

## Review of Twilight Trilogy

Twilight Trilogy Review

*Twilight* (2005)

*New Moon* (2006)

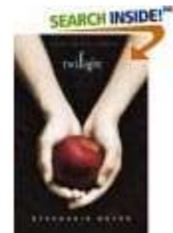
*Eclipse* (2007)

by Stephenie Meyer

Review by Hollis Helmici, Director, El Dorado Public Library

*ED. NOTE: The Twilight Trilogy is immensely popular with YA readers right now. Some news stories have suggested that Meyer has reached much of the young audience that had such loyalty to the Harry Potter series.*

There are mysteries in the world of fiction, and why this trilogy is so compelling and addictive to read happens to be one of them. There are innumerable literary weaknesses throughout the trilogy, but reading them is like eating potato chips. I read each one while ignoring other activities, and waited impatiently for the next one. These three books are truly compelling reads.



Meyer does not try to create a realistic high school experience. In some ways she mirrors the kind of impossible world found in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (especially in the television series). The plots are thin; the characters nearly flat; the setting and other literary elements weak—why would a vampire care if it was enrolled in high school? How does an underage girl fly internationally without guardian okay? Is a small town cop really going to ignore his daughter’s bizarre behavior?

The story is about Bella Swan, who leaves her flighty mother’s care to live with her father for the final year of high school. She moves from Phoenix to a small town in the rainy Northwest, where she meets Edward Cullen and his “siblings.” Bella falls in love with the distant and exceptionally attractive Edward, who is attracted to Bella because she is (literally) unreadable to him.

This relationship is complicated by friends of Bella’s father, the Blacks, who are members of the indigenous tribe. Jacob Black, several years younger than Bella, wants a relationship with her beyond friendship, knowing that she is dedicated to Edward Cullen. The young males of Jacob’s tribe, affected by the presence of the vampiric Cullen “family,” transform into werewolves. The struggle for Bella’s affections between Jacob and Edward continues through the three books. In *Eclipse* there is a momentary alliance between the werewolves and the vampires which allows for a greater evil to be overcome. Bella’s willingness to make a sacrifice allows for the muted happy ending.

Given that the plot line for three books can be summarized in two paragraphs, what makes these books so readable? Meyer creates characters that are just vaguely enough defined that almost any reader can

identify with them, yet they have motivations which make sense within the story. Bella learns to ride a motorcycle in order to take risks so as to draw Edward closer to her. This allows Jacob the time needed to fall in love with Bella. It is this sort of realistic behavior which, I think, drives the popularity of Meyer's works.

Meyer also maintains the human values of the main characters even as they are transformed, and so Edward retains the values and mores of the time when he was transformed. This sort of emotional realism is what draws readers into books—certainly there is no reason why a vampire would require his beloved to marry before biting! Bella's temporary friendships in high school and the struggle to balance between Jacob and Edward—as well as her lack of insight—mirror both the behavior and reactions we all have on a daily basis.

Meyer seems able to work the struggle of being a “good person” into the foundation of these works, and that ultimately is what makes them so immensely readable. The didactic nature of her writing strikes much the same chord as Nathaniel Hawthorne's short stories, with the same intensity given to the characters as they stumble through the confusion of life.