

**YA Café Podcast**  
**Episode 37 The Disasters by MK England**  
**20 December 2018**

- Danielle: 00:00 Welcome to the YA Cafe where we share conversations about books for teachers, readers, and caffeine addicts everywhere. On today's episode, we'll be talking about The Disasters by MK, England. Grab a mug of your favorite beverage friends and let's talk books.
- Ad: 00:21 Have you tried the radio public app? It's a great app where you can find all of your favorite podcasts like this one. You'll experience the same great content for free and we'll receive a small kickback every time you listen there. This is a great way to support any podcasts you enjoy. Come find us over on radio public.
- Amanda: 00:44 Welcome y'all. As always, our first segment will be spoiler for you and so you can stick around even if you haven't checked out the new novel yet, I'm Amanda Thrasher.
- Danielle: 00:51 And I'm Danielle Hall an 8th and 9th Grade English teacher and I blog at [teachnouvelle.com](http://teachnouvelle.com) . Today we're discussing The Disasters by MK England. After washing out of flight school in less than a day wannabe pilot. Nax Hall is dreading his return to earth, but when the academy space station is attacked by terrorists, Nax and three other failures escape a stolen shipped, the far off colonies framed for the academy attack the four of them, must scrambled to figure out where to hide and how to prevent the powerful terrorist organization from striking again.
- Amanda: 01:22 Dun Dun Dun Dun.
- Danielle: 01:24 That's good. \* laughter It was a very necessary Dun Dun Dun .
- Danielle: 01:26 I didn't realize you were going to Dun Dun or I would have timed it.
- Amanda: 01:29 I didn't either but you really like you went for it and I was like, this is the moment. \*Laughter
- Danielle: 01:34 So, Amanda.

Amanda: 01:36 So, Danielle.

Danielle: 01:37 What did you think?

Amanda: 01:38 I thought it was really fast-paced, like a very good intro for somebody who's maybe new to Sci-Fi and maybe like a little more of a reluctant reader, like the sentences tend to be pretty short and snappy \* laughter and

Danielle: 01:52 this is the right number of pages.

Amanda: 01:54 I think it's a very important stylistic choice to have like short and snappy sentences versus sentences that kind of meander and ponder and take up half a paragraph you know.

Danielle: 02:04 It is very snappy. It's very accessible. You don't have to have a lot of like Sci-Fi baggage to enjoy this story pretty much figure out what's going on without like a degree in engineering or astronomy or genetics. Like last week's book. \*Laughter

Danielle: 02:25 This book is set five minutes into the future and I feel like when you told me that today you were naming a TV trope.

Amanda: 02:33 It is in fact a TV trope, uh, I think this one is very obvious. They talk very similar to modern day internet speech, I guess. You know what I mean when I say that right?

Danielle: 02:45 If you've ever been on the Internet, they talk like that .

Amanda: 02:48 They talk like Tumblr.

Danielle: 02:49 Or Reddit or live journal.

Amanda: 02:52 Oh, live journal. \*Laughter

Amanda: 02:54 Yeah, so it set like this very snapshot into the future kind of thing. Uh, it's supposed to be about 200 years in advance, but most of the references are very, like modern day. The speech is still very modern day. Like they use like current company slogans and things like so it's uh.

Danielle: 03:12 You can figure out how the tech got from today to the future. And also something I thought was super entertaining. All of the spaceship companies are today's car companies.

Danielle: 03:27 All right, so this is a book about flight school. Well, I mean it's not a book about flight school but this is a book that is set into motion by Nax washing out of flight school on day one, which I thought was an interesting choice. Like I get why it had to happen for the story but it kind of like irritated me a little bit. So maybe how did you feel about it having gone to flight school?

Amanda: 03:52 I mean like I can't really have that much of an opinion on it, you know, because like you reach a point when you're like, like there's so much flying in fiction and like most of it is bad. \*Laughter

Amanda: 04:01 So, to really enjoy fiction you just kinda have to like turn it off a lot. I mean like obviously like you crashed, assume you're not going to fill out a flight school because you crashed sims. That's what you do. \*Laughter

Danielle: 04:14 Right! And okay, so I guess that this is like a minor spoiler, but I was anticipating that the reason he washed out of flight school would be way more dramatic than just crashing a sim.

Amanda: 04:26 Yeah, I mean crashing Sim is like..

Danielle: 04:28 A normal day.

Amanda: 04:29 There are people who have crashed planes and still graduated flight school, so like, but it's 200 years in the future and maybe they really cracked down on these kids willy nilly crash and sims all over the place.

Danielle: 04:40 I feel like I have to tell our listeners that when we went to your flight school graduation, I got to flight in a Sim. I flew very well. I landed the plane.

Amanda: 04:51 She did land the plane right smoothly on the runway even, It was a good moment for you.

Danielle: 04:56 I mean I'm ready. I could do what Nax does.

Amanda: 04:59 She was however less successful in the helicopter. \*Laughter

Danielle: 05:02 Helicopters are hard.

Danielle: 05:04 I really like the narrative voice in this book. Nax is very funny and I guess I was anticipating a split perspective book. Like we read so many of them, whole metal girls with split perspective. Were you expecting a split perspective?

Amanda: 05:20 I kind of was.

Amanda: 05:21 Yeah, something about just like the four unlikely heroes come together, it's, it felt like we were going to go into a split perspective, split...., \*Laughter but I liked that we didn't. I liked that it stayed in Max's perspective the whole time. I thought I thought it worked well.

Danielle: 05:38 Yeah, but he's funny and I really liked that, especially in a book about like high speed chases and like very stressful situations. I feel like terrorist make situation stressful.

Amanda: 05:53 Hot take from YA Cafe.

Danielle: 05:53 Those pesky terrorists.

Amanda: 05:53 They're stressful.

Danielle: 05:55 Here's an example, I'm quoting from the book. This is the first sentence of the chapter. "It's the wobbly trickle of blood meandering down cases arm that finally breaks the wall of awkward and puts words in my mouth."

Danielle: 06:09 "Wall of awkward" I feel like I can totally relate to that.

Amanda: 06:13 I think "wall of awkward" is good, but then doesn't it like kind of read like there's blood in your mouth?

Danielle: 06:19 Eww, like the blood came and put words there, but what happens in your brain?

Amanda: 06:24 I mean, I just think that's where it is. I mean I. So I did not super love Nax 's voice in this, but that's just pure taste, right? Like I could see how a lot of people would really enjoy it.

Danielle: 06:36 You're so contrary.

Amanda: 06:37 I have not. I'm just saying what I personally thought, but as I said, there's a lot in this voice. It's a very distinct voice and I think that a lot of people will really like it.

Danielle: 06:47 It's spunky and upbeat and he's funny. So, it actually reminded me of the Martian.

Amanda: 06:54 Yeah, I could see that.

Danielle: 06:55 Yeah, so in the Martian by Andy Weir, he's in this super stressful situation and kind of like the way that he is dealing with it is through his constant inner monologue of like self deprecating humor.

Danielle: 07:08 So, one of the things that I liked in this novel get ready folks Amanda's gonna disagree with me. There's this joke and I laughed out loud when I heard it. It's kind of a common thing like you know, it happens when a book is like set in the future and then they're like, ha! ha!, we're gonna reference this thing which is going to be totally dusty and archaic to our characters, but super relevant to the audience reading. And so the line is "across the table Asra has managed to lure Case into a low voice discussion about some old classic book series I've never read something about Griffindor and wizards and it's "griffin doors".

Amanda: 07:50 Spare rooms. \*Laughter

Danielle: 07:53 And you didn't like the joke.

Amanda: 07:55 I like the trope. That particular joke wasn't a little to winky for me, but I like it. I recognize that other people will like that joke.

Danielle: 08:03 I like winks and nods and all those things and you're just no fun.

Amanda: 08:09 That's fair. \*Laughter

Danielle: 08:12 Alright, so one thing that we both really did like is that the colonies, the far off colonies as you said in the summary. Well, I said it but you wrote it. So, these far off colonies are culturally diverse and space still has religion.

Amanda: 08:30 I really liked that. I dislike when religion just vanishes in futuristic stories.

Danielle: 08:36 Yeah.

Amanda: 08:36 Especially like a story like this, which is only 200 years in the future.

Danielle: 08:40 Right.

Amanda: 08:40 Of course there will still be devout Muslims.

Danielle: 08:41 And this is another thing that reminded me of Hullmetal Girls, um, Hullmetal Girls was a bit further into the future and so we saw something that had like clear roots in Islam but was not directly Islam, but it's still Islam and in the disasters. And I liked that different colonies still had like a strong cultural sense of, you know, wherever the settlers were from.

Amanda: 09:10 I agree. And I really liked that there was like the right amount of world building, like England's like, okay, you know, what colonies are, right? Like I feel like when we go into it, there's the, you know, what colonies are, I don't need to go into terra forming like whatever they live here, just go with it. I really liked that.

Danielle: 09:28 Yeah.

Amanda: 09:28 We didn't have to go too far into it. And I also really liked um, the no return role. I want to talk about that a little bit. So, there's this rule that when they leave earth and go to the colonies, they can never come back because they don't want to bring some like weird space virus or something like that.

Danielle: 09:44 Right. The academy is this kind of gateway to Earth, right. And so all traffic passes through their station and then moves onto earth or you know, since there is no return, I guess it's only outward, right? Everything goes to the academy first and then outward. And so once like Nax's and the three others, you know, once they go further than the academy, they cannot go back.

Amanda: 10:11 Yeah. It just like the stakes that, that added to the story, like the, the real risk that they were taking. Because like when you have a first person character, like you pretty much know they're not going to die, but like this is a real threat that they are going to have to deal with. And I liked it.

Danielle: 10:24 Me Too.

Danielle: 10:25 And with that friends will take our first break. When we come back we'll share about things. We like a Latte, then we'll return to our discussion of the disasters and dig a little deeper.

Ad: 10:44 Hey friends, are you sitting there thinking, this podcast is awesome. I know me too well. Here's how to support us and our authors order a book choices through our affiliate links. Next week we'll be discussing a whole lot of books on an end of year roundup, one of which is Mirage by Somaiya Daud. If you'd like to help us keep bringing you great content, order through the link in our show notes. Happy a reading!

Amanda: 11:18 Welcome back y'all. It's time for Things We like a latte. Danielle, what's your brew of choice this week?

Danielle: 11:22 Well, Amanda.

Amanda: 11:23 Well, Danielle.

Danielle: 11:25 I have two!

Amanda: 11:26 Whoa. \*Laughter

Amanda: 11:28 We did not discuss this. This is highly irregular. \*Laughter

Danielle: 11:31 So, the first one is small, but super cute. Our bookstagrammer friends. Anna and Courtney met this week for the first time IRL (In Real Life) in Dallas.



Amanda: 11:44 Yay!

Danielle: 11:44 And they're super cute and I love them and that's what I wanted to shout out. It made me happy that they're now in real life friends too.

Amanda: 11:56 That's always a nice moment.

Danielle: 11:57 The second thing is, okay, so this might secretly be three things, but..

Amanda: 12:02 Whoa! \*Laughter

Danielle: 12:03 The second thing is that when we in Powells last weekend, I saw that there is a new book, like kind of a prequel to The Last Unicorn by Peter S. Beagle, so I haven't read it yet and Amanda told me that I wasn't allowed to shout it out yet because it'd be like a Marshall Seal of approval.

Amanda: 12:24 I didn't say you weren't allowed. I just said you should be careful.

Danielle: 12:28 So I'm being careful and I'm not shouting that out. The book could be terrible, but the movie is Great. So the movie the last Unicorn, if you have not seen it, you totally should. I watched it like a million times when I was a kid. It is about this Unicorn and she's the last Unicorn and she goes on a journey to find out what happened to all the other unicorns and along the way she meets friends and there's like a magician and a talking cat and a castle. And there's a lot of stuff. It's Super Fun. Um, it kind of fell into this abyss of what people believe animation should be, which is for children, but in reality I think that this movie has wide appeal. It's very weird and the entire soundtrack is by America  
\*Laughter

Amanda: 13:20 Violently by America. \*Laughter

Danielle: 13:23 You don't want to sing?

Amanda: 13:24 No, I don't.

Danielle: 13:27 I love it. It's great. Strongly recommend the last Unicorn. How about you, Amanda? What's your brew of choice this week?

Amanda: 13:35 Well, my brew of choice is another new release that also is about a pilot.

Danielle: 13:40 What is it?

Amanda: 13:41 It is Skyward by Brandon Sanderson. It is the story of a teenager who goes to flight school and goes to fight the aliens. You know?

Danielle: 13:51 How long has she in flight school?

Amanda: 13:53 She's only a flight school for four months, which is some garbage. I want a four month flight school. But I really enjoyed it. I loved the descriptions of like they're learning through the simulators. They crash a lot, which made me feel very seen.

Danielle: 14:06 They don't get kicked out.

Amanda: 14:08 Not for crashing. They get kicked out for a lot of things. But I mean, you know, it's different from this book obviously because it's a, it's a school setting versus like the constant chasing that the disasters is going through and everything. Um, but I really, I liked it like he definitely did a lot of homework on like flight school and like the mechanics of flying and learning to fly and that kind of thing. And I just really enjoyed it. So if you have students who are interested in flying, I definitely recommend Skyward by Brandon Sanderson.

Danielle: 14:36 We're going to take a quick break and when we come back we'll return to our discussion on the disasters. The rest of the show will contain spoilers. So if you let us here, keep in touch on Instagram and Twitter at YA Cafe Podcast. We'll be back.

Music: 14:50 Music

Amanda: 15:06 Welcome back. Yell to the cafe. We're continuing our discussion on the disasters by MK, England. If you haven't read this yet, we want to warn you again that this section will contain spoilers.

Danielle: 15:15 Spoiler!

Amanda: 15:17 Spoiler.

Danielle: 15:17 This is new!

Amanda: 15:19 What?

Danielle: 15:19 You have a, like a complimentary singing. One day we could sing those at the same time and no pirates. Instead we have terrorists.

Amanda: 15:30 Significantly the less fun version of pirates.

Danielle: 15:34 Alright. So, there is a terrorist organization and it ends up being this thing called Earth First, which is this group with an isolationist and nationalist mission and they basically like want to obliterate all the colonies.

Amanda: 15:51 Yeah. I didn't quite get what they wanted, but like they were clearly the bad guys.

Danielle: 15:56 Right! It felt like that for me too, I'm like, I get it they're bad they have like a super weapon.

Amanda: 16:02 Yeah, like the end goal of just kill all the people I didn't know like what they were after, like were they after the resources, like they just seem to want to not have colonies.

Danielle: 16:12 And I don't get that because it seems like the reason that they had colonies at first was like overpopulation and like normal depletion of earth's resources stuff. Right. Maybe I was really into that because they definitely still had goats in North Carolina. So if they had goats come on. If they had goats, they had farmland.

Amanda: 16:33 No, you're right.

Danielle: 16:34 If I just didn't have overpopulation.

Amanda: 16:36 I just really enjoyed the specificity of goats in North Carolina.

Danielle: 16:40 Nax is from North Carolina and it matters to the plot that he raised goats because that whole like Odysseus moment where they hide behind the goats like Odysseus and his men in the cyclops episode.

Amanda: 16:55 Oh yes. I have read that.

Danielle: 16:58 Amanda hasn't read any required reading from high school or middle school. It was assigned to her. She didn't read it.

Amanda: 17:06 Sorry, to all these teachers who are listening to this podcast, I was the worst.

Danielle: 17:11 One of the things I really liked about this book was the treatment of mental health Case who is like this totally awesome genius girl, but has washed out like inexplicably has a panic attack and that's what we discover has led to her washing out was like her sudden an uncontrollable panic attacks and we can understand how like having panic attacks would be a difficult thing for a stressful job, but I think that Nax is able to help her with patients and like leave her with some dignity in her situation,

which I think is like a lot better than kind of the cold and callous. Like ignoring her life's work that she'd done to get their treatment she got from the academy.

Amanda: 18:02 Yeah, I think that, so this touches on like a thing that I feel very strongly about in my work as an officer and as a pilot where when you make mental health like a barrier of entry or barrier to your job, it makes people much more likely to just lie about it and hide it. Like people who are suicidal in the military often one of the primary reasons that they cite for not coming forward is because they don't want to lose their job. They're afraid it's going to negatively impact their career. So it's kind of a bummer that that's still there and this 200 years in the future setting. But I did like that it came across it like Nax understood that case still, like had all of these skills was hugely valuable to the mission, like just had this particular hurdle to overcome versus like the hurdle of needing to study more or whatever that many people have going through academies in flight school. Um, so I really liked that they included this detail and had case continue to be an important part of the crew.

Danielle: 18:59 Right. I totally agree and I think, you know, it's, this is something we talk about a lot, like when does a work of fiction change details about our current world that are like undesirable versus when does it keep them the same in order to eliminate them, you know, like his fiction, a lamp lighting the way or is it a mere showing us the problems in our current world and I think that this is a really great moment where it's the mirror and I think it will open up a lot of people's eyes to this problem that you know, isn't spoken about, which is the treatment of mental health in the military and, and many other places where it becomes the barrier to entry that you mentioned.

Amanda: 19:44 So moving on from that, a lot of this book is chase scenes, right? You felt that like we're getting chased off to space station and getting chased off the colonies, all these kinds of things, which was kind of exhausting I thought. What did you think of that?

Danielle: 19:57 Yeah, I mean it definitely was exhausting and like, I dunno, I guess I have a desire to always like get to know the world and the chase scenes made it difficult. The changing of ships.

Amanda: 20:12 Yeah.

Danielle: 20:13 Did the ships feel like ships to you?

Amanda: 20:15 I mean it happened so fast, you know

Danielle: 20:17 Its like it's like a blink of an eye.

Amanda: 20:18 Yeah.

Danielle: 20:19 So yeah, in regards to that, like pacing was too fast for me.

Amanda: 20:24 Especially at the end whenever they were going for like the final battle on space station to destroy the death ray or whatever, like I had to go back because I didn't realize they had left the ship.

Danielle: 20:35 Me too.

Amanda: 20:37 So that was, that was difficult and I really, I thought it was kind of too bad that that's how the book was pace because I really enjoyed the scenes with Malik so much. Malik was Nax's older brother and he really had this like long suffering older brother vibe like dad and I really enjoyed it and I liked how much it caught Nax flat footed. I liked Malik getting to know this new Nax that he had known for two years.

Danielle: 21:05 Yeah

Amanda: 21:06 I just really liked their whole like transitioned into a new kind of sibling relationship. I wish we had gotten a lot more of that.

Danielle: 21:12 Yeah, I really liked the scenes on Airihla, where Asra from like I wanted to know more about that place. I wanted to know more about their tech. Like they had this face changing technology, which was really interesting. I guess I just wanted more of like any given part.

Amanda: 21:31 It's a very breathless book.

- Danielle: 21:33 That's an excellent way to describe it. So you know, if you're a person that likes super fast paced things worth scenery changes all the time, like this is your book. One of the things that I really struggled with in regards to Malik was so Nax was really nervous to see his brother again didn't want it to happen, felt like there was this unbridgeable rift between them and it ended up just being that next was driving and had a car accident with the car, like come on.
- Amanda: 22:04 I thought that was okay because like the car accident happened when he was 15, 15 year olds catastrophize.
- Danielle: 22:10 Like okay. I guess that that's true. Like Malik ended up saying like, I wanted to give you space to like become your own person, but like he also just left his little brother to think that he had been abandoned and was angry at him, you know, like, that was unfortunate.
- Amanda: 22:27 But I also thought that was just how Nax interpreting it. Like, I thought that was just like, I thought the Nax was being Harry Potter in Order of the Phoenix.
- Danielle: 22:34 Where he's all caps all the time.
- Amanda: 22:38 He's all caps all the time. He says that his friends aren't looking at him and his friends are like, well, you weren't looking at us. Like that's, that's what I thought it was. I thought it was just like Nax thought that his brother had been in him in this way and his brother was just like, I guess he doesn't want to talk to me. I guess I'll go to the academy now. That's how I took it.
- Danielle: 22:56 I don't know, I just thought it would be a bigger deal. I thought that it would be different. I would have preferred just some straight up direct communication.
- Amanda: 23:05 Well, yeah, but..
- Danielle: 23:06 Direct communication avoids conflict and literature thrives on conflict

Amanda: 23:12 and also it just wasn't Nax at the time he was 15, he just gotten into a car accident. His ego was bruised.

Danielle: 23:18 Oh, poor little pilot ego

Amanda: 23:21 I know pilot egos are very fragile.

Danielle: 23:25 So overall we thought that this book was a fast paced, quick, accessible read set in the near future and would appeal to a lot of reluctant readers.

Danielle: 23:35 That's our show for today. Friends, you can find us on Instagram and Twitter at YA Cafe Podcasts. We'd love to hear from you and if you're enjoying the show, please consider us a review. Happy reading. \*Music