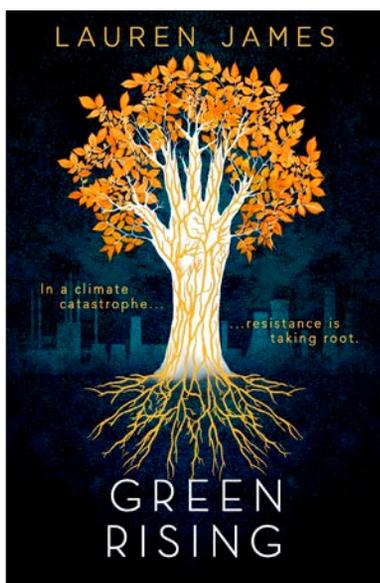


BOOK CLUB NOTES

GREEN RISING

LAUREN JAMES



FOR READERS AGED 14+
OCTOBER 2021
9781406384673
PAPERBACK

Set in a near-future world on the brink of ecological catastrophe, Lauren James's novel is a gripping, witty and romantic call to arms.

Gabrielle is a climate-change activist who shoots to fame when she becomes the first teenager to display a supernatural ability to grow plants from her skin. Hester is the millionaire daughter of an oil tycoon and the face of the family business. Theo comes from a long line of fishermen, but his parents are struggling to make ends meet. On the face of it, the three have very little in common. Yet when Hester and Theo join Gabrielle and legions of other teenagers around the world in developing the strange new "Greenfingers" power, it becomes clear that to use their ability for good, they'll need to learn to work together. But in a time of widespread corruption and greed, there are plenty of profit-hungry organizations who want to use the Greenfingers for their own ends. And not everyone would like to see the Earth saved... As they navigate first love and family expectations, can the three teenagers pull off the ultimate heist and bring about a green rising?

"*Green Rising* is a whip-smart tale that asks big, bold questions of how we can save the planet, with or without Greenfinger magic. Beautiful imagery, a strong scientific underpinning and well-rounded characters. A must-read for teens today."

– Laura Lam, *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *Goldilocks* and *Seven Devils*

"Frighteningly clever and richly imagined, *Green Rising* is a book that combines lush, compulsive storytelling with an urgent message, and everyone who reads it will be stirred by its call to arms. I loved it."

– Laura Wood, author of *A Sky Painted Gold*

"[...] this is a terrifically bold and original take on climate fiction."

– The Bookseller

Discussion questions

1. Did the book expand your views on climate change? What were your main takeaways? Did you learn anything that surprised or shocked you?
2. How did the layout of the book – including all the online comments, news articles, etc — affect you as a reader? Why do you think Lauren James chose to include all these extra elements?
3. Do you think Lauren James made the world of the novel feel realistic and plausible? Why or why not?
4. Are any of the characters purely ‘good’ or ‘bad’, or do they all have some shades of grey? Characters that might be good to discuss include Hester, Theo, Gabrielle, Edgar or Mr Daleport.
5. What are some of the negative repercussions of the Greenfinger powers that the book considers, both in the story and the extra asides?
6. “This whole planet is screwed. It’s impossible to do anything without hurting someone, somewhere,” (pages 193-194). Is it challenging to always do the right thing by the environment in your everyday life? Is it even possible?
7. How is Hester’s relationship with her parents different to Theo’s relationship with his? How has that helped shape the people they’ve become, for better or worse?
8. The novel has two key voices: Hester and Theo. Did you connect with either character more than the other? While we hear a lot from Gabrielle, we never get her voice: why do you think Lauren James might have decided to focus on Hester and Theo instead?
9. How does the novel use Hester and Theo’s individual Greenfinger capabilities to explore various things they’re struggling with, like belonging, insecurity, and emotions?
10. *“This isn’t the end of anything,” Gabrielle said. “You can’t think about it like that. We’re going to continue living here for ever, however bad Earth gets. Calling this an apocalypse just leads to fear paralysis. It gives people yet another reason to avoid acting. But this is happening; it’s real. Set your old ‘normal’ aside and start working on building a new one,”* (page 223). What are some possible strategies, big or small, Green Rising suggests individuals and communities could utilise to come together to help combat climate change?

A Letter from Lauren James

Dear Reader,

Green Rising is about politics, standing up for what you believe in and taking direct action. Inspired by movements like Extinction Rebellion, I wanted to write about teenage activists who have the power to make real, decisive change in the climate crisis. It's something which makes us all feel incredibly helpless, and climate fiction is often a depressing, dystopian look at our doomed future. I wanted to write a more optimistic, hopeful path forward to a better world, with clear instructions about what we should be doing next to fix the planet.

I read Chemistry and Physics at university, so I've been studying the science of climate change for many years. It's incredibly frustrating that I was taught the science of the greenhouse effect and the proposed solutions over a decade ago, and yet we're still no further along in fixing it. For this book, I did a lot of research into cutting-edge climate technology, including geoengineering and solar seeding. People tend to bury their head in the sand about climate change, because it often feels so hopeless. But it's important that we're all aware of the politics and ethics of climate solutions, because they're going to determine the course of the next hundred years on Earth.

So many of the climate fiction books I read focus on the effect that individuals can have on the planet, with the message that we all need to be more responsible, greener consumers. I wanted to look at how industry and businesses are causing pollution, to make it clear to my young, scared readers that it's not their responsibility to fix climate change. No amount of careful consumption can fix an industry-wide problem.

While writing the novel, I founded the Climate Fiction Writers League (<http://climate-fiction.org/>), an organisation of over a hundred climate

writers. I run a biweekly newsletter of essays about climate writing, in order to encourage readers to take action. While magic is fantastical, the ability of humans to fix the climate emergency is not. It will take money, sacrifice and time, but we can create a better world, just like Theo and Hester wish to do. This has to start with policy changes, immediately.

The carbon emissions responsible for climate change are largely caused by industry, and can only be reduced through government action. However, if you'd like to make lifestyle changes to help limit your individual emissions, here are the most effective changes you can make. Some of these will take many decades to achieve, but long-term societal changes are the only way we can tackle this problem.

- **Vote in all political elections you are able to, and make sure your representatives are aware that your vote is based on their climate policy views**
- **Replace garden lawns with wildflower meadows**
- **Switch to LED lightbulbs**
- **Don't fly - and pay for carbon offsetting for any flights you are required to take**
- **Make sure your savings and pensions schemes are not invested in companies contributing to climate change. Ask your company to divest from their harmful default options**
- **Avoid eating beef, and transition to dairy alternatives**
- **Buy in-season food, grown locally (avoiding hot-house produce grown out of season)**
- **Change to a renewable energy utility supplier**

- **Buy electric cars – but only once your current car is absolutely unable to be fixed. Keep current cars on the road for as long as possible, to keep manufacturing emissions low**
- **Install solar panels or solar roof tiles**
- **Air dry clothing instead of tumble drying**
- **Avoid disposable, cheap fashion and invest in long-term, quality pieces that can be worn for many years**

And, of course, plant trees wherever you can. They truly are the lungs of our planet. Depleted forests, savannahs, peatlands, mangroves and wetlands have the ability to grow back quickly, but we need to give them the opportunity to do that.

I really hope you enjoy *Green Rising* – and it makes you feel a little less powerless in the fight to save Earth.

— Lauren



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren James is the twice Carnegie-nominated author of *The Quiet at the End of the World*, *The Loneliest Girl in the Universe*, *The Starlight Watchmaker* and *The Next Together* series. She sold the rights to her first novel when she was twenty-one. Lauren teaches creative writing for Coventry University, WriteMentor and Writing West Midlands, and has written articles for numerous publications, including the Guardian and the Children’s Writers and Artist’s Yearbook. She is a passionate advocate of STEM further education, and all of her books feature scientists in prominent roles. She lives in the West Midlands and you can find her on Twitter at @Lauren_E_James or her website <http://www.laurenejames.co.uk>

Discussion guide may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only. These discussion questions were created by Bethany Nevile. For enquiries please contact educationwba@walkerbooks.com.au. Discussion guide © 2020 Walker Books Australia Pty. Ltd. All rights reserved.

MORE GREAT BOOKS BY LAUREN JAMES

