

**Title: *Agnes at the End of the World***  
**Author: Kelly McWilliams**  
**Genre: Dystopian/Science Fiction**

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Yujay A., 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Date Reviewed: May 30, 2021**

*Agnes at the End of the World* takes place in Red Creek, a small ranch town surrounded by woods. Agnes, the main character, is a 16-year old girl who has been living in Red Creek her entire life. She lives with her multiple siblings, including her twin sister, her father, and depressed mother. However, Agnes, and the other residents of Red Creek do not know that they are living in a cult. The terrifying leader of the cult, Jacob Rollins, is known as The Prophet. The Prophet keeps an iron grip over Red Creek, and preaches his twisted understanding of the bible. Red Creek is very patriarchal, as the men have more freedom, while the women must follow a strict set of rules and do all the work in Red Creek. Additionally, the men practice polygamy and take multiple wives at a time. The Prophet preaches of the end times, where those outside Red Creek will face the wrath of God while the Prophet's people descend into the underground temple. There is no internet or phone service in Red Creek and the inhabitants have no knowledge of the outside world besides what the Prophet tells them. The Prophet has completely brainwashed the residents of Red Creek and there is almost no resistance to his rule. However, Agnes breaks the rules of Red Creek to get insulin for her baby brother Ezekiel, who has diabetes. She meets an "Outsider" nurse and her son Danny to retrieve the insulin every week. One day, when Agnes goes to receive the insulin cooler, Danny explains to her that there is a deadly pandemic which puts humans and animals into a zombie-like state. He explains that it will be very difficult to give her the insulin and that she should consider escaping. The next day, Agnes is informed by her father that she will be married, which means she will not be able to take care of Ezekiel anymore. The first virus creature enters Red Creek, and the Prophet announces that they will begin to enter the underground Temple as the end times are here. Agnes, due to her sister and Danny's help, is able to escape with Ezekiel right before they descend into the Underground Temple. She finds that the outside world is in a worse state than she thought, with much of the world dying to the virus. Agnes must save her family, survive the outside world, and keep Ezekiel alive, all before the mad Prophet kills them all. Along the way she discovers the dark history of Red Creek, and the powers she has which will save them all.

*Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?*

The plot definitely kept me interested, as there were a ton of actions and many different developing aspects of the story. There was a lot of suspense throughout the book.

*Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?*

The pace of the book was just right, as it left enough time to understand everything happening while not being too slow and boring.

*What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?*

This book is appropriate for grade levels 9 and up because it has some strong language and violence, and many detailed gruesome scenes.

*What type of reader would you recommend this book to?*

I would recommend this book to anybody looking for a good dystopian or science fiction novel. Anybody who wants to read an extremely suspenseful and entertaining novel should definitely read this book.

*What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?*

The point of view switches between different character's perspectives throughout the novel.

I would rate *Agnes at the End of the World* **5 stars** because it was very captivating and suspenseful. There was a good amount of humor and lighter moments to balance the seriousness of the plot. The pace was perfect and there was a lot of action. All in all, I would definitely recommend this novel to anyone looking for a good fiction book.

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Oliver W. 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Date Reviewed: October 31, 2021**

Agnes lives in the town of Red Creek, Arizona, which is led by a prophet with stringent religious beliefs. She is incredibly hard-working and dutiful and cares for her family deeply. Anybody outside of Red Creek is known as an "Outsider" to the people of the town. Red Creek is considered to be a cult by the outside world, as all medicine and "unfaithful" art forms are banned, and the people blindly follow the direction of their prophet Jacob Rollins without question. Women also have few rights, and they must listen to their "Patriarchs," or heads of the family, with obedience. Agnes has always been especially "faithful," but she secretly meets with an Outsider named Matilda monthly to get insulin because her brother Ezekiel has diabetes. However, when Matilda's son Danny comes one day, the things he says contradict everything she's been told her entire life, and Agnes becomes determined to escape Red Creek even though she is told that a devastating pandemic, known as Petra, has upended life Outside. The pandemic is viewed by the prophet as God's way of punishing the Outsiders for their sinful acts. One day, the prophet brings into the church an infected dog and lets it loose, biting and infecting several people. Then, the prophet says that everyone must descend into the Underground Temple, which was built to allow the people of Red Creek to survive the "Rapture," and Agnes knows this is a death sentence to everyone who goes in. Agnes escapes with Ezekiel after her sister Beth causes a distraction, and she goes to meet Matilda and Danny on the Outside. Agnes starts to hear the world humming from inside of her, and she believes that this is God talking to her, and calls it the prayer space. As God starts to speak with her, Agnes realizes that she was chosen to be God's prophet, and she sets out to cure the world of Petra.

*Did the plot keep you interested?*

In the beginning, the plot kept me interested as Agnes' character developed and new developments were happening. However, later in the book, I wasn't a fan of how the plot turned and I started to lose interest.

*Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?*

The pace of the book was ok. There was plenty of action throughout the book to keep the reader engaged, but I thought a little too much of the book was of Agnes' internal musings about God and the prayer space.

*What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?*

I think this book would be appropriate for readers in grades 8 and up. There is occasional profanity, and some descriptions of infected animals and people can be heavy.

***What type of reader would you recommend this book to?***

I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy books about cults and what happens when a character who has been blocked off from the world for much of their lives suddenly finds out how expansive the world truly is. This book is certainly not for everyone, but people who enjoy science fiction books with some religious aspects might enjoy it.

***What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?***

I think it would be helpful for teens to know that this book is told from the perspectives of both Agnes and her sister Beth at different points throughout the story.

I would rate this book: *2 stars - I did not like this book but somebody else might.* The exposition and much of the rising action of this book are rich and quite thought-provoking to read, as the reader watches Agnes' internal conflict play out. However, as the author starts to expand the range of topics the book covers and plays into deeper spiritual aspects and a futile attempt at romance, some readers may lose interest in the plot, view certain characters as underdeveloped, or feel confused about what exactly is the message the author is trying to convey. *Agnes at the End of the World* starts out as a rich and appealing book with dynamic characters and an electrifying plot, but readers may feel underwhelmed near the end as the book falls apart.