



Elfangor's Secret

K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate

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The Animorphs are given the power to pursue eighteen-year-old Henry-- a human Controller who has discovered Elfangor's Time Matrix--through time, but one Animorph must pay for this power with his life.

Elfangor's Secret Details

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From Reader Review Elfangor's Secret for online ebook

Trinity Bernhardt says

I first read the Animorphs series in 5th grade and I loved it. I felt Applegate had managed to write an easy to read book about alien invasion and kid heroes, but still was able to touch on deeper human truths. These kids don't just win and have fun. They are soldiers and they carry that cost with them.

Elfangor's Secret is the 3rd Megamorph special. These books go beyond the usual day to day battle and usually invite more involvement of the other alien species, as well as revealing more information about Elfangor and the other Andalites. This one follows the consequences of Elfangor's earlier time on Earth and his finding and hiding of the Time Matrix. The Time Matrix allows the user to travel anywhere they can think of throughout time. Now a disgraced yeerk, Visser Four, has his hands on it and plans to turn the world into a horribly cruel place; complete with slavery, genocide, and reeducation camps; so that it is easier for the yeerks to win and he can regain power. The two powerful species known as the Crayak and the Ellimist have decided this cannot be and so they offer the Animorphs a deal. They will allow them to follow Visser Four in order to stop him, but one of them must die. Marco and Cassie realize immediately that between the hatred the Crayak has for Jake and Jake's own sense of responsibility there is little doubt his life is forfeit. How can they sacrifice the world for him though? The Animorphs must take on a difficult journey through time to save the world, all while hoping they can find a way to save Jake too...

The book starts with a terrible choice. It's not all that different from the choices they often have to make though. Questions of humanity, loyalty, love, and other dilemmas fill these books. Get they can be read at a young reading level and manage to stay as appropriate as possible for books on war. I would definitely let my kid read these, in fact I would probably make them read them with me, just for the excuse of reading them again!

Jenny Clark says

"Cassie the killer with a conscience. Kill 'em, then cry over 'em. That's our Cassie"

"You? A violence-prone sociopath like you, Rachel?"

"War is obscene, the worst thing humans do. But warriors, the individual men, are the very best of humanity. Not because they're willing to kill. But because they're willing to risk death, to sacrifice themselves for others"

Man, this one raised the bar... It's a time travel one, so despite it all the status quo is not changed, but really the time matrix is kept from falling to the yeerks so yea...
Just all the wars and their reactions to them... damn....

Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says

Brought to you by The Moonlight Library!

The Animorphs have been issued a challenge: stop Visser Four messing with Earth's history using the Time Matrix, or else America will never be and instead everyone is racist and Cassie has a slave and Tobias is in a relationship with Melissa Chapman because Rachel is being re-educated for being awesome. I mean a wild, reckless female in a sexist world. The Animorphs will string along on Visser Four's time hop and attempt to stop him, but at a price: one of the Animorphs must die.

This is by far the best Megamorphs so far. The time jumping through history can be a little confusing if you're not American and don't know any American history, because the whole point of Visser Four's meddling is to make America weaker and therefore easier to conquer. So the Animorphs follow him through time as he attempts (and sometimes succeeds) to screw up the battle of Trafalgar, World War II, the crossing of the Delaware, and some other historical events I don't really know much about.

That being said, it's a hugely enjoyable novel. Applegate handed over her series to ghost writers a couple of books ago and from then on only wrote a handful – a few of the regular series, the Megamorphs, and the Chronicles. Applegate knows her characters better than anyone, and this novel is particularly poignant because each Animorph takes a turn to do something particularly heinous and immoral – murder, and mostly of innocents. It's easy to pass it by with 'ah, they're time travelling, it doesn't matter' like I did when I was a kid, but on this re-read, as an adult, it was far more powerful. I understand the consequences and characterisation better.

The only annoying thing is that after each time hop the Animorphs have to figure out where they are. You know how sometimes each morphing description and each introduction to the books in the regular series (Hi, my name is so-and-so, and here's the deal; morphing, Yeerks, save the world blah blah blah) can get repetitive and tedious? Well, so did the time hops. Especially when the Animorphs don't know enough about their history to be certain where they are or what's going on. It's confusing to the reader because it's confusing to the narrators.

Apart from that, it's a hugely enjoyable novel, and even though because of how it's laid out (time travel, yo) it really doesn't impact on the regular series, it's really worth the read.

Odhran says

This is the point where Animorphs goes from "we are the brave hero kids fighting the aliens" to "war is hell", and I love it. Main characters die (though it's time travel, so not for good.) Main characters kill. It really feels like the books have taken a level in grim.

Kim Dyer says

Megamorphs was another example of why time travel plots are not Applegate's strongest suit. The story was fast paced and exciting in places, but felt ultimately pointless. The Animorphs are shunted to a handful of fairly random points in history as they try and stop Visser Four from preventing America from forming, thus giving the Yeerks an easier time taking over (though how he thinks that this will stop intervention by "Andalite Bandits" is beyond me) and make himself the new Visser Three (again, not sure how this will work as he's CHANGING HUMAN HISTORY, and Visser Three received his position before the invasion of Earth, but there you go).

What I did rather like was the comparison of the Yeerk invasion to other wars in history, including World

War II, Agincourt and the Battle of Trafalgar which allowed the Animorphs to reflect on their experience and realise that humans had both the capacity for bravery and honour, but also the ability to behave worse than the Yeerks ever could. I also felt that the end carried some good "Cassie" development - her bloodless solution was both inspired and shockingly nasty.

As with the other Animorphs books, there are far too many narrators in this story. I think this has been the worst for this so far as there really was no need to switch between them as the Animorphs were never split up. Additionally, I found it hard to tell who was narrating at time as (other than Ax) their voices sounded exactly the same.

Ultimately, this was a rather pointless addition the series. Visser Four's motives are pretty weak and it's never revealed how he came across the Time Matrix. The Animorphs never really feel like they're in danger because the Crayak's interference makes them functionally immortal. Also, as with *The Forgotten*, the resolution of the plot essentially erases the entire story from the timeline which makes it feel all the more pointless.

Unfortunately, not one of the better books in the series, which is kind of a shame as it followed on the heels of the excellent *The Sickness*.

JonSnow says

Quite entertaining overall, with one glaring flaw, language. without spoiling anything I will say, 1400s English would be incomprehensible to anyone... so technically, same goes for other languages. I guess for plot simplicity it makes sense to ignore that fact, but it was rather glaring, considering I had to actually study Chaucer in its original writing from the 1300s as part of my honors English degree (not a fun course sadly... turns out English was very different back then, to say the least).

This issue aside, I'm sure I could point to little things here or there. But the book was fast paced. The combat scenes were well written all around and easily visualized as I read.

I will say... if I'd gone through a tenth of what the Animorphs have, I'd probably be a trainwreck of emotional trauma with every symptom of PTSD and then some.

Alan Gilfoy says

I knew the story of Elfangor and the Time Matrix, so I brushed off the prologue at first. Apparently Elfangor can be too hard on himself, just like his younger brother.

The first time I knew something was up was when Tobias referred to his girlfriend as Melissa. Chapman? That was otherwise a pretty normal Tobias intro. I thought the name was an author mistake until I noticed many other differences. I am a fan of alternate history, so I figured I was going to like this book.

Disaffected veterans do make sense as a source of voluntary hosts, like how *The Sharing* works in general. Yes, some would be in positions of power, military or civilian. Also, their bodies and knowledge might make them particularly useful hosts.

Apparently there's still slavery. Is it racial at all? Cassie's apparently free, but the society is suspicious of

blacks and Jews. It's interesting that a mild slave owner is still a radical in this world. There's also an imperialist adventure in Brazil. Triple S is clearly some sort of secret police. Drode made clear how much other nasty stuff was going on. Yes, a society like that would have no room for girls like Rachel.

I thought they ended up at Agincourt, made clear when the French knight said 1415 and the English king was Henry V. I wonder what its grand significance is; it seems important mainly to the two countries involved. Jake is right, the French had trouble getting all their troops into the actual battlefield. They also had trouble operating in the mud compared to the unmounted lightly armored English infantry. In general, this seems to get the facts of the battle right as far as I know them.

Marco had a great sarcastic summary of the St. Crispin's Day speech. (That holiday may explain the extra masses) Comparing that to Animorph pep talks seemed like a universality of war point. Speaking of which, Cassie had a good point that it doesn't compare favorably to the glorious stories.

A different language (or dialect of the same language), being thought of spies or triggering superstition, are all problems with time travel, so I'm glad that came up. The horrible condition of bodies and clothes, even for kings, is a realistic part of the past. Henry's knights being compared to Mafiosi seemed like a realistic hole in the ideas of chivalry. Ax had a great line about how the Yeerks would have to go elsewhere because these people already have enough parasites.

I promptly recognized the Battle of Trenton, Washington's crossing of the Delaware, was their next stop. This does make sense as one of the major turning points of the American Revolutionary War. The Hessians were German mercenaries rather than a country directly involved in the conflict, which helps explain Jake's confusion. Assassinating George Washington makes sense since Visser Four tried to kill Henry V last time. KAA was right that George Washington didn't dramatically stand up in the boat. She does seem to be on a historical accuracy theme throughout the book.

It makes sense that Visser Four would warn the Hessians, as they had been caught unaware in the real battle. Intel like that seems like a great opportunity for manipulating the past. Maybe he'll tell Hitler the Allies are landing at Normandy, not Calais (I was right). Einstein being somewhere besides Princeton in 1934 makes the point of subsequent history developing differently.

I correctly guessed that the sea setting was Trafalgar - yay me. Like Agincourt, it seems like a European internal issue rather than something critical to the whole world. Navies of that era did have very young midshipmen, so the 13 year old was another good point of historical accuracy. The Animorphs being perceived as stowaways makes sense in-character. I thought the sailors will regret hitting on Rachel. The officer basically saying 'get back to work' made sense to avoid that problem.

Nelson was killed anyway; that seems like another mistake on Visser Four's part in addition to a ship providing limited room to work in.

Yes, a failed revolution would be classified as a rebellion.

How much Jake's death hurts Cassie is a twisted version of shipping them. It's interesting to see the dolphin mind as a coping mechanism. Rachel's death didn't seem to have time to sink in. I figured out Rachel was resurrected since Jake's death had already paid Crayak's price. Yay me.

It seems they temporarily appeared at a version of Gettysburg just before Pickett's Charge. It was probably hot because that battle was in July.

Marco has a great point about how death being sudden adds to the horrors of these real wars.

It's all too understandable why Ax's superiority complex kicked in - senseless human-on-human wars, let alone the Holocaust. (I give KAA credit for naming Roma, gays and disabled as additional victims. I would've also mentioned Soviet POWs and other Eastern Europeans) I wonder if Ax has a rosy view of Andalite history, and/or such things are far enough in their past that it doesn't come up as much.

There was a good point about leaving things the way they were instead of trying to improve them. That seems to be a common moral of time travel stories.

Overall, this book did great with the alternate history genre - using fantastic elements to explore real history, and showing the importance of an event by showing what happens if it transpired differently. KAA did well considering the points of divergence she used.

Claire says

Understandably, it's difficult to make a believable, engaging scifi novel based so heavily on time travel, so this book was a bit cheesier than usual. However, the character development and harsh moral decisions more than make up for it. You see a much darker side of each of the Animorphs as they appear in famous moments in human history. *SPOILERS* Ax becomes caught up in the senseless violence of human battles, then learns of the Holocaust and becomes thoroughly disgusted with humanity. Cassie feels cowardice and pure rage. Tobias becomes consumed with vengeance. Rachel even manages to surprise by dropping her usual gung-ho attitude and becoming cold and distant. Marco casually murders a Yeerk by tossing it into a fire, calmly saying that Kandrona starvation would be even worse. In an alternate reality, Jake is an arrogant racist, which is especially ironic considering in their normal reality, he loves Cassie, who is African-American. Each character shows a new dark side. Sometimes it's really shocking to believe these novels were written for young adults...

"Men stood up in the face of the enemy and were massacred. Arrows found throats. Swords found vulnerable flesh. Cannons ripped away limbs. Bullets entered organs by neat, round holes and came out in a shredded mess. Men died never having the chance to resist, to fight, to run, to cry out, to prepare, to wonder. One second they were scared and brave and alive. The next second they were dead."

Once again, Applegate makes a chillingly correct observation on the nature of war and its effects on young people. This one is haunting.

Stephanie says

More playing with time in a Megamorphs book! – but then, isn't that what usually happens, excepting the first Megamorphs book? It's a good diversion from the main story, and one that can just as easily have happened as not have happened. Though in this case, the big things that stick out are who ends up dying as part of Drode's deal, how the rest who survive handle it, and that we finally get some solid opinions and narration out of Ax in regards to his view of humans in general. Oh, and that the Animorphs get a taste of what a full-out war battle is like. But for those things alone, and for random "Yay we get to experience and mess with history time!" (/sarcasm), this book would otherwise be rather forgettable. While reading it, I couldn't help but feel like I was wasting time since I knew that considering Crayak (and likely, the Ellimist – he is Crayak's counterweight, after all) were involved, plus the usage of the Time Matrix which could just as easily rewrite history as it could undo everything which was rewritten, that there would not likely be much that would come out of this in furthering the Animorphs vs Yeerks fight. Though I am very curious to know

if Jake gets to keep his year 1415 warhorse morph...

Also, I think a better title for this book would be “The Time Matrix” because let’s face it, it’s the Time Matrix which drives this story more than “Elfangor’s Secret” that he hid the Time Matrix on Earth. And why does the summary on Goodreads have Visser Four’s human name as Henry, and that he’s eighteen years old? It’s clear from the beginning that his human name is John Berryman, and at the end it is very clear that he is closer to 25 than 18.

And I was going to rewrite history?

Quotes and comments:

“Why wasn’t I even in the group?” Rachel demanded [of the Drode].

“You? A violence-prone sociopath like you, Rachel?” the Drode said with a happy laugh. “You were in a reeducation camp. This world has little room for bold, aggressive females. You were being taught your place.”

“Say what? My *what*?”

[...] “My *place*?” Rachel muttered, not quite believing the word. No one teaches me my *place*.” – page 22-23 – Ouch, that is a painful (yet, I am reluctant to say, fairly accurate) description of Rachel.

I [Marco] couldn’t hear everything he said, but the basic idea was, “Men, we’re outnumbered, but we’re here for a good reason, which is that I want to be king of France, so let’s go kick some French butt and we’ll all be mighty pleased with ourselves on the off-chance that we actually survive.

Basically the same kind of heroic nonsense we Animorphs tell ourselves before we go into battle. – page 48-49 – So the Animorphs are following in tried-and-true footsteps before they dive into battle.

/Now where do you go, Yeerk?/ I [Rachel] asked him.

“Get away!” he cried in a shrill voice.

/I don’t think so,/ I said. /Your personal history ends right here, right now./

“No! Let me live and...and...the Time Matrix! You know you want it!”

/Where is it?/

“You’ll never find it without me!” he said.

I laughed. /It’s a ship. It’s only so big. I’ll find it./

“You can’t kill me, Andalite,” he begged.

/Oh, but I can,/ I said. /You killed someone I love./ -- page 124-125 – This is one of the few times we get Rachel voicing her relationship with Jake, as cousins. So often, their relationship is more often defined by their roles in the Animorphs, with Jake as leader and Rachel as his fighter.

I [Cassie] did it all on automatic. Rachel! I should have been there for her. I had run away, nursing my wounds. I’d abandoned Rachel when she needed me. – page 137 – So often it seems like the personal friendships between Animorphs are superseded by their relationships in battle-formation, so it’s good to see Cassie showing us how important her friendship with Rachel still is. This is also a bad wake-up call for Cassie, the “kill ‘em then cry over ‘em” member of the Animorphs. I think this is also what prompts her to take the final action with Visser Four’s host at the end of the story. She feels she failed the ones closest to her, the ones she cares the most about, and so she must avenge them, and make up for her shortfalls.

Page 138-139 – The university student with a Southern accent calls Cassie a word she won’t repeat and which felt like he had slapped her. I doubt I knew what this word was at 10 years old, but now I have a pretty good guess. Especially since the student is so obviously racist.

This small battle was all mine. I didn’t want any help.

“You don’t like black people, Mr. Davis?” I said pleasantly. “No problem. I can turn white. Watch me.” –

page 140 – Admittedly my first thought was that she was going to morph into Rachel. But I much prefer what she actually morphs – a polar bear.

“Really,” Rachel said. “What are you doing? Stealing my act?”

“Rachel!” Tobias yelled. And a millisecond later he has spun around, grabbed her, and kissed her. – page 142 – YES! Finally, they kiss too! (And I’m glad Tobias hasn’t forgotten how kissing works, despite being a hawk...). (view spoiler)

Chelsea Gouin says

Applegate picked up the pen once again for the next Megamorphs. I'm a bit confused on the Elfangor timeline at this point...but the rest of everything was pretty cool. Visser 4 has found the Time Matrix that Elfangor had hidden and is using it to change history so the Yerks will have an easier time taking over Earth. The book opens up on the alternate reality with Jake being a mistrusting jerk and Tobias being in love with Melissa Chapman and Rachel in some reprogramming for being to fierce. The rest of the book is on the gang running through time and historical events trying to figure out how the events actually happened in order to right them. Of course since it's time travel, it all works out and nothing too significant happens plot wise. However, as for their characterizations this really pushed the envelope for a children's book with the Animorphs facing a real and brutal death of a friend. They experience war at the front lines and it does seem to shake them all more so than any of their previous adventures have. I'm still not sold on these Megamorphs novels but it was an enjoyable addition to the series.

Jen says

I'm always really wary of time-travel books (which, really is what every Megamorph is) because there's always some catch that neatly cleans everything up (yup, there's that here, and it's so simple I can't believe it would work or that Crayak would let himself be cheated out of his price like that).

I also have mixed feelings about this as a history buff in general and a medievalist in particular. It feels like a lot of research was done for this, which is awesome, but it does carry that aspect of America being the center of the universe, which just isn't true. History is way more complex than that.

The things I really did applaud in this, though, were that the kids often had no idea what was going on--spot on in terms of being realistic, because most kids totally aren't paying attention to middle school history. They know the handful of things that interest them and completely forget the rest--yep, I know that attitude quite well. So their lack of knowing what was "supposed" to happen added some reality to the plot. I also appreciated that, because the former visser (rightly) assumed that the most change could be made by mucking about with wars, the kids got to see again that war is absolutely rough. The death in the Delaware crossing was fantastic in its suddenness and flatness. We often glorify war and its heroism and it's not like that at all. Get up on your novella soapbox and preach it, Applegate; war is ugly and brutal and even if you have to fight it to save something totally worth saving, it's still a direct act of violence against another.

Ax has the opportunity to offer the alien's horror at the sins of mankind, which he does thankfully without arrogance. Applegate writes that beautifully, too, in terms of his reaction being so covered in shock that judgment will be a minute behind.

And I heart Marco long time.

But the little moments of writing greatness just couldn't save the plot. And I admit wholeheartedly that I'm mad that Jake and Cassie's kiss got fanfare when it finally happened, but there was no commentary at all for Tobias and Rachel. C'mon, man, I know you're tired and scared but there should be at least a quip from Marco or something. This has been a long time coming.

Samantha Trillium ? says

I don't think I read this one when I was younger?? I don't remember this one at all...I have to say that the title did let me down a bit... i thought this would be more backstory into Elfangor's life as a human or maybe when Tobias was born....

In this installment we are dealing with the time matrix again, and I have to warn you, if you are really picky about your time travel storylines adding up then just skip this one. It was all over the place, and it was just a hot mess.

Some good things happen in this installment though: I can definitely start to see the gang grow up. This was the grittiest battle for them yet, and ironically it wasn't even Yeerks they were fighting: it was their own kind. I wish we had more Ax chapters to see how his interpretation of human nature took shape; studying them up close for months and then seeing what we were like hundreds of years ago. It would have been interesting.

I didn't realise how much I really loved Jake until I read that (view spoiler)

All in all, a nice break from the Yeerk war, but not my favourite Animorph tail. (See what I did there??)

Jackie Krasuski says

I do not know how I ever would have survived junior high without this fantastic science fiction series. Maybe the story quality went down as the book numbers got higher, but the idea that aliens were invading our planet secretly... it was almost good enough for a young teenager to believe.

The Library Ladies says

(Full review here at the thelibraryladies.com.)

Narrator: Everyone!

Plot: What I remembered from this book:

1. Tobias/Rachel kiss
2. Wibbly wobbly, timey wimey stuff

The story starts out in the barn with our favorite team. But wait, is it our favorite team? Rachel's not there, and instead Melissa is a member of the team. Jake is a burgeoning sociopath who is a hair's breath away from turning in Cassie for being sympathetic towards her...slaves? And Ax's opinion's don't matter. He's just some dirty alien, anyways. The entire unpleasant scene is suddenly interrupted by the Drode. Everyone is back to themselves, and Rachel is once again there (turns out that in the other timeline she had been sent to some type of reform camp for being too aggressive for a woman). The Drode informs them that what they just experienced was the result of a Controller, specifically Visser Four, getting his hands on the Time Matrix that was discovered at the old construction site where they all met Elfangor. Crayak and Elfangor have once

again struck a sort of deal with the Animorphs at the heart of it. They will be given a special connection to the Time Matrix that will allow them to time jump with Visser Four to try and re-capture it from him and undo his changes to history. But there's a price: the life of one of the Animorphs.

Cassie and Marco know who the most likely casualty will be: Jake, with whom Crayak has a particular beef. But, at the same time, letting the future they so briefly experienced go forward is unacceptable. They vow to protect Jake, and the team agrees to the mission and terms. And so the time jumping commences!

Agincourt: The team find themselves in what seems like the middle ages, between two armies (French and English) that are about to go at it with horses, spears, and bows and arrows. Rachel and Cassie almost get taken out by an errant knight before they all manage to reconvene. From there, they begin looking for Visser Four. They realize that the best way to spot him will be to look for someone who is NOT covered in fleas and has terrible teeth. They finally do, just as the two armies collide. He's in a tree aiming an arrow at the English king. Tobias manages to snag it out of the air. Rachel, Marco, and Cassie almost gets trampled in the fighting, but horse! Jake and HorkBajir! Tobias rescue them in the nick of time. Ax almost catches Visser Four and the Time Matrix in a local bell tower, but he manages to jump at the last minute.

Delaware River: It's night, it's cold, and it's raining. And George Washington and co. are about to cross the Delaware. In human form, Marco and Jake end up on a boat alongside him when it all goes wrong. Visser Four had already warned the Hessians on the other side that they were coming, and a volley of bullets sprays across the boats. Jake falls, a bullet hole in his head. The team panics. Marco tries to hold onto Jake, but he falls into the river. Dolphin! Cassie tries to collect his body. Rachel insists that Ax attack the Hessians for killing Jake. In the chaos, they all jump again.

Battle of Trafalgar: The team is on a ship. They're all still reeling from the loss of Jake and trying to find their way. Dolphin! Cassie gives up hope and heads out to sea. Marco and Ax fight their way up from the brig. Up above, Tobias and Rachel spot Visser Four. Chimp! Rachel follows him up onto the crow's nest, but just then canons begin firing. Rachel falls, blown in half by a canon ball. Back below decks, Marco and Ax almost nab the Time Matrix again, but just miss as Visser Four sets an explosion that blows up the ship. Another jump.

Princeton: Cassie and Tobias find themselves on what appears to be the campus of Princeton. But the American flag is not flying. Washington was killed crossing the Delaware, and America doesn't exist. Cassie is done with all the death, morphs polar bear, and lays the smack down on a passing college student when he expresses some racist opinions. Suddenly, Marco and Rachel (!) show up. The team realize that the rules of this mission were that one, and only one, of the Animorphs would die. Are they all now invulnerable? They wring more news out of the terrified student and realize that Visser Four was likely here to kill Einstein. But history has already changed so much that he miscalculated. Einstein isn't even here. The team realizes that their plans need to change. History has already been too damaged by Visser Four. They need to get back the Time Matrix for themselves, change history back, maybe even get back Jake. Time jump!

D-Day: Several of the Animorphs experience the unique horror of charging the beaches and seeing hundreds of soldiers gunned down. Ax is particularly horrified by the violence. In small morphs, they are able to escape the rain of bullets. As birds from above, they see a line of tanks making their way towards the beaches. They realize that the French are on the side of the Germans, yet more proof that the timeline has been changed in crazy ways. In an attempt to get at Visser Four, HorkBajir! Tobias gets shot in the chest, but miraculously just stands right back up, confirming their theory that they can't die. Eagle! Rachel takes out a tank with a hand grenade, but afterwards, realizing that so much is different, has a panic attack after realizing that it is no longer clear who the bad guys are. In this timeline, Hitler is just an old man driving a truck. They manage to finally nab Visser Four and the Time Matrix, but the host body is too injured to survive for long. The Yeerk makes a break for it, but Marco manages to grab it. None of them want to be the one to kill it, so Marco takes one for the team and throws the Yeerk into the fire that was the tank. With the Time Matrix now

in their hands, they debate what to do. Cassie is the one to come up with the solution: she asks the man whom Visser Four had Controlled where his parents met.

The 60s: They then time travel to that point to break up the meeting, figuring that if his parents never met, then he would never exist and Visser Four would never Control him and discover the Time Matrix. While they are waiting, they discuss the horrors that they saw and that at every point in history they visited, people were senselessly killing each other. They debate whether or not they could do more to change the world, making it a more peaceful place. While they are talking, several hippies wander by and are impressed by the Time Matrix itself. Suddenly, they are back in the barn.

They realize that one of the hippies admiring the Time Matrix had been the would-be mother and that her distraction had resulted in her missing meeting the would-be father. What's more, Jake is back, alive and well, not remembering anything after their attempted crossing of the Delaware. The world may not be better, but it seems that at least things are back to the way they were.

Our Fearless Leader: Jake gets the short straw as he is out of the story fairly early on and misses much of the action. We have some good leadership moments from him, particularly during their first time jump when Cassie, Rachel, and Marco are in the middle of the battlefield about to be trampled at any moment. Tobias is going crazy with worry about Rachel, not wanting to focus on Visser Four at all, and just go in after her. Jake reminds him that Cassie is down there too, but that just wildly going after them will not get them anywhere. His calm, even in the midst of crisis, is really highlighted.

While I like the tie-in to Jake and Crayak's particular beef when it comes to the likelihood that Jake will be the one to die, it also lowers the stakes quite a bit. There are a few of the Animorphs who, theoretically, we might have bought as actually being killed off in this book. Rachel or Tobias are probably the most likely candidates. But with Jake, there's never any question that he'll be back somehow.

Xena, Warrior Princess: Rachel is at her reckless/brave best (worst?) in this book. In their very first jump, she and Cassie end up in a tight spot with a few knights when Rachel's go-to response of morphing elephant doesn't turn out so well. Though I did, as always, love the Cassie/Rachel scene!

[Tobias]

"Very funny," Rachel said. "They started it. Cassie: Tell them who started it!"

Later, she has a really cool scene taking out the tank with the hand grenade, though it is questionable later whether this was necessary. Mostly, she was just gungho to take out Nazis. But once she realizes that the French were teamed up with Germany in this timeline, she begins to understand that she doesn't know whether they were the enemy or not in this scenario. It's a really small scene, but it does highlight Rachel's own knowledge and fear of her recklessness. She's scared by herself in this way.

But, as I've pointed out in the past, she's also, again, the first one to go into danger to try to save one of the others. This time, she's the first to try to save Marco when he gets stuck in the middle of the battlefield in the first jump.

A Hawk's Life: This whole book is a perfect example of why Tobias should use his Hork Bajir morph more often. He uses it to great success multiple times within this book. It doesn't hurt that the clearly alien morph is sure to freak out any nearby people, thus clearly the way quite effectively without having to even do anything.

He also has another impressive hawk moment when he catches the arrow that Visser Four is shooting straight out of midair.

Tobias is also particularly vehement about taking out Hitler in the D-Day jump. Cassie tries to talk him

down, pointing out that they don't know who he has become in this new version of reality, but through a series of events, HorkBajir! Tobias does end up killing him, rather accidentally. As everything gets undone, it doesn't matter one way or the other, but now Tobias can brag that he did in fact kill Hitler at one point.

Peace, Love, and Animals: Cassie gets a lot of chapters in this book. As I discuss in Marco's section, she and Marco have a unspoken plan to protect Jake. When they don't succeed, Cassie succumbs to a moment of weakness and tries to flee out into the ocean in dolphin morph. Obviously this doesn't work out, and she finds herself tugged along in the next jump anyways. It's also nice to see her get mad and take things into her own hands when it comes to dealing with the racist guy in the Princeton jump.

She's also the one to come up with the plan for out to set things right in the end. She's not outright "killing" anyone, but her plan does result in the end, or more like, lack of existence, of a man's life.

The Comic Relief: This is one of the first books where we've really seen a strong connection between Cassie and Marco. In the very beginning, when the Drode is laying out the situation, Marco is resistant to agreeing. It doesn't take long for Cassie to realize why and for the two of them to come to an unspoken agreement about not letting Crayak take Jake. It's nice seeing them both recognize the special relationship they each have with Jake. Rachel, too, has a close connection with him, but, as we've seen, she and Jake have a bit more of a fraught relationship than the BFF relationship that Marco has or the quasi-dating relationship of Cassie.

It's also worth highlighting that Marco is the one to ultimately kill Visser Four. He tries to pass it off as a casual thing, but this is only marginally successful. But it does show that he is also willing to shoulder the burden when it is clear no one else is capable of it. Given their ultimate plan, though, I don't know why this was so much of a concern. They change the timeline for the man he was Controlling, but it seems as if the Yeerk Visser Four would be alive and well back in their new timeline, so his "death" here is rather meaningless.

E.T./Ax Phone Home: After the Hessians shoot Jake, Rachel orders Ax to take them out. He tries to argue that they are innocent (at least of meaning to take out Jake specifically), but in the end, he goes for it. Throughout the rest of the story, we see this decision continue to haunt him.

On the beaches on D-day, he has a similar moment to Cassie's where he thinks to just flee. He is horrified by the violence all around him, and struggles again to understand the duplicity of humanity, that people like his friends can exist yet throughout history humans just seem to kill each other. He is even more horrified when he learns the reasons for this particular war and what happened to the Jews.

Best (?) Body Horror Moment: There's so much actual action taking place in this one, that we get a lot fewer descriptions of disgusting morphs. That said, this has to be one of the most violent books we've seen, made worse that it is drawing from history. Rachel's death is probably the most gruesome. Her chimp body is literally blown in two and as she falls, she sees the remaining half of her own body still hanging from the ship's masts. Then we switch perspectives to Tobias and get to have even more lovely descriptions of her blown apart body.

Couples Watch!: As I said, one of my big memories of this one was the Tobias/Rachel kiss. Once again they are blowing Cassie/Jake out of the water as far as relationship goals go. Tobias thought she was dead for like fifteen minutes, but the minute he sees her, he runs to her and kisses her. Cassie thinks Jake is dead for quite a long time, but when he shows back up in the barn, everyone's kind of like "Oh, hey there!" and Cassie casually kisses him on the cheek while talking about the philosophy of time and humanity. Romantic it is not. Seriously, what is with these two??

"Whoa, Cassie! That is so Rachel," Marco said. [Cassie in polar bear morph threatening the Princeton guy]. I

recognized the voice immediately. He'd come up behind us.

"Really," Rachel said. "What are you doing? Stealing my act?"

"Rachel!" Tobias yelled. And a millisecond later he had spun around, grabbed her, and kissed her. Then he held her back at arm's length. "You're dead!"

If Only Visser Three had Mustache to Twirl: Visser Four is obviously the big bad in this. But we never really get to know much about him. Throughout the book he's seen more as a distant figure that they are chasing, and the few interactions they have with him are pretty typical Yeerk boasting.

"So. The Andalites pursue me still," he sneered. "I was careless. I did not expect to be pursued. But I'll be careful now. Yes. And you know what? It's better this way. I have the power now! I have the POWER!"

More telling, when John Barryman is finally freed from the Yeerk, he is astonished and amazed that they are all just kids. He mentions how much the Animorphs are driving the Yeerks, and especially Visser Three, absolutely crazy trying to catch them. He tells them they're heroes. Probably something they needed to hear about now.

Adult Ugly Crying at a Middle Grade Book: Ax's complete bewilderment and horror at the violence throughout human history really struck home. There's a particularly heart-wrenching scene on the beaches when he witness a man get shot, and then sees a army doctor run up to try and help him and the doctor is shot too. All while trying to help a soldier whose injuries were to dire to begin with.

Jake's death, while not really worrying as something that will stick, is made more poignant because of Cassie and Marco's silent agreement to protect him and how suddenly and completely they failed. In many of the other books, we see them get horrific injuries and then slowly start dying but have the time still to morph out to save themselves. Here, Jake is shot in the head. He's dies in a second and there was absolutely nothing Cassie or Marco could have done about it. It really hits home how dangerous the war with the Yeerks is. This same thing could happen at any moment in their ongoing war, and the others would be equally helpless to stop it, and wouldn't have a convenient time loop hole to get them out of it.

What a Terrible Plan, Guys!: Really, the fact that they were even for a second discussing messing around with the Time Matrix more than just trying to set things right. They've already seen how even the smallest changes have had huge repercussions on the world. How could they ever think they could figure out this impossible puzzle in a way that wouldn't be disastrous somehow? And it's not like this is even their first experience with time travel! In the last megamorphs book with the dinosaurs, they saw how fragile the balance was for things to need to happen in a very specific way to get to the world they knew. Plus, you have to assume that any further messing around with time would have been put to a quick stop by either (or both!) Crayak or the Ellimist.

Favorite Quote:

There's quite a bit of dark stuff and deep, timey-wimey musings, but, as always, Marco quips win the day:

"Oh, man, the colors, man!" A "hippie" had come up to admire the Time Matrix's shimmering globe.

"Right, the colors, whoa! Cool! Go away. We're trying to figure out the space-time continuum here," Marco snapped.

Scorecard: Yeerks 6, Animorphs 12

I'm not going to change the score for this one. Like the other megamorphs books, this one kind of exists on the sidelines of the main plot, so there aren't any long-lasting repercussions from their success here.

Rating: I still really enjoyed this one. I forgot about Marco and Cassie's mini alliance, and all the details of the historical time periods they visited. I had completely forgotten how this book started out, just dropping readers into the other timeline. I was pretty confused at first since I know the last megamorphs deals with an alternate reality and I started questioning whether I had somehow gotten the order mixed up and that was this one. And, of course, I'm going to love any book with good Tobias/Rachel moments!

Julie says

No ghostwriter -- Applegate is back, because it's time for the third Megamorphs!

You know, reading this, I'm actually not certain if I ever read it as a kid? This book didn't really ring any bells whatsoever, except for maybe the sight of chimpanzee!Rachel falling, blasted in half, and her seeing her other half still clutching the rigging. Maybe it's just that I wasn't familiar enough with history when I read this. Maybe I repressed it because it was too horrific. Maybe I never read it. Either way, I'm giving it five damn stars.

And you know what, am I at the point where I can finally upgrade this series to YA? Considering what happens in this book and right after, I think I'm going to go ahead and officially shelve it as "young adult" rather than "children's lit". This book represents a graduation, I think, which I'll get into below.

The plot: The Yeerk formerly known as Visser Four (demoted after their Leeran adventures in #18 The Decision) has found the Time Matrix and is traveling through time, wreaking havoc with history and trying to undermine humanity to make them easier to conquer. His actions produce a nightmarish alternate universe not!America, where the Animorphs are still fighting the good fight against the Yeerks... but Jake is a xenophobic/racist junior Nazi, Cassie owns slaves, and the mild-mannered Melissa Chapman has taken Rachel's place in the Animorphs because Rachel is holed up in a re-education camp, for not fitting into the neat categories of the empire.

The non-altered Animorphs, *our* Animorphs, chase the Visser through time to try to put a stop to his meddling before this future comes to pass.

It's a muddled, confusing trip, leaping uncontrollably through time, trying to get their bearings, find out what Visser Four is doing, try to stymie him, meanwhile the world is altered and changed around them. So I can see why people might not like this book, but I think it's great because it explores such rich, juicy thematic ground.

This book is filled with traumatising events and images:

- Jake dead, legitimately *dead*, with his brain blown out, and them desperately trying to recover his body amongst the chaos of so many other dead boys;
- aforementioned half-chimpanzee;
- D-Day and all its horrors, its mindless slaughter (I almost started crying at a random one-off scene with a soldier and a doctor, both shot down on the beach);
- several of the kids just plain shutting down from the horror and shock of it all, just shutting

down and turning off and leaving the fight, cowering, unable to process. (contrariwise: the way Ax eventually rode through the terror and the *this isn't my war* and then finally picked himself up made me want to hug him, I love him SO MUCH, bless you Ax for not turning your back on us forever after what you've seen);

- the Animorphs consciously deciding to kill humans, non-infested humans, who have nothing to do with the Yeerk war;

- Cassie coming face-to-face with preppy white boys at Princeton in the '30s, directly addressing and lashing back against racism, and one of them clearly dropping the N-bomb at her (if I read this as a kid, I *definitely* did not understand that they were referring to a racial slur, or which one);

- the horror of what they finally do to rewrite and undo the whole thing, simply wiping a man out of existence.

They all do immoral things in this one. I think this is the book where they all finally cross the line, and it represents a waking up, of sorts. It's also an exploration of nature vs. nurture, and alternate universes. If things were different, how close is Jake to a tyrant? If Hitler didn't rise to power and do any of the things he did, does he still deserve to be killed? (Also, no time travel book is complete without a *let's kill Hitler* moment.)

On the bright side, Tobias and Rachel kiss for the first time :']

You could say that it's an inconsequential book because nothing has really happened by the end, everything has been undone, just maintaining the status quo (the downfall of time travel stories), but I don't think so. Because it raises the question of whether this *is* better, really, and that's exactly the bittersweet, confused note it ends on, for a reason. And because these experiences are going to be carved into all of their memories forever; no one can come out of D-Day without aging overnight. They've been fighting a guerilla war against the Yeerks, but there were always rules: they did not hurt innocents, and they did not kill humans, even Controllers. They were never in an open battlefield. Now they've finally experienced it, a montage of the absolute *worst* that mankind has to offer, and they've broken their own rules.

This was another thing that was so great about having KAA back at the reins: Ax's characterisation is on-point again, funny yet honourable and driven, with perfect rumination on humanity, with them telling him about the Holocaust for the first time, and his ensuing shock. It's a sobering look at our own history.

In fact, as my closing remarks, I'm just going to include a lengthy quote from my favourite part:

<And the Holocaust,> Rachel said.

<Holocaust?>

<The Germans, the Nazis under Hitler, murdered six million Jews - men, women, and children.>

Obviously Rachel had misspoken.

<These Jews were an opposing army?>

<No. Jews are a religion, or a race, I guess. My dad's Jewish. Mostly the Jews in the Holocaust were Germans and Poles. You know, civilians. Normal people. Others, too: Gypsies, gays, handicapped people. They were taken to camps and shot or starved or killed with poison gas. Children killed in their mothers' arms.>

She spoke with no special emphasis. No anger. Human emotion is often confusing, in part because each individual human expresses it differently. Rachel is quick to anger over small things. The larger things render her cold and seemingly emotionless.

But then what emotion could possibly be sufficiently intense to encompass the crimes she described?

Humans. I wondered, not for the first time, but now with renewed intensity, whether the Yeerks had any notion of the species they proposed to conquer. Humans seemed to exist across too broad a spectrum to even be considered a single species.

The same species that spawned my friends, Jake, Cassie, Marco, Rachel, my shorm and "nephew" Tobias, seemed to revel in mutual slaughter and sank to depths no Yeerk would sink to. Depths of depraved brutality that would be unimaginable to an Andalite.

<Even humans—> I began. I stopped myself. I should not insult humans. This was not the time or the place. We were racing to intercept the Yeerk, to save the future, to ... But my mind was boiling. Too much!

That human warrior would stand against human warrior and kill, that was wrong and foolish and stupid. But that humans, the species I was risking my own life to help, were capable of such a filthy, cowardly thing as the deliberate slaughter of innocents . . .

Not at all like the things I had done in combat. Not at all like fighting Hork-Bajir-Controllers, or Taxxons or... or Hessian officers.

I jerked my thoughts away from that memory. From the memory of my tail blade snapping forward.

<We Andalites have fought wars among ourselves in the past. We did not kill children. It is not possible to conceive of a greater evil than the deliberate killing of a child.>

<Yeah, well, we do know that, Ax,> Marco said resentfully. <Why do you think those guys down on the beach are dying?>

<Those tanks coming down that road? Those are Nazi tanks,> Rachel said. <So let's stop them.>

<We are after the Time Matrix,> Marco reminded her.

<Maybe you are. You and Ax go get the Time Matrix. I'm getting a Nazi.>
