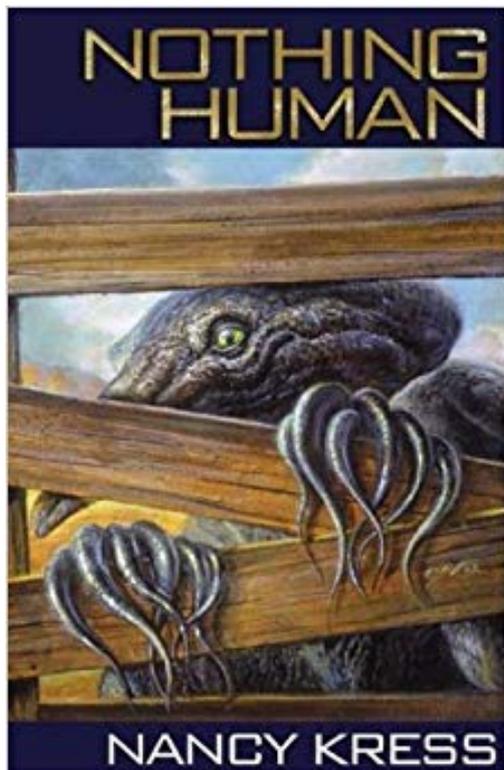


Nothing Human *by* Nancy Kress



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Author: Nancy Kress

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Told from the perspective of several generations of teenagers, this science fiction novel involves an Earth ravaged by mankind, high-tech manipulative aliens, and advanced genetics. Early in the 21st century, global warming has caused sickness and death among plants, animals, and humans. Suddenly aliens contact and genetically modify a group of 14-year-olds, inviting them to visit their spacecraft. After several months of living among the aliens and studying genetics, the students discover that the aliens have been manipulating them and rebel. Upon their return to Earth, the girls in the group discover that they are pregnant and can only wonder what form their unborn children will take. Generations later, the offspring of these children seek to use their alien knowledge to change their genetic code, to allow them to live and prosper in an environment that is quickly becoming uninhabitable from the dual scourges of global warming and biowarfare. But after all the generations of change, will the genetically modified creatures resemble their ancestors, or will nothing human remain?



Reviews of the **Nothing Human** by Nancy Kress

Rainpick

Once again, a fascinating apocalyptic premise borne out by an interesting storytelling structure. It's very intriguing to consider how we as a species could evolve to survive a slow apocalypse, especially if "guided" by an alien "human" species. I didn't like this book as much as I liked "After the Fall, Before the Fall, etc." for various reasons:

--the ebook copy that I got from Amazon was, for some reason, not a finished copy. There were a lot of typos, to the point that it was detracting.

--the book was told in three parts and from various perspectives. I think the story would've been told better just from Lillie's perspective, as she was the one character that all the parts and perspectives had in common.

--there seemed, at times, to be a slightly moralistic tone. While it made sense that moral issues would arise in the context of the story (e.g. impregnation by an alien species), and that these issues might be dealt with differently or more frequently as the extinction of the human race seems more and more inevitable, the characters talked about them as if they were from the here and now, not the future.

All in all, though, a very thought-provoking read.

Juce

Nothing Human by Nancy Kress had very slight echoes of her Beggars in Spain trilogy, which is one of my all time favorites. This story also deals with the idea of changing human DNA to adapt faster to the environment than evolution would. It's an inspiring tale, with many small characterizations of human responses that are not stereotypes and therefore all the more interesting. Fear, love, revulsion and logic twist into unusual combinations throughout the tale. The story is written relatively tight, with the suspense coming from not knowing how each change will be accepted by those changed and those close to them. Meanwhile the environment grinds away from an almost Eden to near total desolation and back again. Like all Kress' work there was plenty of food for thought. The story is more thought provoking than exciting, but good reading none the less.

Gardagar

What a story. From start to finish an exciting ride. This author has an imagination that is off the charts. Of the three books that I have already read this one is the best. I will look for more.

EROROHALO

Excellent book. This was my first introduction to Nancy Kress. I've since bought several of her books to read. I am a big fan of "hard" science fiction and this book fits the bill. The genetic changes mentioned in the book are realistic and is a good commentary on climate change and dangers of messing with genetics.

Anayanis

For the most part, anyone who already reads any noticeable amount of science fiction, or even genre fiction in general, will be able to predict where this plot is going, from the first few pages. There are no surprises, other than a few inconsistencies that leave one surprised when nothing happens to straighten them out.

Kress is a good writer even with a pedestrian plot, so the book is readable, and not a waste of time. It's just not worth saving to re-read or mull over the ideas.

The starting point is test-tube babies from a mysterious clinic who, surprise, turn out to have peculiar mutations. The particular mechanism that results from these mutations is a bit improbable; leaving the unlikelihood aside so that we can accept the notion that aliens can communicate with human children by smell alone, why aliens would choose to use barely-teenage children as their messengers rather than people who would command more respect and attention when speaking to

other humans is a question Kress doesn't answer, other than an overall implication in the last third of the book that these particular aliens are rather incompetent. Incidentally, toward the end of the book, when the "new generation" of children is described, I recognized the adaptations that Kress describes as being taken pretty much exactly from an article that appeared in Scientific American a few years ago, on what humans should look like to be well-adapted for our terrestrial, bipedal way of life. Kress adds a couple of unique details, but her characters are nowhere near as original as people who don't read science magazines might think.

If I were going looking for a story about aliens who happen to bring bits of mutation/change to Earth, I'd re-read Larry Niven's "The Green Marauder," for preference. However, that's not to say that people won't like "Nothing Human" and in fact, I suspect that it could well be a read that juvenile humans about the age of our protagonists might enjoy.

Galanjov

Nancy Kress' latest novel, despite its garish cover, deals with a topical issue; genetic manipulation of the unborn. Kress' novel would be little better than an average Michael Crichton thriller if not for her unusual twist; the genetic manipulation being done here is not by humanity but by an alien race called the Pribir.

The Pribir were once like humanity (or so they say) and are preparing humanity for life in an environment full of environmental toxics. Their primary means of communication appears to be through a series of complex smells. The resulting children from their experiment are something more than human but still have the same emotional flaws as their peers.

Kress deals with a lot of complex issues here: the environment and our place in it; the rights of those who have been genetically manipulated; the role of any outside culture in influencing another one--even for their own good. As usual Kress handles the plot, characters and themes deftly. What the novel lacks is any sense that it is building to a powerful conclusion.

Nothing Human isn't disappointing just anti-climatic. It's rare that a Kress novel disappoints and no one can write a classic every time. Kress' latest novel has much to admire but it just isn't in the same league as Beggar's in Spain or Probability Moon.

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