

Time's Mouth: A Review Of The Novel That Will Sweep You Into The Body Of Time— *a microreview* | Cali R.

*T*ime's Mouth by Edan Lepucki takes a unique approach to time travel that sweeps readers off their feet and into the body of time. Lepucki uses specific craft elements to deepen the impact of the novel's many themes, the main one being the use of time-jumps to enhance the idea of one generation's trauma rippling into the next. She also utilizes her knowledge of California and its lush landscape, adding to the reader's understanding of the setting and using place to contextualize each character within their own situation. Lepucki employs a multi-generational narrative structure to demonstrate that each character has been impacted by things that had happened before their birth. These craft elements add to the themes of trauma, family, parenting, and self-discovery that Lepucki aimed to convey.

Time

While the story is told in chronological order and we see the events unfold from beginning to end, Lepucki uses her characters' magical gift of time travel as a means to show readers glimpses into different moments in time, moments which may come back and be important later. This is one of the main reasons I was so deeply impacted by this book—Lepucki uses methods that other time travel stories have only scratched the surface of, planting the seeds within the reader by letting us see into her characters' minds in a new way, by letting us travel with them through time. This element largely contributes to a deeper understanding of not only the narrative itself, but the characters and the way they think and process emotions. We get to know each character in distinctive ways through intense focus of certain events, allowing us to compare how each person reacts to the situation at hand. We also get to see how one moment in time can change a person's future and impact their family. It reminded me of the film *Interstellar* in this sense, but felt more intimate and let us get closer to each character. Jumping around

in time lets readers see a side that would not have otherwise been revealed, allowing them to come to their own conclusions about the situations the characters find themselves in. It can be overwhelming to jump between so many characters within different times, but Lepucki does it seamlessly and uses this technique to allow readers to explore her world from multiple angles and perspectives. Through these characters, we see relationships develop that transcend time and space and pass through dimensions.

Trauma

The idea of multi-generational trauma is addressed in this book through the use of different protagonists and the aforementioned time-jumps. The reader is led to believe that Ursa will be the main character and we will be rooting for her throughout, but she actually becomes the perpetrator of much of the abuse that impacts her son and his family. Ursa's bitterness towards her son's happiness comes from her own inner struggles and the hardships that she's faced, and she allows it to directly cause harm to his family. The use of telling this story throughout multiple generations showcases these concepts of unhealthy family relationships and the passing down of trauma from one generation to the next. Not only do readers get to see exactly where Ursa's trauma comes from, but they get to see how her responses to this trauma has caused a ripple effect to pass the trauma down through the generations. In real life, we don't get to see how our trauma will impact our children or our children's children, but Lepucki has made this possible using time travel as a means to give this concept a physical representation.

Place

The setting of *Time's Mouth* largely contributes to the novel's theme of family trauma by introducing the idea of escapism. Ursa uses California as the place where she can disappear and hide from her parents, and the same state becomes the hiding place for her own son when he runs away from her years later. The setting and rich history of California play into the importance of the story, with the state acting as an enticing force and shifting into a vastly

diverse landscape that can become home to all different aspects of one unique family. Not only is Ursa pushing her son away emotionally, but she physically pushes him away too as he moves further down the state to get away from her. The vast change in setting emphasizes how drastic this change was to the characters and what it means for them in the context of the story. If you live in California and are familiar with its scenery and landscapes, you'll appreciate Lepucki's description of the Santa Cruz and Los Angeles areas--and no matter where you're from, you'll get the sense of home that Lepucki is trying to portray through different parts of the golden state. The idea of place wasn't something that always stuck out to me in books, but once you start to look at it on a deeper level, you will begin to realize the impact that a particular setting can have on the way a story is told.

Time's Mouth proves that the concept of time travel can be expanded on to explore several themes at once, and that it can do so effectively while moving quickly through time and space. Lepucki also reveals details through the use of time travel, jumping around in time and using these moments to reinforce her overall theme of generational trauma and unhealthy family dynamics. This book had me physically yelling at the pages with tears in my eyes, and it gripped me this way by connecting me to each character, letting me see into their mind and feel the way they feel. Whether you laugh, cry, or just enjoy the ride, once you're pulled into the mouth of time, you may not want to come out.