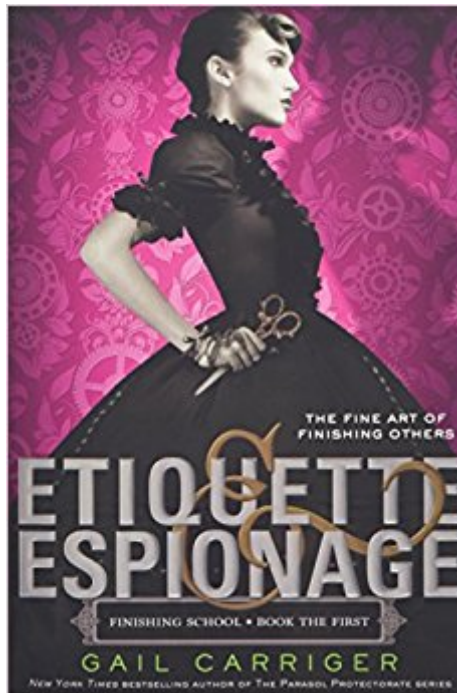




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Etiquette & Espionage (Finishing School)



Synopsis

Set in the same world as the New York Times bestselling Parasol Protectorate, this young adult steampunk series debut is filled with all the saucy adventure and droll humor Gail Carriger's legions of fans have come to adore. Fourteen-year-old Sophronia is a great trial to her poor mother. Sophronia is more interested in dismantling clocks and climbing trees than proper manners--and the family can only hope that company never sees her atrocious curtsy. Mrs. Temminnick is desperate for her daughter to become a proper lady. So she enrolls Sophronia in Mademoiselle Geraldine's Finishing Academy for Young Ladies of Quality. But Sophronia soon realizes the school is not quite what her mother might have hoped. At Mademoiselle Geraldine's, young ladies learn to finish...everything. Certainly, they learn the fine arts of dance, dress, and etiquette, but they also learn to deal out death, diversion, and espionage--in the politest possible ways, of course. Sophronia and her friends are in for a rousing first year's education.

Book Information

Series: Finishing School (Book 1)

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (October 8, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316190101

ISBN-13: 978-0316190107

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.9 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 581 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #55,833 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in [Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Steampunk](#) #43 in [Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Historical](#) #75 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Values & Virtues](#)

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 6-9-Sophronia is far from the proper Victorian young lady she is expected to be. She would rather climb, take apart machinery, and cause a general ruckus than sit for tea and crumpets, making her a blight on her mother's reputation. She is enrolled in Mademoiselle Geraldine's

Finishing Academy for Young Ladies of Quality to learn proper decorum. But she soon discovers that its students are learning more than a proper curtsy. The school is a floating airship charged with teaching the skills of espionage. Sophronia is an early savant of sorts and quickly learns to use her skills to help thwart a fellow student in an attempt to steal a prototype essential to communications. The author touches on themes of gender identity and racial and social equality, though they are not developed thoroughly enough to either add to or distract from the story. Carriger's leading lady is a strong, independent role model for female readers. There is still more to be learned about the relationships of other characters who are integral to the story, perhaps in a sequel. Ladies and gentlemen of propriety are combined with dirigibles, robots, werewolves, and vampires, making this story a steampunk mystery and an adventure mash-up that is sure to intrigue readers who can get past the language of the time period. -Betsy Davidson, Cortland Free Library, NY
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Starred Review Set 25 years before her Parasol Protectorate series, Carriger's YA debut brings her mix of Victorian paranormal steampunk and winning heroines to a whole new audience. After an incident involving a plummeting dumbwaiter and an airborne trifle, Sophronia is sent to Mademoiselle Geraldine's Finishing Academy to learn how to be a proper lady. Their carriage is immediately waylaid by flywaymen looking for a mysterious prototype—the first of many clues that this academy will not be the dreadful bore Sophronia expected. Once established at Mademoiselle Geraldine's (set on a chain of dirigibles!), Sophronia learns that she is a covert recruit into a school that trains girls to be part assassins, part spies, and also always fashionable ladies of quality. It's this last bit she has trouble with; in her self-assigned search for the prototype, she acquires an illegal mechanimal pet, befriends the boiler room sooties, and avoids both teachers and mechanicals to explore restricted areas, yet she can't master curtsying or eyelash fluttering. While the prototype plot isn't fully developed, Carriger's series starter more than makes up for it with cleverly Victorian methods of espionage, witty banter, lighthearted silliness, and a ship full of intriguingly quirky people. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Carriger has made major waves as a best-selling steampunker, and the promotion and outreach planned for this YA offshoot should continue that streak. Grades 9-12. --Krista Hutley --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Review written for and originally published at steamingingenious.blogspot.com I have been eagerly

anticipating this first book in a new series by Gail Carriger, author of the fantastic *The Parasol Protectorate* series. The book follows the exploits of 14 year old Sophronia Temminnick, a troublemaking youngest daughter of a middle class Victorian family. Not knowing what to do with a daughter interested in technology and books, her mother is only too happy to send her off to an exclusive finishing school. Except this finishing school teaches more than just deportment. It also teaches the arts of espionage and assassination. This book has all the fun of the first *Harry Potter* novel; it shows an unsuspecting protagonist encountering a weird and wonderful boarding school, and, in fact, almost an entire new society of which she was previously unaware. So this book takes some pretty familiar "starting a new school" tropes and puts a nice spin on them. Sophronia is an extremely likeable character and her new school provides lots of opportunities for her to show off her daring. This series takes place in the same world as the *Parasol Protectorate* series, but it's set several decades earlier, in the 1860s, I believe. So fans of that series will enjoy seeing some familiar characters pop up here and there. As for the steampunk elements, while I tend to think of the *Parasol Protectorate* as a predominantly supernatural series set in a steampunk world, this series seems to be a steampunk series set in a supernatural world. Meaning that this series seems to involve a lot more technology in more important roles than the previous series. There are also vampires and werewolves, but the supernatural elements don't drive the main plot and are pretty much incidental. I don't want to spoil all the surprises of the book, but I will say that the steampunk elements include: airborne highwaymen in small balloons, a giant airship, a steam-powered dog, mechanical servants, airship pirates, a school for evil geniuses, aetheric communication devices, and a group who adorn their clothing with gears and their top hats with decorative goggles. Ultimately, I loved this book. I found it totally charming, with its combination of polite manners, adventure, and emphasis on practical skills such as how to fake a faint without wrinkling your skirts. I would absolutely enroll in this type of finishing school. My one and only complaint is that I wish it were longer. It's a young adult series, so it's fairly short. Otherwise there's no noticeable difference in language or style from Carriger's other books. There's no sex or any real romance in this one, which is another difference. (And can we take a moment to celebrate a YA book with a female protagonist that DOESN'T place any emphasis on romance?) I'm extremely excited about the potential for this to be a phenomenal series. I know the second book is already written and I think is supposed to come out later this year? I can't wait.

I've enjoyed the "*Parasol Protectorate*" novels a lot, but this one was even more fun. It's set in the same world, I think somewhat before the PP series, and focuses more on intrigue and steampunk,

and less on the vamps and weres.Plus- as an American who went to local public schools, I have always ADORED boarding-school fiction! And a boarding school on an airship??? with the companion school for boys devoted to developing Evil Geniuses??? What's not to love?OK, the kids don't Save The World. What kids really can expect to? but they do rise to their challenges, outwit the adults, and have a grand time doing it.A good ending, but with enough threads left that #2 can pick up nicely.I think a lot of Harry Potter fans could love this, if they're OK with the focus being on GIRLS (the horror!).Highly recommended. And for YA's, too!

I'm not a young adult but enjoy reading what they consider "theirs". But, I started the book thinking the story would be describing the how and what of a spy school for young women, not so. The plot seemed to be (from my senior adult perspective) "how to survive other young women's evil/vicious intents in a school type environment" (and I remember those intents at that age!). I enjoyed the author's use of an Victorian-age setting with fantasy and magic complete with were-wolves, wizards, and vampires. One of the funniest characters was a teacher who wore nun's clothing but wasn't a nun. Another tickle to me was the amount of time to produce the "proper curtsy" that seemed like it was equivalent to some "required" courses in high school.

This was my first book by Gail Carriger, and it definitely won't be my last. This one was fun, humorous, and overall, really enjoyable. I really liked Sophronia, the atmosphere of the school was fantastic, and even at the times when I wasn't particularly enthralled by what was going on in the book, the pages seemed to fly by. It took me a while to get used to the voice of the book, but once that happened, it was hard to put down.My only complaint is that the central plot of this particular book didn't really draw me in, but the concept of the school Sophronia had been recruited to intrigued me enough to keep reading, and I'm glad it did. I LOVED the idea of a school training girls in both etiquette and, well, espionage. :)It took me a while to get around to reading this one, but I'm so glad I did, and the timing turned out pretty spectacular, because the other books in the series happened to go on sale while I was reading it. Looking forward to reading them when I can, and maybe catching up in time to read the fourth book later this year!(I received a copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.)

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