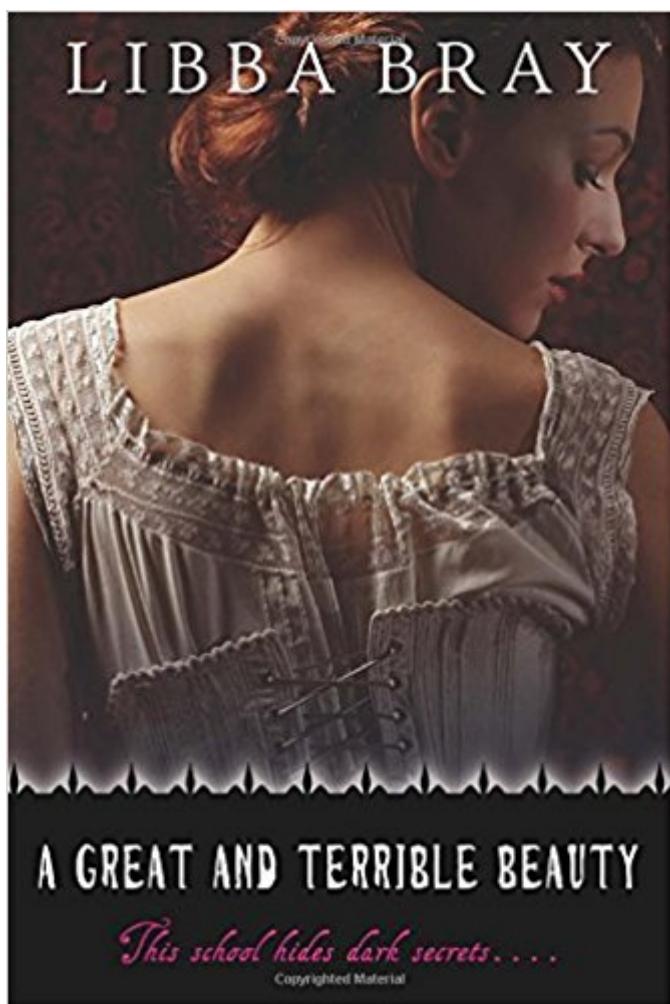


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# A Great And Terrible Beauty (The Gemma Doyle Trilogy)



## Synopsis

It's 1895, and after the suicide of her mother, 16-year-old Gemma Doyle is shipped off from the life she knows in India to Spence, a proper boarding school in England. Lonely, guilt-ridden, and prone to visions of the future that have an uncomfortable habit of coming true, Gemma's reception there is a chilly one. To make things worse, she's been followed by a mysterious young Indian man, a man sent to watch her. But why? What is her destiny? And what will her entanglement with Spence's most powerful girls—and their foray into the spiritual world—lead to?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 760L (What's this?)

Series: The Gemma Doyle Trilogy

Paperback: 432 pages

Publisher: Ember; Reprint edition (March 22, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385732317

ISBN-13: 978-0385732314

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.9 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 619 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #26,165 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #28 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Europe #114 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Girls & Women #210 in Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Coming of Age

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

A Victorian boarding school story, a Gothic mansion mystery, a gossipy romp about a clique of girlfriends, and a dark other-worldly fantasy--jumble them all together and you have this complicated and unusual first novel. Gemma, 16, has had an unconventional upbringing in India, until the day she foresees her mother's death in a black, swirling vision that turns out to be true. Sent back to England, she is enrolled at Spence, a girls' academy with a mysterious burned-out East Wing. There Gemma is snubbed by powerful Felicity, beautiful Pippa, and even her own dumpy roommate Ann, until she blackmails herself and Ann into the treacherous clique. Gemma is

distressed to find that she has been followed from India by Kartik, a beautiful young man who warns her to fight off the visions. Nevertheless, they continue, and one night she is led by a child-spirit to find a diary that reveals the secrets of a mystical Order. The clique soon finds a way to accompany Gemma to the other-world realms of her visions "for a bit of fun" and to taste the power they will never have as Victorian wives, but they discover that the delights of the realms are overwhelmed by a menace they cannot control. Gemma is left with the knowledge that her role as the link between worlds leaves her with a mission to seek out the "others" and rebuild the Order. A Great and Terrible Beauty is an impressive first book in what should prove to be a fascinating trilogy. (Ages 12 up)  
Patty Campbell --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 9 Up An interesting combination of fantasy, light horror, and historical fiction, with a dash of romance thrown in for good measure. On her 16th birthday, Gemma Doyle fights with her mother. She wants to leave India where her family is living, runs off when her mother refuses to send her to London to school, has a dreadful vision and witnesses her mother's death. Two months later, Gemma is enrolled in London's Spence School, still troubled by visions, and unable to share her grief and guilt over her loss. She gradually learns to control her vision and enter the "realms" where magical powers can make anything happen and where her mother waits to instruct her. Gradually she and her new friends learn about the Order, an ancient group of women who maintained the realms and regulated their power, and how two students unleashed an evil creature from the realms by killing a Gypsy girl. Gemma uncovers her mother's connection to those events and learns what she now must do. The fantasy element is obvious, and the boarding-school setting gives a glimpse into a time when girls were taught gentility and the importance of appearances. The author also makes a point about the position of women in Victorian society. Bray's characters are types--Felicity, clever and powerful; Ann, plain and timid; Pippa, beautiful and occasionally thoughtless; Gemma, spirited and chafing under society's rules--but not offensively so, and they do change as the story progresses. The ending leaves open the likelihood of a sequel. Recommend this to fantasy fans who also like Sherlock Holmes or Mary Russell.--Lisa Prolman, Greenfield Public Library, MA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I adore this book. "I'm running because I can, because I must. Because I want to see how far I can go before I have to stop." So anyway, this book was one of my favorites in middle school- it had everything I liked: historical fiction with a dash of the paranormal. However, Libba

Bray's A Great and Terrible Beauty is so much more than that. It's a staunchly feminist YA novel that should have more recognition among young girls everywhere. And here's why: Gemma: Gemma is, without a doubt, a beautifully written main character. Though she may be a "chosen one", the girl is definitely NO Mary Sue! She can be annoying, pushy, and quite mean at times- as well as very judgmental and ignorant,, but she is a sixteen year old girl. And sixteen year olds, especially ones that have been privileged their whole lives, are know-it-alls. And Libba Bray writes her very well. I grew to love Gemma! She get's her ass handed to her- and I enjoyed watching her grow into a better friend/person.Friendships: This is a book that celebrates female friendship vs. young girls clamoring for the love of some aloof boy. There is this trend in YA where the main character is hounded by other girls and is left to only only associate with some handsome male (throneofglasscoughcough) and it is so great to read a story about friendship and sisterhood.Also, this book is no love story! However, Gemma still finds herself "in like" with a character named Kartik. I found this pollen to be written very well- there is no "insta-love", because in real life,especially at Gemma's age, "insta-love" is more "insta-i wanna kiss you" and it was interesting to see Gemma wrestle with her feelings and be confused. It was realistic! And I liked how he didn't crumble for her! Libya Bray let's them be their own characters.Themes : There are so many wonderful themes in this book! Feminism? Racism? Classism? Xenophobia? All of that is discussed and weaved in brilliantly. I would go into details, but there would be spoilers.This book impacted me so much that I bought a tons of copies and campaigned to have it integrated into my high-school's English curriculum. Of course, it helped that my high-school was an all girls school, ex-finishing school much like Spence.Thank you Libba Bray! Thank you!There are many criticisms about the novel. 1. That the writing is verbose. Well, I will admit that Bray's style is quite heavy, but ti works here- it is seems that a lack of brevity fits into the victorian setting. 2. That the POC are made fun and are regarded inappropriately. I understand that- but Gemma isn't going to automatically not be prejudiced or ignorant. Gemma is kind of a bitch. But she grows throughout the novel and the book- and begins to view those different from her differently. I appreciated the fact that Bray didn't go easy on Gemma.

I read this at a friend's recommendation, and to be honest I was prepared not to like it, in part because I'd grown quite bored with YA in the past few years, not to mention I am no longer the "target" audience for this book. However, it grabbed me from the very beginning and kept me turning the pages until the very end. I couldn't put it down. As I found it to be a wonderfully dark read and I can't wait to read the rest of the series. I highly recommend this one.

Imagine, if you will, that on what should be a lovely day, you find yourself in a sour mood. You just can't seem to get your views across or anything you want. After all, you are only a young girl, and why should you get your way? Especially in an age when women aren't yet liberated. Imagine also, that you are lashing out on someone you love dearly, because life seems quite unfair. All you want is to escape the heat of India and find refuge at a normal school in London. But then, with your last cruel words to that one you hold dear, you run off, only to find yourself lost. Not just lost in India, but consumed by a vision of that loved one being killed by a monstrous being. That, my friends, is the beginning for Gemma Doyle, a sixteen year old girl living in India during the Victorian era. Never once has anything so strange happened to her, but on the day she runs away from her mother she is attacked by a horrid vision. She runs to look for her mother; surely it is all a mistake. But when the after effects of the vision come to life, the truth is there; cold and hard. Is it her fault? She was so painfully frustrated being trapped in India when it was not meant to be her world. She said hateful words to her mother, and then it happened. Who is to blame? No, this is not so much a mystery novel, although there are many mysteries within the trilogy. It's almost as if this novel cannot have a single genre. It's not just a paranormal romance, a supernatural, fantasy adventure, or even thriller filled with suspense. In its essence its genre is life, with a touch of magic. Not only is the story magical, but so is the writing styles of Libba Bray. The story comes to life in the most vividly detailed writing I have ever read. When reading this book, you truly feel and know each character; you are each character at any given point of the novel. You're living vicariously through these characters, developing relationships, and discovering a new world. Fear will course through you, but so will sheer happiness. I once compared this book to my own Wonderland, in which I fall down a hole and escape the realities of my life. It is quite true. I've read this book many times often as an escape; a very beautiful escape. After the death of Gemma's mother she is sent to Spence Academy for Girls. There she meets Ann Bradshaw, a sponsor student. She discovers what will be frenemies of sorts; Miss Felicity Worthington and Pippa Cross. Despite their differences, the group joins together, bound by untold secrets and a wish to be free of society's rules. Visions continue to attack Gemma, of which a mysterious Indian boy insists are dangerous and she must stop having them. Yet, how can she stop something she hasn't control? And when she does gain control; what does that mean? Soon, Gemma discovers a world of its own with her friends. It is a magical world in which the dead reside briefly, a limbo of sorts, and anything is possible. Such an exciting world without the constraints of society! What will they find there? And is it all as beautiful as it seems ; this world where leaves can turn into butterflies and beauty is but a wish away? My friend Stephanie recommended this book, because I liked Twilight. There are no vampires here, no Edward's or

Jacob's. In fact, it's quite different. Honestly, I think Twilight may have been an excuse to force this beautiful novel upon me J Which is quite okay, because I truly enjoyed it. Even more than my sexy Edward and my adorable Jacob. This story is much more mature and deeper than that of the Twilight Saga. There are more surprises, twists, and turns. I highly recommend the Gemma Doyle trilogy to anyone who likes to read. In fact, even if you hate reading, you should read this novel. It will change you; I promise! "Your mind is not a cage. It's a garden" --- Miss Moore

This was a really great read. I found that it enveloped one of the major lessons of life, where we are not all good, but rather a mixture. The author phrases it nicely, "we are not made all of light, there are a lot of gray areas." I find that this is something that youth especially have a hard time coping with. The older that we get, the more that we learn from our mistakes or different directions that we take. The areas that were intense seemed to be short lived and I would have liked to have seen some areas more in depth, such as did Felicity become impacted by the darkness or maybe go into more detail. I can't wait to read the next one though!

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