves with the power to save the world or destroy it resting in their hands.

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Customer Reviews

Wendig's conclusion to the HEARTLAND trilogy not only delivers on the promise of the first two fantastic novels but brings the story to a satisfying--and unexpected--close. I particularly liked the

character development throughout the series. It takes a talented author to not only create realistic characters, but to change the reader's mind about those characters over the course of a series. Wendig's heroes are beautifully human, flawed, and imperfect, yet possessing the courage to fight and the spirit to keep the reader rooting for them. More intriguing to me, however, is Wendig's skill with the villains and secondary cast, all of whom are not only well-developed but capable of inspiring both emotion and thought in the reader. Most of the 'wicked' are also strangely sympathetic, and I found myself feeling compassionate toward characters I considered villainous in previous books--a testament to Wendig's skill. It's hard to create a character who inspires the reader's passionate hatred and then persuade the reader (in later installments) that perhaps this villain is someone we should feel compassion for instead. Five stars for great action, beautiful characters, and Cicero. (You'll have to read it to know what I mean by that last bit.)

Book three of The Heartland Trilogy, The Harvest picks up the story about a year after the events of Blightborn. The characters are a little older, though not much wiser. Lane and Gwennie have undergone the most change, not counting Cael and Wanda's physical changes. I mentioned in my review of Blightborn that I was annoyed that some of the characters kept making the same stupid mistakes, belatedly realized it was a flaw of their ages, not of characterization. More the same here, and to their credit, they didn't kill a few characters that I really wish they had (it gives them a stronger moral standing). Had Wendig indulged in that type of revenge fantasy, the meaningful deaths in the story wouldn't have had as much meaning, either to the readers or the characters. Not everyone in The Harvest has a happy ending, or at least, the happy ending I think most readers expect. That's okay. That makes for a better story and the conclusion is still satisfying. I think the unexpected fates of some of the characters makes the conclusion MORE satisfying. Every character earns their end. I didn't reach the end and declare with incredulity "That's IT?" Not that I was expecting, to, but it wouldn't be the first time I reached the end of a well-regarded trilogy and been disappointed that some reset button had been pressed or that the character I wanted to DIE DIE DIE ended up having a happily ever after. The Heartland Trilogy covers world-changing events, and by the end the world has, indeed, been changed, for good or ill. I enjoyed that the end didn't create a magical, wonderful life for all the characters. Happily ever after is fine and dandy, but it has to be tempered through the eyes of the characters to be true. Life isn't easy and clean and so it is not for these characters. They've been tempered by the events of the story and come out the other side better people. Wendig has received some criticism about profanity and sexuality in his YA

works, and these are YA fiction. Compared to the type of language I heard from my peers at that age, these books are mild. The sex? There's nothing graphic. There's a homosexual relationship, but I'm not even going to address those criticisms because they're not worth the effort it would take. I will say reports of a "gay agenda" in Wendig's writing, in this series in particular, are grossly misleading. I'm not sure those people read the same books I did. Read *The Heartland Trilogy*. You won't be sorry you did. Unless you HATE corn. Corn-o-phobes might be uncomfortable, and there are some elements of body horror, but it's not really framed that way.

This rip-roaring conclusion to the *Heartland* trilogy brings it all together without stopping for breath. It's both exciting and interesting as it ties together both the surface plot elements and the subtext political and YA coming-of-age messages seamlessly. It's not easy to pull off a multi-layered book that never bogs down in action or becomes preachy or trite. As someone who has struggled to incorporate messages and issues in his novel without losing people or letting the story drag, I can attest that this is no easy feat. I especially liked the way Chuck handled the issues of power, and the complexity of taking sides and figuring out your own personal position in the middle of a change process. He shows credibly and touchingly how different characters struggle from their own different points of view, both within themselves and with each other. I thought that was an especially strong element for a YA book, and I can imagine adults of all ages debating the decisions Cael, Wanda, Lane and Gwennie make as they wrestle with their values in the midst of intense dangers and demands. It's really beautifully done. Bravo!

Wendig really brought it together; the characters matured, the story came together, and we got a satisfying conclusion. His usual gift for dialog is out in full force, and while he always pushes the metaphor envelope, it usually works. Chuck Wendig is woefully under-appreciated and I seriously look forward to what comes next.

This is the third installment of Wendig's *Heartland Trilogy*: a world decided in two, rulers float through the air in low orbit, fueled by corn, and earth covered with genetically modified corn, tended by the serf class--Heartlanders. The Heartlanders, led by a group of adventurous kids, revolt, with the help of the mysterious "Blight Witch." In this third volume, the clash comes to a head. But rather than a big climatic battle, the struggle ends with a wimper, or rather in a series of chaotic scenes, without a clear cut narrative to hold everything together. It almost reads like Wendig got tired of his

world, and just wanted to wrap the story up, without bothering to really finish the various narrative lines he had been pursuing through the first two volumes. On the other hand, real life is like that. All the narratives don't neatly wrap up. Rather, we impose narratives on a series of discrete acts...as how we make sense of a largely random world.

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