

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin purple lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from dark purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming larger, more interconnected clusters than others.

# The Iron Trial

Written by Holly Black

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Published by sanmarco-sf

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# The Iron Trial

By Holly Black

## The Iron Trial Series

Cassandra Clare co-wrote this, so obviously, there are Shadowhunters in it.  
Where are they?

I can't find them.

## The Iron Trial Movie

What's with all the Harry Potter comments? Can authors not write stories about kids and magicians anymore because it's a "rip off" of H. Potter?

Callum Hunt does not want to be a magician. All his life, his father has warned him about the dangers of magic, and the sinister ways of the mages who teach youngsters to use their powers in the underground world of the Magisterium. When Callum comes of age and must take his entrance exam for the Magisterium, he tries his hardest to fail. But he fails to fail. He is chosen to train with Master Rufus, the most prestigious mage in the Magisterium. Callum (Call) is ripped away from his normal life in Carolina, separated from his father, and plunged into a subterranean world his father has said would be worse than death.

The Iron Trial is a hugely fun, inventive spin on the middle grade fantasy novel. Yes, the parallels to Harry Potter are obvious, but as I see it that's sort of the point. Clare and Black take those patterns and expectations and deliberately turn them upside-down. Callum doesn't want to be a magician. He wants to fail at magic. His experience is not like Hogwarts. It's alternately boring (sorting piles of sand, anyone?) and terrifying (the elementals are awesome creations), and Call can't be sure who to trust – even his parents. His mother's dying words: Kill the Child, apparently meaning her own infant son. And his father . . . has he been protecting Call all these years, or lying to him? Is Master Rufus a friend or enemy? Will Callum ever be allowed to leave his new home?

I liked Call a lot. His leg was badly broken when he was a baby, and his trouble walking informs his character. It's especially poignant when he wonders if he can learn to fly as a magician, thus making him more mobile. He is mistrustful but empathetic, capable and yet deeply flawed. I also liked the cast of supporting characters. His fellow apprentices are great, especially Tamara. The magic system is inventive and logical. The world-building is fantastic. The Iron Trial sets up the game board for the rest of the series, which promises to be great – and after that huge, massive twist at the end (no spoilers, but oh boy!) how can you not want to read on?

...more

## The Iron Trial Audiobook

Well, first of all, all of you people SHUT THE HELL UP.

If Cassandra Clare wants to write books about shadowhunters or magic, it doesn't even freaking matter it's her choice on what she wants to write, and wait-you don't like it? WELL DON'T READ IT, GOD.

You were all ranting about her next series about shadowhunters, The Dark Artifices. If I remember correctly, you were all calling her out on "milking the shadowhunter cash-cow until there was nothing left".

Now she writes a series on something Well, first of all, all of you people SHUT THE HELL UP.

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You were all ranting about her next series about shadowhunters, The Dark Artifices. If I remember correctly, you were all calling her out on "milking the shadowhunter cash-cow until there was nothing left".

Now she writes a series on something else and you're still criticizing her?!? SERIOUSLY PEOPLE, STOP. Do you even know HOW many books have been written on magic? Just because it's written about magic doesn't mean it's a rip-off of Harry Potter.

Harry Potter was the most successful fiction book on magic, but do you know how many others there are? If anyone has read the Septimus Heap series, that's also about magic.

Also, I hear things about the main character set-up from the cover. Two boys and a girl, DO YOU KNOW HOW OFTEN AUTHORS USE THAT? Percy Jackson, for example. None of you dim-witted idiots hated on Percy Jackson because the group was similar to Harry Potter.

SO STOP IT. STOP. I GET THAT YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE IT, BUT I DON'T GET WHY YOU'RE HATING ON HER NEXT SERIES WHEN YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW IT MIGHT TURN OUT. ...more

A pre-review in Disney Gifs

Initial Impression:

First 50 pages:

The Iron Trial

All the Harry Potter similarities:

Worldbuilding + Magic system:

The plot:

The very obvious "plot twist":

The convenient info-dumpings:

Conclusion:

Basically:

## The Iron Trial Summary

You're all thinking it.

No one wants to say it, but we're all thinking it.

\*sigh\* Okay fine, i'll say it.

J.K Rowling to Cassandra Clare:

Well, at least this one isn't about Shadowhunters.

I really wanted to love this. Really wanted.

~The Enemy was a great mage ~ maybe even the best ~ but he went crazy. He wanted to live forever and make the dead live again. That's why they called him the Enemy of Death, because he tried to conquer death. He started pulling chaos into the world, putting the power of the void into animals and even people.

Sigh.

I'm thinking that this reminds me very much of someone in the Harry Potter series. You must be annoyed of seeing this being so much compa

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Sigh.

I'm thinking that this reminds me very much of someone in the Harry Potter series. You must be annoyed of seeing this being so much compared to that series but there are so many similarities! To say the least.

It wasn't 100% ripped off but you can't just stop comparing it to HP while reading it. I have actually no idea what Cassandra Clare and Holly Black are thinking about their work, themselves, but I wonder how they did to NOT see (or perhaps they just didn't care?) the ~that-belongs-to-the-Harry-Potter-series~ elements.

## The Iron Trial

The beginning, I actually enjoyed. It was interesting and I had a good feeling about this book but that only went on for a maximum of 40 pages. Then, it all went VERY downhill and I kept thinking stuff like "Come on, you can do it. Only 200 pages left! 150 more! 100, you're almost there, 50 thank god!" and then it was 50% reading and 50% skimming.

There were those silly sentences that made me cringe or just annoyed or confused the hell out of me. Seriously, this was a bad reading experience.

"You're closer to the element" like you're doing magic, you eat rocks or sand, fire mages can eat matches, air mages might consume blood for its oxygen.  
SERIOUSLY??? Who would eat rocks, sand, matches or BLOOD, to gain more power? A sick sick person.

The writing was absolutely not impressive nor pleasant. If only it had a better and more beautiful one, I would have enjoyed this maybe A LITTLE more. See, the story takes place in our Century so the language is pretty urban. I was expecting something different and wanted this to feel like a true fantasy book.

As much as I love witches, magic, wizards and boarding schools, those elements in the story weren't, surprisingly, enough to make me enjoy the plot. That quite rarely happens to me. The Magisterium didn't even feel like a school, more like a camp.

The events are predictable or just darn boring. And, to be honest, I was just not convinced. Not convinced by the characters, the friendship, the dialogs, the TWIST. I don't even see how this series might get interesting with its sequels. It just lacked or contained too many, as I said, similarities to the HP series.

So, I would certainly recommend you stay away from this, in my opinion, awful read that will only anger you (if you're an HP fan) or steal your precious time. That was harsh, I know, but it doesn't change that I felt "and still feel" what I said in this review.

PS. There are illustrations in this book, mostly at the beginning of each chapter, but, unfortunately, they're not always pertinent. ...more

## The Iron Trial Book

I really wanted to love this one, and I could almost give it a 3-star after the fascinating twist at the end, but I just can't. For the most part, I couldn't stop seeing the glaring parallels with Harry Potter which annoyed me endlessly. I'm not one to roll my eyes at similar storylines - I don't curse all MG novels about magic school for being Harry Potter rip-offs, but there are only so many similarities I can tolerate.

So let's see, we have this kid, Call, who was marked at birth by the most evil of its kind - someone I really wanted to love this one, and I could almost give it a 3-star after the fascinating twist at the end, but I just can't. For the most part, I couldn't stop seeing the glaring parallels with Harry Potter which annoyed me endlessly. I'm not one to roll my eyes at similar storylines - I don't curse all MG novels about magic school for being Harry Potter rip-offs, but there are only so many similarities I can tolerate.

So let's see, we have this kid, Call, who was marked at birth by the most evil of its kind - someone corrupted by his desire to become immortal (called the Enemy of Death but I call him Ed, sounds much more ominous don't you think?). When Call gets to magic school, the best of the masters takes him under his wing, telling him how he has a hunch that he will be something special. Then he teams him up with a boy and a girl, telling them they were chosen to form this special combination (probably because he saw it in a Harry Potter movie). There were more, but smaller similarities throughout, like how he finds a small creature that bore resemblance to Dobby (not in appearance, but in quirkiness and general oddity of a friend), their whole setup for meals (with magic food) and general atmosphere of the school, things like that.

Parallels aside, the plot kind of bored me for the most part. There's a lot of time spent on character building that ended up just being boring. A number of chapters wasted on sorting sand (not kidding!) for instance, followed by exercises or tests that ended up being quite pointless for story progression. Ok fine, we get to explore the school grounds and learn some interesting history which helped expand the world building a bit, so I do give it some credit, but I felt as if everything that happened, everywhere we went were just detours designed to give further hints towards an eventual twist. A twist that was surprisingly really intriguing, but easy to predict after all those not-so-inconspicuous \*winks\*.

As far as characters, the cast was diverse and engaging enough, but I didn't feel especially attached to any of them. Nor did I feel as if I really got to know them, aside from maybe Callum. I know the role they each have to play in the story, but I couldn't even recall most of the side characters from one sitting to the next. The world could have also used a wider scope. How they find students for the Iron Trial had me a bit confused, especially as it said some kids don't even know themselves they have magical abilities. It seems like it would be easy for a kid to fly under the radar. At any rate, the entire mage history/purpose is briefed in a mere 2 pages...

Am I sufficiently intrigued to want to continue with the series? I think the twist offers something new and thought-provoking enough to make me want to know where it will go from here, so I will be highly

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tempted, but I'm not sure this one will even be memorable enough for me to care by the time it's released. Either way, I will always be a fan of Holly Black, but this one left me feeling disappointed.

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at [Xpresso Reads](#) ...more

Why does the blurb read like a Harry Potter re-mix?

## The Iron Trial Book 2

How is it even possible I didn't know about this?!!!

I mean seriously?

A series written by two of my favourite authors?

AND I JUST DIDN'T KNOW?!

WTH?!

There's no way I'm not going to add this to my to-be read pile.  
Which unfortunately leaves me with 300 books,  
which also means that the limit I set for myself is thoroughly broken,  
which means I need to READ the hell out of my to-be read,  
which means I'm basically screwed! \*lol\*

BUT

Holly Black and Cassandra Clare!!!

Jeez!!!

I'm doomed! &lt;333

I'm going to try and regurgitate (lovely word) this whole subjective experience in the most objective manner possible.</b>

I've heard a lot of this going around:

"I won't read this because it's just a repacked Harry Potter."

Sorry to break it to you, but most likely, those that will gravitate the most to this book are those curious enough to see this attempt at a magical school. After the phenomenon that was Harry Potter, one that transcended a series initially aimed at children into a universal experience, the magical school concept has been set aside into an exclusive league of its own. Suddenly it's now just a J.K. Rowling thing. I'm going to try and regurgitate (lovely word) this whole subjective experience in the most objective manner possible.</b>

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how you all feel. But youâ€™ve also got to see the greater pictureâ€™itâ€™s become stigmatic for an author to even poke magical children with a pole and a ten mile radius.

â€œThereâ€™s a little piece of magic in all of usâ€• , is that not what they say? So why, pray tell, is it problematic for someone else take a crack, tap into their own piece of magic and bring it to life (Iâ€™m not being exclusive to this book; in fact, this is said in generality). This is not a point blank, carbon copy of Harry Potter.

It is a book with elements similar and/or parallel to Harry Potter, simply because:

- a) Harry Potter has become the immortalised invisible bar that every magical book must now reach and
- b) Most of us have begun this book having read Harry Potter, having loved Harry Potter, having been weary of the Harry Potter comparison foreshadowing and/or having had knowledge of Cassandra Clareâ€™s beginnings as an author of Harry Potter fanfiction.

So, in that manner, we are biased. No matter how hard we try, we are biased. And so, I read The Iron Trial in two mindsets.

- 1. As a person encapsulating both said a + b traits mentioned above and
- 2. As though I was a middle grade child, woefully ignorant of the pleasures of the magical world of Harry Potter

And so I have three separate outcomes to this review (three because youâ€™ve got to keep in mind the invisible mindset: I donâ€™t read middle grade fictionâ€™exceptions for the glorious Ms. Clare). Therefore, Iâ€™ve decided to split this review, three ways and congregate at the end for a big conclusion and overall, I just love making life harder for myself.

- 1. Mindset: â€œHow dare they attempt to repackage Harry Potter!â€•

If youâ€™ve gone into this book, consciously on the prowl to compare The Iron Trial to Harry Potter then, most likely, youâ€™ll probably succeed. But donâ€™t, for a second, expect to have it made easy. Thereâ€™s no Dumbledore thatâ€™s simply renamed Fumbledore. There are parallels, in atmosphere, in culture, in characterisation. Because weâ€™ve read Harry Potter, we notice this. I may even go as far as saying, weâ€™re paranoid because of Harry Potter.

At times I found myself pausing at the most ridiculous things, hoping to pull something out of my repository of Harry Potter information, simply to say â€œAnother parallel! Iâ€™ve found anotherâ€• . But I was being silly. You could compare anything and everything to Harry Potter, if you really tried. And you can most certainly can compare any magical fiction to Harry Potter, really without trying at all.

Harry's sarcastic; Callum is middle grade sarcastic (I'll get into more of that later on).  
 Harry's meals are magical; low and behold, Callum's meals are magical.  
 Harry in a golden trio of chosen; Callum got himself a trio as well.  
 Harry got himself a rich bully; oh look! Callum got a rich, old money bully, as well.

While yes, some things can be argued as terribly influenced by HP, others, when you take a step back, are unfair criticisms. Of course their meals were magical; it's bloody magic school. Of course they've got themselves a bully. Believe or not, school isn't filled with daisies and ponies and nice bffls. It's logical to assume that magical school isn't either. And sure, Harry got a tongue on him, but what preteen doesn't nowadays?

The point is, if you're on a rampage and you're ready to butcher the book to pieces then the world's your oyster. But it isn't intended to be "keep that in mind. It's a coincidence that no longer can be avoided. Harry Potter's set the stage, now we all just carry it's garbage.

2. Mindset: Jess doesn't read middle grade fiction. In this episode, she makes an exception for Clare and regrets it (just a little bit).

The reason I don't read middle grade fiction? Simple. I like my writing with heft and a sprinkle of metaphors. Do children around nine like that? I would assume, no. So how does one fare with a middle grade book? Not well. Not well, at all.

In this mindset, I wasn't enjoying the book. It's written in a simple manner. The descriptions aren't fancy and they don't conjure tangible experiences. In all honesty, there were even times when I questioned their ages. They're twelve but the dialogue is quite unrealistic "a little more like 15, I would say (unless I'm so far removed from the youth nowadays. In that case, I apologise in advance. Totally not meant to be condescending). I found that the maturity of the dialogue oscillated like a pendulum (that's come to be my favourite metaphor, featuring in every second review). One moment we're having a really intellectual conversation, the next there's proclamations of "Glurp lurpl". Don't ask.

It's a first POV (I prefer my books in third) so the journey is completely biased and one-sided. We get what Callum wants to express, nothing less, nothing more. And half the time, Callum wants to talk about himself. I don't like talking about Callum.

I felt incredibly impersonal to all the characters, simply because Callum interacted with them but he didn't share empathic moments with them. Whatever trust was brewing, we don't get to see it. Therefore, I was incredibly, incredibly shocked when he mentioned that Aaron (your Ron, if you will) was his best friend (for life "it implied) and Tamara (sticking with the associations, meet Hermione) was equally so. In Young Adult fiction we rage about insta!love. Perhaps the Middle Grade equivalent is insta!biffles. I've got no qualms about making friends but in the course of what seems to be a chunk

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of a time, to have a friendship like so develop, and to generate empathy from the reader, one must allow sentimental moments that are raw and personal to be exposed. But then again, maybe I'm just asking for too much.

The sarcasm was dry. And it's certainly not Clare's best (I can't comment on Black's—I've only read a bit of her work, a long while ago). For those who've made the move down from YA fiction, where sarcasm reigns and witty one-liners are bountiful, you will be shockingly disappointed. Lucky for me, I enjoy dry sarcasm that tries way too hard to come off as sarcastic. Or maybe I enjoy the attempt.

Case in point:

He had been expecting the tests to be scary, but the only apparent danger was the danger of being bored to death.

Har, har. The sad thing was I had to stop and laugh for a good five minutes. Sad, I know.

“Warren knows the best way. Sometimes the best way isn't the fastest.”

“Warren shouldn't talk about himself in the third person,” Call said!

Oh, the things that make me laugh.

This is a nitpick, but I want to forewarn you: be prepared for confusion. Callum has a nickname. It is Call. Call starts many sentences. I assume his name is meant to be pronounced Cal. But with the extra L, it suddenly becomes Caaaall like one does on the telephone. So, at times, I was left wondering “Call who?”

If you're here to be saturated by fabulous world-building then turn right around—go home. It's not on par with what I expected from the two lovely ladies. Like I said, The Iron Trial does not benefit from having Callum's POV. There's not a whole lot of unfolding; it's secondary. There's certainly a lot of word barf. Left and right I was being told things. But I didn't see anything. The tagline, the history and the consequences of war—it was all jammed down my throat.

Fire wants to burn, water wants to flow, air wants to rise, earth wants to bind, chaos wants to devour.

Yes. Is this school teaching it's students or are they attempting to teach me with number a thousand hundred times that this line appears?

But then I remembered. Jess, it's middle grade fiction. Turn off the brain. Enjoy what you're given. I don't think the intended audience is going to be too bothered by the fact that the world-building is a little off—the action makes up for it aplenty.

3. Mindset: I've got a kiddie nephew turning ten and he would eat this up for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

If you took a step back, stepped into the shoes of the intended audience, then Black and Clare have got a winner on their hands. It's a bigger jackpot if they've yet to read and enjoy the wonders of Harry Potter because they're a clean slate; easily influenced and without bias. Having no preconceived ideas will do this book wonders; it's what it needs to sell an audience untouched by the blockbuster phenomenon.

Even then, if a middle grader has just devoured Harry Potter they would still be satisfied with The Iron Trial. That's because coming off a book hangover (and a massive one at that), The Iron Trial will be the stuff of dreams. It is a portal to yet another magical world and yet another journey between good and bad, morals and ethics, won and led by a teenage hero. (That sounds incredibly cynical. I promise, I'm not trying to be.)

## Conclusion

It has its faults and it will most certainly will not work for everyone. Above, you see only three mindsets of one person, at that. It's not fair to write the series off as yet another HP because it isn't. Look at the bigger picture. The series, it's going places (don't make me eat my words). When you do fantasy, you either blow your first book out of the water, or you flop it a tad with too much information but then grow and nurture it into an epic. Many fall into the latter. And I hope this one does too.

Call it what you will, this is the journey of a Chosen One. A bildungsroman. A coming-of-age. A boy who never truly mattered, no longer is a no one; he becomes someone.

• You matter, Call

You sure do.

Many thanks to the publisher for providing an advanced copy in exchange for an honest review. All quotes used were obtained from uncorrected proof that is subject to change in the final publication.

This review can be found at MyReadingDress.

...more

The Iron Trial

## The Iron Trial Pdf

And we all thought Cassie was going to try something new.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book! I'm interested to see where the series goes. :)

## The Iron Trial Characters

Chapter-by-chapter review on my blog, the Snark Theater.

This is exactly what it sounds like. Cassandra Clare (and Holly Black, though her influence is basically invisible) wrote a book about a kid going to magic school. There was no other way this could go, really.

If you're not aware (but is there someone on Goodreads who isn't?), Cassandra Clare has a history with the Harry Potter series, and its fandom. She rose to fame by writing Harry Potter fanfiction. Even then, people already accused her Chapter-by-chapter review on my blog, the Snark Theater.

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If you're not aware (but is there someone on Goodreads who isn't?), Cassandra Clare has a history with the Harry Potter series, and its fandom. She rose to fame by writing Harry Potter fanfiction. Even then, people already accused her (with very clear evidence) of plagiarism of other things. I remember that whole passages from TV shows and other books were lifted nearly verbatim, for instance. From there, she wrote The Mortal Instruments, which readers of her fanfiction quickly pointed out was basically the same story, just in a different universe. Having read the first three books of that series, I can see it. The TMI world is practically the same as the HP one, except with more religion, and more shallow.

With all that in mind, as I said, there was no other way this book could go. I was severely tempted to play a Cassandra Clare bingo with this book, and I would probably have filled several grids. If you're more adventurous than I am and like drinking games, do not play a Clare drinking game with this book. You won't make it out alive.

Clare tropes aside, this is pretty clearly Harry Potter. Look at the cover, and try to tell me that the villain doesn't look like a Death Eater from the movies (fun fact: (view spoiler)[as it turns out, that's exactly what he is, too] (hide spoiler)). Try to tell me this trio of two boys and a girl doesn't look familiar. Read the prologue and try to convince me that the Enemy of Death doesn't sound in any way similar to Voldemort. I could go on and on. The Clare tropes do play a part in the execution kind of. And there are some differences, obviously. But the core concept? Pretty fucking identical.

Let's take our main trio, who are basically the Mary Sue version of the HP trio. Harry Call is a boy who lost a parent at the hands of the villain, somewhat of a prodigy with magic but not the best. He has dark hair, is scrawny, and has a distinctive scar. Sound familiar enough yet? How about the fact that his role in the trio becomes (view spoiler)[as Aaron's counterweight, meaning that his main strength is "soul", which is totally different from "love" (hide spoiler)]? Or the fact that (view spoiler)[the villain hid his soul in him. Yes, let me repeat that. THE VILLAIN HID HIS SOUL IN THE PROTAGONIST. (hide spoiler)]. His only "unique" trait is his leg (where his scar is, for the sake of transparency), which is

wounded/deformed/malformed in some vague way. It was an interesting concept, featuring a disabled protagonist. But it's only used as a source of angst, and Call only focuses on trying to overcome his ability, instead of adapting to it. He thinks about adapting, but never does it.

Second is the one that's most unique of the trio: Aaron. He's mostly unique because, in Clare-land, Ron is lame and boring, so she made him new and better. Aaron is kind, compassionate and the one who keeps the morale of the group up for the most part. He's the emotional core of the group. Unlike Ron, though, he's very talented, because, as I said, they're all Mary Sues. (view spoiler)[He's also the Chosen One, not Call's or so it looks like until the final few chapters. Then it's more like we have a regular Chosen one (Aaron), and then Call who's an even special-er special snowflake. It's complicated. (hide spoiler)] Aaron was the one good thing about this book. I love him, he has lots of slash potential with Call (and I don't love him just because of that, just to be clear). I was glad about the spoiler I just mentioned, but it doesn't look like it's going to make him any more important anytime soon.

Third and last is Hermione Tamara. Tamara started out as weirdly judgmental, to the point where I almost expected her to be one of the "bullies" of the book (and I'm getting to the actual bully, don't worry). She's also a POC, which is pretty cool. I say she's the Hermione, and in a sense, she is: she's the smart one, the one with the information, the one who makes the plot move and/or who deduces stuff, the one who respects the rules, and arguably the best mage at this point in the story. However, she lacks what made Hermione interesting: the outsider aspect. Hermione is impressive because she's Muggleborn, and still manages to outperform everyone, not because she's the Chosen One or is talented (though she probably is), but because she works for it. Tamara is the one with information because she's the only main character who comes from a mage family (well, Call does too, but his dad's an asshole, I'll get back to that). Suddenly it's not very impressive anymore. As for her talent's well, they're all Mary Sues, so she stands out much less.

So. The rest of the cast. I'll just go through them by order of appearance. Call's dad, Alastair, is a retired mage. We know most of his backstory (dead wife and brother-in-law, his wife left him a warning about their son) because he's the PoV in the prologue, but Call doesn't know, because Alastair developed a hatred towards mages and magic. So much so that he wasn't even bothered to heal his son's leg with magic, and now it's irreparable. Alastair is an abusive dad, and I will fight you on this. He lies to, and manipulates, his son at every opportunity. He fucking throws a dagger at him. It's retconned later as Alastair throwing it to him, but I'm not buying it. He could have prevented half of the reveals in the book (at least) by just talking to his son. I hate Alastair.

Next is our resident bully, Jasper. Or "bully". Jasper is one of those fictional bullies that everyone (in the book) acknowledges as a bully. He fails at everything he undertakes, he loses his best friend (Tamara). Nobody likes him. And yet somehow he still acts like a bully and gets away with it. That doesn't work. Bullies can only exist because most people let them. I know it's hard to think about that when you're a victim of bullying (or reading a book about a victim of bullying), but it's true. So yeah, Jasper is a failure of a character. He's also completely irrelevant to the plot.

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Next up is Call. I don't remember, so I'll go with Rufus. He's the Dumbledore. A black Dumbledore, which, again, is appreciated, but he's still Dumbledore. He also probably knows a lot more than he lets on (including knowing that Call breaks into his office at one point which isn't addressed, for some reason), and probably does some manipulation. Instead of being the school's director, he's only our trio's personal mentor. And he's the best teacher or so the book tells us. The truth is, every single Master is a terrible educator, and we can range them only from "least awful" to "fucking get this person arrested already". And Rufus isn't even on the former end of the spectrum although he's not on the latter end either. His methods get the best results, which makes me wonder why the other Masters don't do the same as he does. Rufus also knew and mentored Call's parents (sound familiar?).

Last character worth mentioning is Drew. At first he looks like he's going to be your Neville. Then the book pulls a twist out of nowhere for him ((view spoiler)[He's the villain's right hand's son (hide spoiler)]). It was a terrible twist, because it felt like the book just pulled it out of its ass. That's literally all I have to say about him or wait, no, I just wish it was. Because, due to the above spoiler, Drew fakes his innocence, and uses it to accuse his mentor of emotional abuse and get him fired. Does this book not realize how irresponsible this is? Does this book live in a beautiful world where abuse victims aren't accused of lying by literally everyone? Because I don't, so this is a terrible thing to write about. No, I'm not putting this under spoilers tags. This is way too important.

The plot is basically nonexistent. You know how I compare the book to Harry Potter? You know how every Harry Potter book introduces the main mystery early on, builds up on it gradually, until the climax which is payoff for all the setup? Well, that doesn't happen here. The characters are at school, learn school stuff. The climax just sort of happens, completely by accident. I mean, sure, we'd set up the general threat of the villain, but nothing specific, and certainly not this. And most importantly, our protagonist do jack shit to make the climax happen. Which I hate in every book.

There was also not a single thought put into the world. There's a masquerade, because of course there is. No, seriously, Call says it's "obvious" they should keep magic a secret and just moves on to something else. Even at its best, the trope bothers me, but this one is just lazy. Aside from that, the magic system presents zero originality or effort (from the writers, or from the characters who are learning it), all adults are useless as usual in a Clare book, there's way too much purple prose but it doesn't mean anything (there has to be at least half a dozen descriptions of how the Magisterium is a beautiful place; I got it the first time).

And I think that's enough ranting. There could have been a few redeemable things about the book (Aaron & 3), but by the end, the terrible twists, the plagiarism, and the fucking use of fake accusations of abuse as a villain's ploy bothered me way too much. ...more

More reviews on my blog, Exploring Pages.

"As he bent closer, he realized they were words -- words his wife had carved into the cave ice with the last of her dying strength. As he read them, he felt them like three hard blows in the stomach.

KILL THE CHILD"

## The Iron Trial

- Holly Black and Cassandra Clare, The Iron Trial

Thank you Doubleday Children's Books for providing me with an advanced reading copy for review.

By reading The Iron Trial, the first book in the Magisterium series, I think I have signed up for a [More reviews on my blog, Exploring Pages.](#)

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Thank you Doubleday Children's Books for providing me with an advanced reading copy for review.

By reading The Iron Trial, the first book in the Magisterium series, I think I have signed up for an amazing adventure. Even though this book seems more like a set-up for what's still to come, I immensely enjoyed reading the story of Callum Hunt and his first experiences with the Magisterium. Now let's head into the deeper stuff.

Starting off with the characters, a lot of them already have my love. All well developed and each with their backstories. All of those quickly caught my interest, and I started to care for a lot of the characters. Not only Callum with his snarky comments, or Tamara who easily stands up for herself, or Aaron with all the surprising events involving him. Other characters such as Jasper, Celia, Drew, Warren, Rufus, and Alistair form a surprisingly fantastic combination with the other three main characters you'll get to love. And Havoc. I can't ever forget that cute little wolf I would adore to adopt, if not for that little thing.

Moving onto the world, I am thoroughly drawn into it. It is without a doubt, suitable for the story and genre and is most of all, original. I'm rather sure when I say you have never come across a world like this. The world itself is a lot more darker than you would normally encounter with a middle grade. Surely I was quite surprised with that, because I honestly didn't expect it to turn out like this. On the other hand, that doesn't mean I liked it less. In fact, because of this surprising touch to it I enjoyed it so much more. I understand why Call doesn't want to leave anymore at the end of the school year. I wouldn't either. Intriguing is the number one word to describe it all. The world of Magisterium has compelled me. Even though The Iron Trial is the first book and focuses on the world building and its history, there is still a lot undiscovered and I would love to read more about it.

The only thing that fell a bit short and so caused the four stars instead of the five, was the plot and pace in general. I didn't feel like there was much plot present in this book because of the constant amount of world building and character development. I didn't like how they were trained as apprentices and I would have loved to gain some more insight on their training as a whole. I still wonder what the actual meaning was of the sorting out of the sand. It surely increased their focus and patience, yet I do hope that some more action-packed lessons are set for the sequels.

Feel free to set those prejudices towards this book because it's supposedly a Harry Potter rip-off aside, and let me tell you why. Just because J.K. Rowling wrote a world-wide known series about wizards and

## The Iron Trial

witches, doesn't mean that the woman holds the copy right to everything written in that particular genre. I do understand that it's never possible to completely write a book different to Harry Potter or Percy Jackson. Once you head towards that particular genre, you'll always going to end up with similarities, no matter how hard you try. There will always be someone calling it a rip-off from something else. But let me repeat myself again: it's not because someone else gets wildly popular in a particular genre that it's impossible for others to write in that genre too. Dear God, for now I'm patiently waiting until everyone reads this book and then all stop with judging.

So to everyone out there thinking this was going to be yet another Harry Potter rip-off: it isn't. The Iron Trial is a magical thrill ride on its own and filled with amazing characters, plot twists and a fascinating world. Despite the small resemblances to other middle grade's I've read and the slower pace, I still loved reading the book. I cannot wait to see what the rest of the series holds, but I don't think I will have the patience to wait another year. Dammit.

## Before reading

To all those out there saying it sounds like a Harry Potter rip-off, kindly read this question I asked Holly Black to clear it up:

How would you describe your upcoming project 'The Iron Trial' with Cassandra Clare? What will make it stand out from other books in the warlock/wizard/witch genre?

That's a great question and one Cassie and I discussed a lot when we decided to go forward with the project. There have been a lot of stories about witches, wizards and warlocks. Obviously, Harry Potter casts a long shadow, but there's also Books of Magic, Wich Witch, Wizard's Hall, So You Want to Be a Wizard, Howl's Moving Castle, etc.

What we tried to do -- and what I always think is the obligation of a writer -- is too add to the conversation. We wanted to build a fun world, characters we loved, and as many twists and surprises as we could come up with. We hope that reader familiarity with witch and wizard books actually allows us a little more flexibility in terms of what readers will go along with -- and also maybe there are things they won't at all suspect!

I would describe The Iron Trial as being about a kid named Call who really, really, really doesn't want to go to magic school. He's been told his whole life that mages are dangerous, that they'll take you down into their tunnels and that if they make him take the test to get into magic school, you better fail. So what happens if failing spectacularly isn't enough to save him?

Overall, wait until September until you start raving about it being a rip-off. Judgemental peeps. ...more

## The Iron Trial Quotes

Note: I am fully aware of the fact that Harry Potter is NOT the first ever YA fantasy series with 'a boy goes to a magical school' setting in it, but The Iron Trial is still a Harry Potter ripoff. It's clear as day.

And no, I'm not a Harry Potter fan, so kindly put your 'angry Harry Potter fangirl' comments on hold.

Ms. Holly Black, I'm so disappointed in you, I know you can do better than messing about with the likes of Cassandra Clare.

And believe me...being a Harry Potter ripoff is not even the Note: I am fully aware of the fact that Harry Potter is NOT the first ever YA fantasy series with 'a boy goes to a magical school' setting in it, but The Iron Trial is still a Harry Potter ripoff. It's clear as day.

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Ms. Holly Black, I'm so disappointed in you, I know you can do better than messing about with the likes of Cassandra Clare.

And believe me...being a Harry Potter ripoff is not even the worst problem of this book.

What I don't like about this book, a simple checklist:

(1) Really obvious Harry Potter ripoff

I know, authors need to pay rent too, but can they be a bit less lazy and working on their own ideas instead of ripping J K. Rowling off?

Here're the details:

5 pages into the story, we are treated with a bunch of people being murdered by the Enemy of Death and a little boy is the only survivor...his mother also died protecting him...

Hello, The Boy Who Lives?

Plus, like Harry this little boy just also has to be so very famous, he is known among his peers, even the mayor knows who he is, even the teachers from the magical school know who he is, even the bad guys are aware of him. Ugh huh, I have no comment here.

There's more...three kids, two boys and one girl (an outstandingly smart girl, mind you) working as a team for the school year and they also has a mentor who seems to know more about the boy's identity

and the secrets from the past than he let on...again, no comment.

Just look at the book cover and the name 'The Enemy of Death'...are you really going to tell me these fail to remind you of a certain You Know Who?

And don't even get me started with how (view spoiler)[the Arch Villain's soul is inside the little boy's body! (hide spoiler)] I mean, if you must rip J K. Rowling off, couldn't you have done it in a little bit more subtle way!?

If you want even more details, check out LillyCat's review

## (2) Mary Sue and unlikable characters

For too many times the main characters said things which are supposed to be smart and humorous, but they always fall flat.

Sounding familiar, isn't it? It reminds me of all those supposedly 'brave, sassy, funny and strong' characters from Clare's Shadowhunters books which are actually unlikable brats and assholes.

Not to mention, the smart girl in the crew is an unlikable Know-It-All, whilst one of the MCs turns out to be a walking stereotype for a Golden Boy. Plus two of those MCs gave another MC silent treatment for three weeks after he messed up in practice. How charming.

Guess what? At least in Harry Potter, the kids used to behave in a somewhat likable and reasonable way, and they protected their friends when said friends got into trouble with their teachers. Sadly I hadn't seen the kids in The Iron Trial did the same.

I know, at least this book actually includes POC (people of colors) as the main characters, this much I can appreciate, but still.

## (3) the Mages-teachers who are stupid and horrible educators

In this book, the mages in this magical school are terrible as educators and these mages also suck totally at fighting the evil Chaos-ridden too. I wonder why after so many years the bad guys still haven't managed to defeat those stupid mages.

Here're a few examples:

At the very beginning, these mages are wrenching a 12 years old boy from his father and they were going to keep the boy \*without his father's consent\*, and you are telling me those mages are supposed to be the good guys!? And it's supposed to happen in the alternative modern America (which is supposed to be quite similar with our world)!?

Also, students are requested to try moving the sand with their will power for five whole weeks (or five months, can't recall which), and I suppose nothing else can motivate 12 years old kids to learn about magic than this?

Also, those mages have lied to the kids and their parents when they lured them to their magical school with fake invitation letters which were supposedly sent by ballet schools and other schools of talents! Many of the kids' parents have not the slightest idea that they are sending their kids off to apply for a magical school which is going to train them to be magical warriors of some sort and also to fight with some deadly and evil Chaos-ridden, aka monsters and murderers! What The Hell!?

I told you, those mages are terrible people.

(view spoiler)[Alright, then those mages found their precious Maker--their only chance to defeat the Enemy of Death! So let's tell everyone this great discovery! Because the Enemy would NEVER dream of snaking into the magical school and kill the young Maker before he/she comes of age! (hide spoiler)]

(4) The most boring and senseless magical school and magic training ever

Fire wants to burn

Water wants to flow

Air wants to raise

Earth wants to bind

Chaos wants to devour

These must be one of the most unimaginative and unmagical description I've ever heard about magic.

However, I would admit the idea of mages and their counterweights is a decent one, but it isn't like we have never seen this idea coming into play before.

(5) the world building...or the lack of it

In the world of The Iron Trial, for some reasons mages are allowed to war against each other on a regular basis, but why? Isn't this story taken place in the freaking MODERN WORLD? Why would the government allow this?

Plus, why must the existence of mages and magic be hidden in secret when the mages must live among humans and there are also untrained 'gifted' children walking among the general public unintentionally summoning/using their magical power? I mean, there have been freaking wars among the mages and the rest of the world is still in the dark! Why aren't these mages running the governments and running businesses \*since they have power that normal people don't have?\* How freaking believable!

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The Iron Trial

And I'd already informed you those mages can keep a 12 years old boy despite the lack of parental consent. Again, I have no word.

Am I going to read the next book in the future? I am not even sure. ...more

Very solid start to a series. I feel like there were some things that were under-explained, but overall I love the world!