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Beautiful Creatures Mini Analysis

In *Beautiful Creatures*, we are presented with a supernatural teen book that has a surprising amount of depth. Although the surface story is similar to many others (boy meets girl, one has supernatural powers, some climactic event is forthcoming...), there is lots to make this book worthwhile. The depth of the characters, the detailed environments, the literary references (particularly the references to *To Kill A Mockingbird*), and the mismatched family units all contribute to a surprisingly complex and enjoyable story.

The finality that comes with Lena's future lends a seriousness and heavy weight to her character and the overarching story lines - Lena's life as she knows it is approaching a decisive point that will alter her, irreversibly. Either she will be freed of the constraints that she has been worrying about for her entire life, or she will be turned into a Dark Caster, which will effectively be the end of who she is. In a thematic sense, this represents a specific turning point in her life - when she ceases being a child at age 16, there is a significant risk that her life as she knows it, is over (although it's not explicitly stated, it's portrayed as likely that each outcome has a roughly equal chance of coming true). This is easily seen as being a thought that is at the front of almost all the decisions that Lena makes, and is a striking parallel to the character of Adam in the 2011 film *50-50*. In this film, we come to know Adam Lerner, a mid-twenties health nut who is

diagnosed with a rare form of cancer that offers a paltry 50% survival rate. In a thematically similar fashion, much of Adam's life view and decisions have a weight and seriousness that revolve around his health, even before the diagnosis - he doesn't smoke, drink or even have a drivers license, because he's concerned about his future and well-being. Both characters have a seriousness and gravity that bely their position - both should be in the prime of their life and have few grave worries, but both are facing an unknown and uncertain future that is shadowed by death.

The second similarity that is striking is the depth of the primary relationship in each story. In *50-50*, Adam's primary relationship is with Kyle, the deuteragonist and Adam's best friend. Kyle is committed to maintaining and enhancing their friendship throughout the difficult times that Adam is experiencing. In the same way, Ethan continually tries to both reassure Lena and prove to her that he is committed to their relationship, regardless of the outcome of Lena's 16th birthday. We see that both relationships are tested - Lena breaks up with Ethan out of fear and the desire to protect him, and Adam blows up at Kyle, accusing him of not being serious enough about his condition - in both cases, they are reconciled and face the future together, their relationships stronger for having worked through their difficulties.

The final similarity that I find is the abnormal family units that are portrayed. In *Beautiful Creatures*, Ethan's family unit is fractured - his mother is dead, his father is effectively absent due to mental illness and Ethan is being raised by Amma. In this Ethan's case, he mostly takes care of himself, and Amma is generally represented as someone he wants to avoid offending. In a similar fashion, we see Adam's fractured family unit - again a physically present, but mentally absent father (this time with Alzheimer's), and an overbearing mother - these bear a remarkable

likeness to Ethan Wate's situation. In both stories, the protagonist's primary relationship, support and help comes from outside their family.

Beautiful Creatures has a lot going for it - on both literary and narrative levels. On a narrative level it's an entertaining story - I found it very enjoyable. I found the characters deep and believable, especially the difficult relationship between Ethan and his father. The struggles and difficulties that the characters have with each other are such that teens will be able to relate to them in multiple ways. In a literary sense, the book is interesting as well. The interactions between characters, the portrayals of characters in a literary and historical sense. The use of flashbacks and literary references to book like *To Kill A Mockingbird* as well as the intentional parallels of Macon Ravenwood to Boo Radley make for lots of teaching opportunities and introspection of the text. Although this book has only been around since 2009, I will not be surprised when it becomes a staple of YA literary analysis. It's rare that I find a book that I feel works so well on both levels, and this is one that definitely does.

WORKS CITED:

Garcia, Kami and Margaret Stohl. *Beautiful Creatures*. Little, Brown and Company, 2014. Apple iBook.

Levine, Jonathan. *50-50*. IWC Productions, 2011. Apple iTunes Movie.