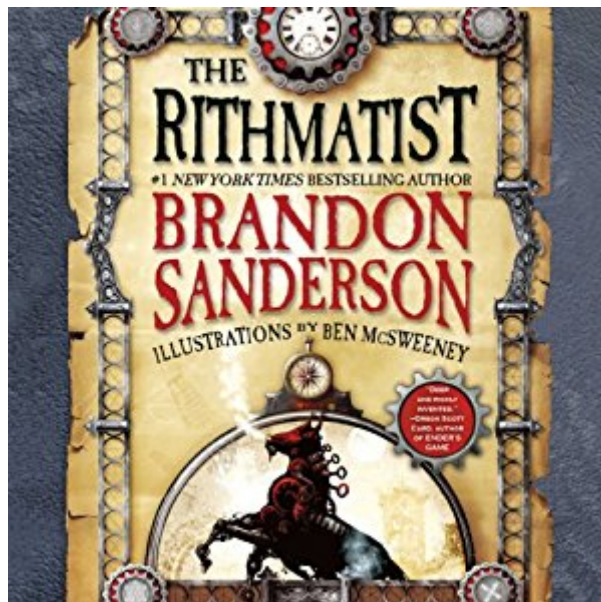


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# The Rithmatist



## Synopsis

Audie Award Finalist, Fantasy, 2014 From number-one New York Times best-selling author Brandon Sanderson: his debut novel for the young adult audience. More than anything, Joel wants to be a Rithmatist. Chosen by the Master in a mysterious inception ceremony, Rithmatists have the power to infuse life into two-dimensional figures known as Chalklings. Rithmatists are humanity's only defense against the Wild Chalklings - merciless creatures that leave mangled corpses in their wake. Having nearly overrun the territory of Nebraska, the Wild Chalklings now threaten all of the American Isles. As the son of a lowly chalkmaker at Armedius Academy, Joel can only watch as Rithmatist students study the magical art that he would do anything to practice. Then students start disappearing - kidnapped from their rooms at night, leaving trails of blood. Assigned to help the professor who is investigating the crimes, Joel and his friend Melody find themselves on the trail of an unexpected discovery - one that will change Rithmatics - and their world - forever. Best-selling author Brandon Sanderson brings his unique brand of epic storytelling to the teen audience with an engrossing tale of danger and suspense - the first of a series. With his trademark skills in world-building, Sanderson has created a magic system that is so inventive and detailed that listeners who appreciate games of strategy and tactics just may want to bring Rithmatics to life in our world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

First off, if you are a Sanderson fan, keep in mind that this is written for teens, so do not expect

anything along the lines of his other books. This is NOT like Mistborn or his other works! So if you are looking for an epic novel in The Rithmatist, skip it and be patient for Sanderson's next work. As the parent who was always on the lookout for good books, I appreciated reviews that helped me choose what to order. This is written with an eye to helping other parents. No spoilers. The Rithmatist is about a young man, Joel, who is attending an exclusive school that trains both Rithmatist and non-Rithmatist students. Rithmatists have the ability to bring chalk drawings, called chalkings, to life, and to use symbols in chalk for defensive and offensive purposes. Joel is not a Rithmatist, although he yearns to be one and is trying to learn as much about the subject as possible. His father was a chalkmaker, but died 8 years earlier, and his mother works as a cleaning woman at night while Joel attends the school on a scholarship. He is a very smart, but only applies himself to those subjects that interest him. When Rithmatist students begin disappearing, Joel is assigned as a summerschool aide to a Rithmatist professor, and he becomes involved in the professor's investigation, along with another Rithmatist student, Melody. From a parent's point of view, this is a good choice. It has no foul language or sexual situations of any sort. There is some violence, but it is generally not seen as it happens 'off stage.' And, the violence is of an otherworldly type and not something a child could ever experience or likely to cause nightmares. I liked the way that Sanderson put moral lessons in the book, although it is not preachy at all. It is very positive for young people, and provides good opportunities for parents to discuss several issues with their children. For example, at one point a professor points out to the young hero, who has failed at least one class a year due to lack of interest in the subject, that "school is about learning to learn. If you don't practice studying things you don't like, then you'll have a very hard time in life." The issue of bullying is touched on, as is the feelings of being left out of social activities and the popular cliques. Joel makes several discoveries about himself, and we see characters, child and adult, gaining confidence in themselves. My favorite passage is when the older professor encourages Joel to consider the man he wishes to become, and warns of what to avoid along the path of life. The characters are done very well, but I expected this from the author who wrote the Mistborn series, one of the very best books/series I have ever read. The major characters have distinct voices and traits, and act according to how you would expect, based on those traits- nothing odd or out of character. I think young readers could readily identify with Joel, although Melody is rather whiny and spoiled, and she is very close to being annoying. She does, however, grow and change. The adults are adults, and are not portrayed as being inept or stupid- something that bothers me, whether it be in literature, movies, or TV. It is a YA book, so of course the hero saves the day. But, the younger characters show respect for the adults and look to them for guidance. Joel loves his mother and

wishes a better life for her, and he comes to realize the sacrifices she is making. A male is the hero and focus of the story, but I think both boys and girls will enjoy the book. Melody is not very likable at first, but, as I mentioned, she does grow and gain confidence as the story goes on. So, there are good role models for both female and male young readers to identify with, particularly since the characters are not perfect. The magic system is interesting, and Sanderson includes quite a bit of explanation, mainly in the form of drawings and notations at the beginning of every chapter. There are also small drawings scattered throughout the text, something readers of any age will certainly enjoy. It is based on chalk drawings, and I'm not sure how a 2D drawing is supposed to be able to injure a person, but this is fantasy, so you just have to ignore that little problem. The setting is an alternate version of our own world, with the United Isles of America, and other half-way recognizable countries and states. There are some names from history mentioned, too, which adds to the alternate history feel of the story. There's enough history of the conflict and crisis with the wild chalkings for the reader to understand the pressure on the Rithmatists, but the story does not dwell on it. There are religious elements in the story, and although I found it confusing, religion did not play a large role. Perhaps it will be more important in the sequel. At any rate, you can read and enjoy the book without giving any thought to the religious part. It is a steam punk world (check out the horse on the cover!) and I wish more had been made of it since Sanderson made a very interesting one, indeed. No gas-powered vehicles- everything works by coiled springs wound tightly, even the mechanical crabs scuttling about clipping grass. If there's a sequel, I'm hoping there will be more of the technology. Other than that, this could take place at any boarding school, be it in a fantasy world or ours- it will seem familiar and not overly strange to any reader. The story is interesting, but if you are looking for a story with lots of action and excitement you might be disappointed. It is slow during the first half of the book. Much time is spent on how Joel fervently desires to be a Rithmatist, how his situation is a sad one, and how there is a separation amongst the students. I thought this should have been covered in much less space. There are the disappearances, eventually, but they are off-stage. As I read I kept thinking that younger readers might grow bored. It does get better, but it takes a while. The ending is exciting, and there is a nice setup for a sequel. Even so, this book can stand alone since it does have a problem to be solved and it is wrapped up well. Targeted for ages 13 and up, I think even younger children could read this without difficulty, if they did not get bored when the story drags a bit and quit. Teens (and adults) who enjoy a more thoughtful fantasy will enjoy it, too.

A review by an anonymous jr high boy (my son) " I have never had a book suck me in this

much!!! I have read Harry Potter, Percy Jackson, Rangers apprentice and Paper Cowboy, all which do not compare to this book! I just finished Rangers Apprentice, Tournament at Gorlan and thought "Great. I don't have the sequel so I guess I'll try that book mom suggested." Then about ten pages in, I couldn't take my eyes out of the book. The plot is a murder mystery with a twist. You get thrown into this new world with crazy things and you want to find out more so you keep on reading. I loved the book so much because it was excitement from one end of the cover to the other, twists, secrets and answers sucking you deeper and deeper into the book. It was a great fun read unless you have something important to do that day. It makes you want a sequel, and I hope Brandon Sanderson doesn't keep me waiting too long!"My comments - great clean book (no swearing or sex stuff); fast reading; unique plot - I felt both the main characters were strong and well-written! Can't wait to read the sequel myself =)

Sanderson is a shifty devil, and that's the only "spoiler" I'll include here. I was very much like Joel in high school and college; kind of shiftless, aimless, and couldn't see where it all lead. Also like Joel, I got a swift kick in the pants just barely in time to turn things around. My swift kick and turn around were no where near as traumatic and exciting as Joel's! I am a fan of a couple of Brandon Sanderson's series and was happy to stumble across a book I was not familiar with. I am also a fan of good YA science fiction and fantasy even though I am old enough to have a teenager who is the target market for it. In this day and age it is difficult to come up with a "magic" system that hasn't been done countless times before without it being something a little ridiculous. Sanderson has done it several times in his career quite successfully. The character definition isn't deep or lengthy, which is good in a YA fantasy as most teens don't want to spend the time on the minute details developing a fully fleshed out character description. This doesn't mean his characters are shallow or ill-defined. On the contrary, you get the feeling that they are complete characters, it's just not spelled out for you and you get to learn about them as the story progresses, just like you learn about people in real life. Sanderson has not introduced an entire army of characters just to confuse the plot. He is like a good stage magician, he tricks you in plain sight while you are carefully watching his hands move the cards. This biggest disappointment for me is that I discovered this book before he had written several sequels so I could read them all at once. Now I'll have to wait impatiently for the next one. At least "Shadows of Self" was just released so I can read some new Sanderson :-)

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