



## The Manifesto on How to Be Interesting

*Holly Bourne*

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## **The Manifesto on How to Be Interesting** Holly Bourne

*Apparently I'm boring. A nobody.  
But that's all about to change.  
Because I am starting a project.  
Here. Now. For myself.  
And if you want to come along for the ride then you're very welcome.*

Bree is by no means popular. Most of the time, she hates her life, her school, her never-there-parents. So she writes.

But when Bree is told she needs to stop shutting the world out and start living a life worth writing about, *The Manifesto on How to Be Interesting* is born. A manifesto that will change everything...

...but the question is, at what cost?

## **The Manifesto on How to Be Interesting Details**

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Author : Holly Bourne

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# From Reader Review The Manifesto on How to Be Interesting for online ebook

## Paige Bookdragon says

*Six steps that will see her infiltrate the popular set...*

Why do people always think that being in the "popular set" can make them "interesting"?

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## Emma Blackery says

Incredible piece of YA literature. Finally, an author who GETS it. You can say "we were all young once..." but if I had a penny for every time I came across a "young adult" novel that had unrelatable characters, no flaws, unconvincing dialogue...

Holly isn't like that. This book will pull you in and refuse to let go. Probably the best YA novel I've ever read, and that's a strong statement to make.

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## Nova says

(First of all a quick note to say I haven't edited this review. It's a mess. I'm tired. Oh well. I hope it's coherent.)

This book was... okay.

It had a message. It was well-written (ish). It kept me coming back and turning the page, desperate to read more explicit details of Bree's messy experiment.

But it was also problematic.

Bree was generally a very strange character. She had depth, yes- immensely so, as we figure out- but she seems like an ego-maniac, to be blunt. Maybe the author was trying to portray the teenage mind, but I think that would be a harsh criticism.

Bree thinks she's smart, she thinks she's a brilliant writer, she thinks she looks hot after a makeover and that everyone suddenly loves her. In that sense, she's completely egoistic and ridiculously far from modest.

But she also hates herself. Thinks she's not important, a loner, and has an incessant need to leave a mark on the world. To fall in love, to be part of the popular crowd.

Everything in this book seems like a great big plot device. The story doesn't seem organic, nor real. It's like a parody of every cliche teen movie you've ever watched.

The supporting characters only developed when it was called for by the plot. They are not deep unless Bree acknowledges them as such, if that makes sense. 99% of the time, they are vapid, 2D photocopies of what they could be. Airhead popular girls, arsehole players, hipster nerd boys, that one teacher that's somehow 'different'? But no tears are shed, no confessions are made until it moves Bree's narrative along.

Maybe a bit of a spoiler: this book incorporates self-harm. I'm still not sure how I feel about it. I can't really judge it, but it's never really thoroughly discussed, I think it would take up more than Bree's life than it does. Moving on to the actual writing of the book, though, I have to say it was relatively good. I loved the quick-witted banter and the snarky comebacks, but they made the entire story seem a bit larger-than-life.

A lot of pop-culture/political references are made, even used as metaphors, which I initially liked but I soon

realised it was done in a way that was more awkward than 'hip'.

I also have to say that the actual *Manifesto* makes much too little of an appearance. I thought it would be a major plot point, but instead gets dragged along until it plays a role in the solution of the book. I would have liked more of a gritty look at writing such a thing, more self-awareness on Bree's part. She is, after all, publishing something for all the world to see.

I thought the entirety of the book's solution was a bit out of the blue. Things all seemed very rushed and forced, because of course Bree's father's best friend would be the world's best lawyer, (view spoiler) Of course.

All in all, this book was an experience. I liked the critical view it had on popularity and what it means to be interesting, but it didn't seem quite organic. Real. It lacked instinctual, realistic insight, and I think that was inevitably its downfall. The book itself- much like Bree- was trying too hard to be something it wasn't.

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### **Eden Davis says**

I just finished this book and felt compelled to write a review. I seriously have no idea why it's so highly praised.

It's predictable and unrealistic and so unbelievably similar to the plot of *Mean Girls*... I could hardly believe when I saw that the author had actually quoted '*Mean Girls*' in the book! If you've seen the film, this book will feel very familiar - however, it fails to be as funny/iconic.

Also, if you're a *PLL* fan you'll probably end up guessing one big twist in the story.

I'm not sure why I finished this book, most likely so that I could leave an informed review. It was disappointing, uninspired and just 'meh'. I feel like some girls will relate to some of Bree's problems, but I'd suggest watching *My Mad Fat Diary*, *Skins*, *Mean Girls* and *Pretty Little Liars* instead of reading this book.

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I actually didn't mind the writing style so I'm going to try to read '*Soulmates*' and '*Am I Normal Yet?*' and hope they have better plots.

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### **Ally says**

#### **Choose life. Choose love. And always remember to live.**

I think it's time to admit that I'm too old for YA contemporary. Shit, I never thought that would happen. To be honest I never thought I would become a fully certified adult. It's not something that I wanted for myself. But here I am, paying car tax, doing crafts and getting excited about home decor and help.

There's nothing wrong with anyone, of *any* age reading YA contemporary (I'd certainly be a hypocrite if I said that there was), but I feel *personally* our relationship is slowly coming to an end. We've had a good run. But our opinions are at odds now. The magic is dying and it's sad, sure but I feel like we've just... grown apart.

There's been a couple of books recently that have made me go EEP I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS, but it was pretty apparent with *The Manifesto on How to be Interesting*. This isn't a bad book. It's just that

my own ideas about how to resolve problems and conflicts are so at odds with Bree, the protagonist that it was hard for me to relate to her.

**Being interesting isn't important. But being happy is. As well as being a person you're proud of.**

For a long time, I would never have called myself mature. I like YA, puppies, I have *so* many Disney stuffed characters around my apartment, I'm *still* crap at doing make up and I *never* plan ahead. But... I've realised (yes, 2016 truly *was* the year of realising things) that being mature is about so much more than your likes and dislikes and your shitty dress sense. It's about the way that you communicate and express yourself, the way that you behave and how you view other people. And I'm finding the way that characters in YA contemporary behave increasingly frustrating. I find myself calling them dumb, but that's unfair of me. They're not dumb, they're just young. And the authors aren't bad authors for creating "dumb" characters. They're good authors because they've nailed teenage behaviour.

Bree's actions I could easily sit here and list as ridiculous and selfish and immature. And yep, I'd be right. She's all of those things. But she's not wrong for being that way. She's just a teenager going through a tough time without the gift of experience to be able to pick the best course of action.

One misplaced comment from a teacher and she completely reinvents herself in an attempt to become interesting and infiltrate the popular clique in order to gather material for the book she wants to write after her previous two novels were wholeheartedly rejected by the publishers she submitted to. She playacts while she internally rolls her eyes at her classmates who she considers to be stupid, and petty, and beneath her. Okay, the girls she's targeting *are* bullies, but they're also people. To be fair to Bree, she does come to realise this and I enjoyed the way that Holly Bourne humanised the "bad guys". So often the bullies are just cardboard cutouts of human garbage, soulless evil incarnate. So it was interesting to see them fully fleshed out and Bree even beginning warm to them as friends.

But all the arrogance, the superiority, the isolation, that Bree maintains throughout the story was inexplicable for me. I found it all so infuriating. When Bree refused to open up to her awesome mum and her supportive friend Holdo, when she took unnecessary risks in her relationship with the weird teacher, when she continued to blindly follow through with her plan to destroy the popular girls even though her opinion of them was changing, when she ditched her old friend overnight in favour of the "plan" but didn't share what she was doing? I just:

I don't think it's even a case of poor character development. I genuinely think it's just me. Bree's character *does* develop. Just not entirely in the way I would have liked to see. She comes to the conclusion that she needs to accept herself for who she is and while that's great and all, it's not the whole picture. Yes, you should learn to love who you are, but you should ditch this attitude of "this is who I am and if anyone doesn't like it, they can fuck off" because that's not how the world works. You *do* have to be flexible and you *should* be open to other people's point of view and critique. But maybe that's a lesson that someone of Bree's age isn't ready for? I don't know.

I thought that when Bree began her affair with the teacher things would kind of kick up a notch, and it rekindled my dwindling enthusiasm for the book. But honestly? *It felt so random*. I understand that she had been crushing on this teacher for a while, but to have the relationship play out the way it did seemed more like a dreamscape tacked on to the plot than anything based in reality. I'm not sure what we're even supposed to take away from the whole debacle other than Bree is *clearly* not ready for a high-stakes, adult

relationship. Oh, and the teacher is a shit. He messed both Bree and his wife around and then just up and left at the end leaving Bree with no closure. What a douche.

I don't know if I can recommend this book or not because I genuinely don't know how I feel about it. To be fair, it was entertaining so long as you can weather the crushing, visceral secondhand embarrassment that it provokes (oh man, Bree fucks up proper good several times and my stomach *literally* hurt with it). But.. The way Bree behaves really pissed me off. A lot. But will that bother you if you're the age that this book is actually intended for? See, this is my dilemma. You might be able to take something away from this story that went completely over my head because I've moved on from all the high school drama bullshit that the book is crammed with. Like, there *is* good stuff in here like remembering that everyone is just a human being, same as you, and most of the time, we're all just doing the best we can. And that changing how you appear on the outside won't magically fix everything on the inside.

But I don't know guys... Maybe I'm just having an old-woman crisis?

Send help.

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### **Maddie says**

I still don't know how I feel about this book. It was exactly like 'Mean Girls', in the way that a girl who thinks she's a loser, and social outcast, works her way up to the top of the popularity ladder with the application of lipstick and expensive hosiery. Unfortunately, I couldn't see the reality. The novel only really understood girls on a surface level, and took a long time before an epiphany was reached that even mean girls are human.

I really liked the blogging element, and the idea about getting to know people before you judge them, but a lot of the characters had a very high opinion of themselves, and I just wasn't about that. Still, I'm really intrigued to read more from Holly Bourne, there's definitely something special there.

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### **Hannah says**

LOVED this! Such a great take on "high school drama", identity & self-harm. So proud of my friend Holly for writing this & so glad I enjoyed it otherwise things would be awkward between us...

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### **Aj the Ravenous Reader says**

I am not sure how to feel about the book. The Manifesto on How to be Interesting is basically about a high school outcast who experiments on how to be interesting as part of her research in becoming a writer. It's kind of formulaic, cliché-ish, quite bitter and anti-humanistic but with a lot of truth to it.

As usual, the writing is very bold, revolutionary and feminist. At times though, I feel like it went a bit too far. The things **Bree** personally decided to do as “parts” of her experiment are a bit too cringe-worthy and it broke my heart that she thought she had to do these things to achieve her dream of being a known writer.

I’m still Holly Bourne’s fan. Her themes are always so relevant, current and something that will make you really think about how society really is. I just don’t think this particular book is her best but I’m still looking forward to the rest of the books she wrote.

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### **Greyson [Use Your Words] says**

Trauma. It doesn't eke itself out over time. It doesn't split itself manageably into bite-sized chunks and distribute itself equally throughout your life.

Trauma is all or nothing. A tsunami wave of destruction.

A tornado of unimaginable awfulness that whooshes into your life - just for one key moment - and wreaks such havoc that, in just an instant, your whole world will never be the same again.

This book! God, this book.

The Manifesto on How to be Interesting is a great book! Bourne has a way of writing that just captures adolescence and mental illness so well. I see a piece of me in all of her main characters, and usually a piece of someone I know in each secondary character too. Reading this book transported me back to a time not too long ago.

After Bree is rejected yet again by a publishing house she decides she needs to be more interesting. Not the kind of interesting that reads literary classics and gets drunk on overpriced wine all the while keeping her self-harming secret close to her chest. No Bree needs to be the kind of interesting that gets people talking and invested in her life even if all she's doing is painting her face and taking photos with friends as if they're just having the best time; while behind the scenes they're really just getting drunk on cocktails and coming up with awful names for their classmates.

So she decides to make the ultimate sacrifice; she's going to worm her way into the Perfect Posse of her school, armed with highly sort after cosmetics and a list of things to check off in her pursuit of being an interesting person, a person who writes books people actually want to read.

She didn't believe there were many great life lessons out there for her still to learn. But perhaps this was one of them. That, by letting people in, even seemingly shallow nasty people like Jassmine, you learn something. Something you can only get through intimacy.

Bree's dive into the crazy world of popularity is an honest one. She brandishes her fathers connections to a big name make up company as tear gas, carefully selecting her targets to create hurt and confusion, but mostly importantly, desperation for a highly sort after product. She uses her natural dry humor and utter dislike for people as a knife, because nothing is as funny as nastiness when you're a teenager. She climbs up the social ladder quickly but, unplanned as it is, she also finds herself caring deeply for the very flawed individuals she has forced friendships with. It's all very confusing for a social outcast who only ever viewed

the popular kids as boring and shallow.

A year or so after high school I found myself in a friendship group much like the girls Bree infiltrates in this book. I of course wasn't doing so for research. She was the girl who just held everyone's interest. She was lovely and charming, I couldn't believe she wanted to be friends with someone like me. We were fast friends and before I knew it we became inseparable. I was much like Bree, I was judgmental and always convinced myself I never cared what people thought, in high school I was an outsider.

All of a sudden I had found myself in a group of girls, and such a large group at that. I was completely out of my comfort zone and never really knew what I was doing, just praying I wouldn't be pushed out. I was hyper aware of everything I said, because I was scared of losing everything I had, and in a group like that it quickly becomes the only thing that matters in the world to you, especially if you always felt like an outsider looking in. Bourne captured this so well.

I related to Bree on so many levels. Her experience with this group of girls was so real, though it was kind of the opposite to mine. Where she had loathed the girls from the beginning, I had cared greatly for mine. Over time she found herself caring for the girls, over time I found myself questioning if I belonged in such a world where everyone bitched about everyone and you never quiet knew where you stood. Boy did it tug on my heart strings and pushed me right back into that full house of madness, no matter the differences.

By far my favourite friendship was between Bree and her mother. From being basically strangers sharing a house to a really healthy and supportive relationship between mother and daughter. Bree sees her mother as just as shallow as the perfect posse when we're introduced to her, she doesn't have any respect for her. When she finally reaches out, for what may be the first time, for help with the world of make up and heels Bree is hurt thinking that was all it took for them to develop a relationship. By the end of our journey with Bree it is very clear this is not the case, that what really stood in the way was Bree herself, not willing to open up. It speaks volumes of the situation almost everyone has been through. That teenage angst where you're determined to believe that the world is against you, that you're parents will never understand you and that one day you'll be free from the cage they've built around you. But boy is that not the case and I really hope young readers get that from this book, that no matter how much you feel like your parents don't get it; that there is a huge chance that they've been where you are before, sometimes they just need to a reminder.

Understand what? That sometimes you feel like a boiling kettle, getting hotter and hotter, and the only way to let it all out is to do this- like its erupting steam all over the place? Or that sometimes, when you're really low, it's just nice to feel...something, any kind of physical sensation... and pain is the sensation with the most powerful pull? or that, maybe, it's a way of proving you're alive. *I must be, there's blood coming out of me, this proves I exist. or, look, I've got an entire tuft of hair filling my fist- I must be here, I must be real, I can prove it.*

One of the most gut wrenching parts of this book were when self harm was staring you in the face. Bree cuts herself and Bourne describes Bree's reasoning in such a way that you can't help but want to reach through the page and hold her. Self harm doesn't make much sense to most people, and the reasons for doing it can be different for each person. When we discover another character self harms as well, we're shown just how different self harm can be for each person stuck under it's thumb. Mental illness doesn't care if you're rich, if you have everything and anything you could ever need. Mental illness doesn't discriminate and when it has a hold of you it's impossible to control. It won't be put in a box, it refuses to be shoved under the rug. It may take sometime but it will reach a point where it will scream and rage and over take you're entire life if you don't find help, the right kind of help to suit you. Bree tries to brush it off, she tries to deal with it by writing possibly the most depressing book in history. Most importantly and unwise; she tries to tackle it alone. This

is one of the most common ways to deal with mental illness so it didn't feel like it was being written by someone who had no idea what they were talking about. It felt real, it resonated with me so I'm sure it will resonate with others. Hopefully through Bree's mistakes and lessons, young readers will learn how important it is to seek help when you're fighting a war of the mind.

The Manifesto on How to be Interesting is a lovely coming of age story that touches on so many things that affect millions of teenagers everywhere and I am so glad that I chose to read it and be transported back to a rough time in my life, so that I could reanalyze and learn even more from the experience. For that it will always hold a special place in my heart.

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?Blog?Instagram?Twitter?Tumblr?

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### **Julia ? says**

Out of 70 books, this was the best book I have read this year.

I could give you a 2000 words essay about how much I loved this book, but I don't think anything I'd write would nearly describe just how AWESOME it was.

So I guess you'll have to find out for yourself if you want to know. :-)

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### **Lara says**

I gave up reading this, this book made me cringe way to much and teacher-student relationship made me gag alot so Im done with this book sorry!

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### **Ellen says**

I hated this book. That sounds so harsh, because I thought I would never hate a book. I have always valued the authors craft, even if a book just wasn't for me. But this book was... So so so problematic.

Let's start with Bree. She tries to self proclaim herself as a feminist voice but shames girls for liking boys.

#### **'I have self respect'**

Yeah, Bree, self respect is self defined. Not up to your judgemental standards. There was an intense amount of girl hate in this book. Why do authors keep writing books about bullying and play it off as girl hate? It's so out of touch to how a real school exists. There will always be bullies in schools, but this book was not about bullying at all. It was girls hating girls, becoming friends with the girls they hate, then hating girls again.

#### **"it must be hard to be male and a feminist"**

no it's not?

The author tries to make this funny. But it just misses the mark completely. When she's trying to make Holdo (who I actually liked, shock horror) the only boy in the book who was intelligent and questioning of the world and then portray him as a joke to us. It's like the author can only make 2D characters.

Oh, and don't forget when Bree (view spoiler)

#### **"Shhh Bree. Stop being a feminist just for now."**

Bree I would love for you to become a feminist at all. Maybe then you wouldn't succumb to girl hate, would value your worth more than what boys think of you, and would have some self esteem for you to be you.

The author tries to make Bree a feminist voice so so badly. But if your whole book is full of anti feminist ideas then it just doesn't work.

#### **"Someone's got man PMS."**

Stop equating womanhood to weakness and over emotional-ness. Stop saying that males have to be emotionally inept. I get that I'm nit picking, but it was a constant stream of things that made me think- Hm. I wouldn't want any young girl to read this and adopt that view.

It also used the 'Popular Girls Don't Eat' cliche at one point. I don't need to explain why that is a bad idea to have in a book.

Bree aspired to be an author, but there was no mention of any characters she had created. She didn't take any inspiration from the world around her. The manifesto was often in the background and literally could have just been about Bree's desire to be popular.

Bree also thinks she's a good writer because she got full marks in English Language GCSE. In my English Language GCSE, I remember the question being a letter about a music festival, and what events would you plan for the attendees. Either the author didn't do research into this, or she just didn't care.

But I don't think any aspiring writer will hold their GCSE exam as a credit to them and their writing.

Next is the Self-Harm in this book. It was so casually mentioned within the first few pages- and it was only a sentence, We knew that Bree Self-Harmed, but we didn't know anything about how it affected her emotionally. It was like a surface issue. We don't know why Bree does it. We don't know if she wants to stop. We don't know whether she feels guilty about it. Or whether she's ashamed. It was treated so casually, and on the surface. It's like the Author researched the semantics of Self-Harm, but never went any deeper than that. It's a worrying thing to have in a book. I don't think the author discouraged it, even at the end. (view spoiler) She didn't discourage it because the true severity, the true strain it can have on someone's life, was never touched upon.

Mental Illness as a whole was touched upon so lightly in this book. There's a part where Bree discovers anti depressants in a character's bathroom when looking for something else.

#### **"The usual anti depressants"**

I get that depression is a common mental illness to have, and maybe the author was trying to play it off like this, but if a character had that in their bathroom then they or their family members would have had depression- which is massive. It would have changed their life temporarily and the author just skips over that happily to get back to teen drama. It's like Bree has no empathy at all for anyone else, that or she just wants to be popular so badly she's willing to destroy anything in herself that would recognise someone as another human being.

There's so much I could talk about in this book but the worst part is definitely the presence of a teacher student relationship. The author does the usual "Oh, this shouldn't happen. But it feels so RIGHT. Oh, this is illegal. But he's so gorgeous!"

The teacher was a predator. He broke the law. (view spoiler)

As always, the author skips over the severity of this issue. It's a very real thing. It's not that she fails to mention that the teacher was wrong, it's that she fails to reinforce that. Bree doesn't believe that what he does is wrong, therefore we don't believe what he does is wrong.

I don't understand why authors use this relationship so much. It's creepy. It's dangerous. Often, it doesn't get the true resolution it deserves.

There were so many other things in this book I could have talked about but these were the main issues I had. I'll leave you with my favourite quote from the whole thing:

**"Her heart...hurt. She didn't know her organs could get cramp."**

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### **Kate (GirlReading) says**

Firstly I have to say I really enjoy the way Holly Bourne writes. Her books are such comfortable reads. They flow brilliantly and read so quickly. I pretty much zoomed through and finished this in one sitting. Holly somehow manages to tackle difficult topics in a way that makes them 'easy' to read.

With that being said, I didn't love this book. I enjoyed it but there's something making it hard for me to work out how I feel about it. I'm conflicted. The whole book gave me a huge 'Mean Girls' movie vibe, it was similar in so many ways that I couldn't stop comparing the two. I found myself struggling to warm to Bree's character which is odd considering we're somewhat similar in things we've dealt with/how we've felt. I just think In the ways that we're not similar, we're such polar opposites I found it hard to connect with her and her actions, especially towards others.

BUT I couldn't stop reading, I was drawn into the book and the lives of these characters despite pretty accurately predicting what would happen. I just don't know how to feel. I enjoyed it, I think, just not as much as I had expected too. I think I possibly put my expectations on this book too high after loving Holly's other book 'Am I Normal Yet?' so much.

I will 100% continue to read whatever Holly Bourne writes because, as I said, I LOVE the way she writes and they way I read her books!

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### **Georgie says**

I need to write this review because this book got on my nerves so much.

It's great if you love this book. I'm happy that you enjoyed it. Before I started reading, I read a lot of reviews that declared 'The Manifesto On How To Be Interesting' as "the best of the year" or the new "favorite YA novel". I had high hopes, obviously.

Instead of a great story with good characters and a solid plot, I found myself reading some kind of soap box speech about teenage culture and its downfalls. The writing's not bad, but the whole story just does not sit well with me on any level.

Yes, there's a lot of truth to the themes in this novel. No, that doesn't make the way it was executed acceptable. It makes it unforgivable.

This novel touches on a lot of issues that I've dealt with / am still dealing with. I love feeling connected to characters / plots that I can directly relate to - this book was not that. I was bullied horrendously for three and a half years; it's painful and it's horrible and it really, really sucks. Surprisingly, never did I once think that I should get revenge on the people who did it to me, because as much as they made me cry and gave me the problems I still have to deal with today, I knew that they were still people.

This book angered me deeply and I only finished it because I wanted there to be some sort of fix for the awful things that Bree does. There wasn't really, there was just more preaching and skimming over issues

that could have been approached with much more realism.

"I'm horrible and I'm going to hurt you and try and seduce your boyfriend and I'm sorry but I have to."

I mean, in what world do you sympathize with a character who thinks things like that? My friends have had to listen to me rant about Bree's stupidity all week long. I can't accurately describe how annoyed I was whilst reading.

I want to make it clear that I think this novel offers some unfortunately truthful musings on teenage life, and that's great. What is not great at all is the way they're executed.

Maybe it's me. Everyone seems to worship this book and I cannot understand that at all.

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### **Patricia Crowther says**

4.5\*

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