



Pretenders

Lisi Harrison

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It takes place at a high school in New Jersey. Summer is over. Sophomore year begins tomorrow. Outfits are being planned. Lunch buddies are being secured. Texts are flying. All seems normal when...ping! Everyone in the sophomore class gets an email.

SUBJECT: The Phoenix Five: License To Spill.

Attached is a mega document.

A letter from a mysterious student starts the book. It explains that at the end of each year the school yearbook- The Phoenix- names the five most outstanding freshman. She (or he) always suspected that last years' five (3 girls, 2 boys) were phonies. She (or he) always thought they tried too hard to be popular. But she (or he) never had the proof. Until now. She (or he) stole the secret diaries they were asked to keep by their English teacher. She (or he) has compiled them into a book.

This is that book.

Pretenders Details

Date : Published October 1st 2013 by Poppy (first published 2013)

ISBN :

Author : Lisi Harrison

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Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Realistic Fiction

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From Reader Review Pretenders for online ebook

Michelle (Pink Polka Dot Books) says

4.5 Stars

Each year the yearbook at Noble High announces The Phoenix Five. The five most outstanding freshman, chosen to represent the class. But as the next school year begins, someone has decided that these five are nothing but fakes... and they've decided to prove it. It seems that in freshman year English class students were made to keep a journal. One that was never to be read by anyone, not even the teacher. But now each of The Phoenix Five's journals have been stolen and leaked to the entire school.... and what will they reveal?? Maybe it will show that none of these students were ever deserving of awards. Maybe it will reveal secrets that no one was ever meant to see. The kicker here? The person who stole and released the journals is one of The Phoenix Five him/herself!!

My Thoughts:

This was a total impulse pick up for me. I was at the library, saw it on the NEW shelf, remembered seeing it on one of my New Releases posts a while ago, and grabbed it. I figured a book written entirely by journal entries was definitely something I would like.... and it was!!

This book is written in alternating journal entries from five freshman starting Noble High who all end up being interconnected. Every one of them has secrets. Some came with baggage and some create it as they go, but they all end up in a mess one way or the other. Here is a summary of these characters:

Sheridan- A drama girl who strives for the lead in every play... and she's usually successful. Her BFF (and only real friend), Audri, seems to be slipping away due to a crush and the super annoying Octavia.

Andrew- Basketball = Life. Due to his parents' financial situation, his dream of playing varsity is severely put in jeopardy.... until his sister shows him a way to come up with the money: Be a walking billboard.

Lily- Ex-Homie (homeschooler) who is a little overwhelmed by socializing at Pub (public school). The deal she made with her mom is that she maintains straight A's or she's being yanked back home. But Lily is too worried about socializing and obsessing over Andrew to focus on school.

Vanessa- A type A who just wants a peaceful home life. Unfortunately the only time her parents don't fight is when she brings home some type of award or awesome grade. Now she's crushing on Blake (Lily's closeted gay BFF) and desperately trying to keep her family together.

Jagger- Emancipated minor who's parents are apparently in jail. He lives in the back of a pet store in exchange for a place to sleep. Known only by Jagger, like Madonna or Cher. The mystery surrounding him intrigues his classmates, especially Audri.

I really really enjoyed reading this book. I can't find a better word for these characters other than fun. I had so much fun reading about them that I became a little bit addicted to it and ended up reading this far too late into the night. I love books that make me do that! My favorite person to read about was Sheridan. She has all the typical insecurities of a teenage girl, but she's a talented actress which she couldn't be without confidence. In order to gain this confidence, she adopts personas of different actresses and the characters they portray. Usually something like this would annoy me, but that didn't happen here. I mean high school is hard. I wish I would have figured out how to channel some confident girl when I was in 9th grade. Even if it was an act. There's nothing worse than wearing your insecurities on your sleeve in high school. I have a feeling that Sheridan is going to learn how to be herself someday, but until then, I like seeing her "become" all these different characters

The big surprise for me was how intense and fast everything happened right at the end of the book. It left me a little too cut off. I get a cliffhanger in a series, but this felt a little unfinished. Also I didn't know this was a series (although I figured it out when I was still in September at 1/2 way through). But the series thing is okay with me... as long as I don't have to WAIT forever for the next book. Because I really really want to know what happens!!! And at this point it is really hard to imagine how in the hell these kids are going to end up getting chosen as most outstanding freshman. They are all a little crazy and odd and they aren't exactly hiding it.

I will say that if you're looking for something intense and for the secrets to be like life or death, this probably isn't your book. The secrets are definitely more of the everyday kind. I found it a nice break from books that have me rolling my eyes thinking yeah right this could happen. Most of the stuff that happens in this book is more down to Earth.

OVERALL: So fun!! I really had fun reading this book which consisted of alternating journal entries. I loved how all five characters were so different, but at the same time they all meshed together. If you feel like reading something fresh and different, I would definitely recommend this fun, drama-filled series! I also think this would be perfect for younger teens and/or fans of Pretty Little Liars.

My Blog:

Lynn says

Consider yourself WARNED - this book is the first of a series and it just ends. Full stop, no closure for any of the characters. You will have to read the next book if you want to know how any of this works out.

I LOVED this book until it ended. Everything about it drew me in, and I turned pages like crazy. And then...it just ended. Every single character was left dangling with a full-stop cliff hanger. I've never been so furious. I don't mind books that are part of a series with an over-all arc, but I expect each individual book to have some form of closure at the end. This had none of it. Worst of all, there was no warning that this would be the case - that this was the first book in a series. If I had known that, I wouldn't have started it until the next book was available. I feel so used and frustrated.

Whitley Birks says

See more reviews on my blog

A cliffhanger does not mean the same thing as randomly cauterizing your plot in the middle of the rising action, but no one bothered to tell this book. There is no climax to this thing, no resolution of any sort. Instead the book just gets chopped off in the middle of set-up. It builds and builds and builds and then HAH, NOPE, YOU GET NOTHING. And that is not a cliffhanger, that is prematurely ejaculated book.

If not for that ending, I would have rated it higher. It wasn't really for me, but mostly because of style choices. I didn't like the faux-diary style (it was written more like regular narration with an overabundance

of quirks than like a diary) but others will. It had had a very young-teenage voice, which is appropriate given that all the characters are freshmen. The pace was extremely slow and plodding at the start, but it picked up right before the epic literary blueballing. With five characters, there was a lot of setting up to be done, and it got rather tedious, but for people who enjoy slice-of-life high school it would probably be fine. It's pretty clear that the author has favorites, though. Jagger barely got any page time at all. Between the young voice and the mired-in-early-HS-drama, it just wasn't for me, but I can see how others would like it.

The biggest problem I had (other than the COMPLETEL LACK OF AN ENDING, NOT GOING TO FORGET THAT) was how much it failed to deliver on the premise. The idea is that all these kids are "pretenders," faking their way to popularity or whatever, and the whole point of "publishing their journals" is to expose how hard they are working to cover up this or that. Well...I didn't see a lot of pretending going on. Vanessa was a girl who worked really hard at her grades...and got good grades and didn't try to act like anything else was going on. Lily was a girl who desperately wanted to be normal...so she acted in the way she desperately wanted. Ooo, wow, such drama. And so on and so forth. No one was particularly trying to pretend at anything. Wanting something and then going after that something is not pretending, that's just...the human experience. I think this premise might have played better if we could see more of the school and where they stood in the esteem of their classmates, but the cast size is very small. As far as we know, each of these characters only interacts with two or three people on any given day, which makes it hard to feel like they're putting on any kind of a show. How can you show without an audience?

A review copy was provided free through NetGalley

Crowinator says

Was there this much drama in my high school? Yes, sort of -- the relationship dramas and identity issues and popularity contests and fashion experiments were there. I'm less sure about the more melodramatic parts of these five character's stories, such as the parents on death row and the boyfriend of a sister involved in a pyramid scam.

I wanted to hate this soapy high-school drama but I just couldn't. It wasn't bad, and I can think of a number of high-school girls at the library who will really like it. I read it in a few hours and I kept thinking, "oh, this isn't my thing, I should start skimming so I can finish faster", but I didn't, because the writing and plotting was much better than I expected. I still won't be reading the sequel, even with the (cheap) cliffhanger ending, because it's just not my kind of book, not even as a guilty pleasure, not even when I was a teenager. It's forgettable, and once the brand-name and pop culture references become outdated, it'll be forgotten, but for a well-plotted diversion for lovers of almost-believable melodrama, it does the trick. The two-stars is, in this case, just an inherent disconnect between reader and book.

Read Between the Pages says

I've never read a book by Lisi Harrison, and I probably never will besides this series. This is the first book in the series and just came out in October of 2013, so I'm not expecting a sequel anytime soon. And notice how I said this was a book, and not a novel. Siiiigh....

When I first picked this up, I thought this would be interesting and scandalous! The Barnes & Nobles YA section has failed me...it was only interesting at the end, and there wasn't much scandal. Sheridan was your

typical blond tryhard, Duffy your typical 'I'm not like all the other jocks' jock, Vanessa was your typical smart chick who wants a hot bf, Jagger typical bad boy, and Lily typical weirdo chick. Honestly, I just thought this was a highschool movie in book form. Wasn't much for me to be completely engrossed on. It felt like some entries were missing, which gave the story a choppy feel, and then some characters had more book space than others. If there are going to be 5 characters, I want to know equally about all of them. And I don't wanna know who they are through other character's entries. Take Jagger and Vanessa for example, compare the two and it seemed like the author cared more about Vanessa's life, than that of Jagger's. It would have been nice if there was a balance.

Also, it was a very basic book. Juvenile, and cliched. Everything that I expected to happen, happened. And there was no big twist at the end, even though there was a cliffhanger. No matter how much I didn't like this book, I'll be reading the second one when it comes out simply because I just have to know what happens next. If there's one thing Harrison did right, it was leaving off at the climax.

So all in all, 2/5 because I cannot — will not — give this a 3 no matter how much I liked the ending.

Jessy MelodyofBooks says

Meine Rezension: <http://youtu.be/ncvHmeOKI-E>

Elsa says

To be honest, I was quite disappointed.

In fifth and sixth grade, I was obsessed with the Clique novels. I loved Alphas even more, when that series came out. Monster High was okay, but I never did get around to reading the last book.

When I heard the premise: "Three girls, two guys, five secrets", I thought it sounded exciting, and so I checked it out.

It was not what I was expecting.

The entire novel felt like a watered-down version of Pretty Little Liars for the younger set. The characters were boring, self-absorbed, and shallow. Each felt cookie-cutter. You had your "boy-next-door basketball jock," the "drama queen," an "overachiever perfectionist," and the "dorky skater girl." There even was the "gay best friend" and "hot popular older sister." The only character who really caught my attention was Jagger, who would be the typical "loner bad-boy with a mysterious past" except that he's emancipated, and apparently his parents are on death row, which takes the "mysterious past" thing to an entirely different level.

Duffy, the jock, reminded me so much of another not-so-smart basketball player in a different book. However, the other character was eleven years old, while Duffy is fourteen or fifteen. Just goes to show the level of maturity of the protagonists here.

I really hated how, as soon as the girls (especially Lily, the dork) found some guy they found attractive, it was like their entire worlds revolved around him. Lily stalks Duffy, steals pretty much anything he's touched for her collection, and leaves home-school for public school to get more face time with him. She blows hundreds of dollars on stuff he tells her to buy, not seeing that he's just using her.

Vanessa, the overachiever, was another disappointment. While I do like how sharp and cunning she is, I feel like her motives are flimsy and too blatant—"When I get an A, my parents take us out to this restaurant, where they don't argue." I mean, come on, couldn't she have something a bit deeper? Something about how

good grades are something she feels like she has control over while the rest of her world is spinning loose, or how she defines herself by her GPA? And of course, as soon as she meets this super-cute guy (who's gay, but she doesn't know that) it's game over and her grades go down. It's like the book is saying it's impossible to balance a social life and academics, or that loooooveeee (more like infatuation) gives you the right to let your studies slip.

(A digression: Noble High is supposedly the best school in the country. However, these students throw parties and worry much more about which boy likes them than their studies. Duffy and Sheridan are not on the intelligent side. A school where 47% of the graduating seniors go to Ivies would almost certainly require an entrance exam and essay for admission, even if it's a public school, and the entire student body would be comprised of Vanessas, uptight perfectionists. And the freshmen would be taking more than one AP class, which may be good at a regular high school but not at the top institute in the nation, and I doubt Algebra would be even offered as a course, as "that's so seventh-grade." And yes, I would know this for a fact.) I will be reading the sequel, but if it fails to impress, it's unlikely I'll be looking at the third.

(Random side-note: I did like how she intentionally dated these, though. I was a freshman in the 2012-2013 school year, like these kids, so that was cool.)

Abbie says

(I received a copy from Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review)

Pretenders and i did not get along **at all**.

It was so dull, housework started looking appealing.
By 60%, i was starting to lose the will to live.

The characters were absolutely ridiculous.
Lilly was by far the worst one. I **really** didn't like her.

I will defiantly **not** be reading book two.

Andrea ♥Ninja Bunneh♥ says

Every year at the fucktabulous Noble High, 5 students are nominated as the most outstanding of that year. They are dubbed the "Phoenix Five". One of these spectacular teens has snagged the personal journals of the rest, and wants to expose them all as fakes. This individual distributes the journals to the entire school for all to see.

Basically what you get are the ramblings of five teens. One girl who pretends to be various actresses, two forgettable guys, some other random chick. The final teen is a girl who is obsessed with one of the guys and stalks him. She also steals his stuff and hoards it in her closet.

The journals consist of crushes, teen angst, crushes, more teen angst, parties, unattainable crushes, and last

but not least, teen angst. It bored me to tears.

If you need a teen angst fix, I highly recommend watching these guys.

They got it *right*.

Just to add, this book wins the award for worst ending in the history of any book I have *ever* read. Simply because there isn't one.

Zero Ninja-Bunnehs

(Arc received in exchange for an honest review.)

Michelle Wrona says

Is it possible to say that this is Lisi Harrison's worst book and I didn't enjoy it that much? Yes, you got it Massie Block.

After becoming obsessed with Lisi's *Clique* series and finishing it many years ago when the final book was released, I was very **sad**. *The Clique* was an amazing series and it was one of the first series/books that brought me into the YA Fiction world, and look at where I am today.

But it's already been many years, and I've been waiting for something else by Lisi Harrison. Then **boom** *Pretenders* comes out but I was afraid to see what would come out from it. The summary didn't really sound captivating and it was somewhat childish.

When you compare an adult book to this, you just want to laugh. This is nothing, and I definitely see that this should be released as a 9-12 years old fiction book. It's very light and immature and if you're looking for a hardcore gorgeous romance contemporary, just run away from this book. But I still overall recommend it. It wasn't absolutely horrible or unbearable to read. It was just... **okay**.

In an English class, everyone is assigned a journal. A journal where five freshman students will be spending time writing about their daily lives and secrets and hopes and dreams. But then, their hopes and dreams are revealed to everyone, and no one's safe from keeping secrets.

This book was somewhat a **much dumber, crazier but less hectic version of The Clique**. It focuses on the same concepts and drama and I just felt that there was a Massie everywhere, and her ghost. LOL. Am I weird? Okay, but they did make Massie references which fans will definitely understand and catch all throughout this book.

My main dilemma with this book was that I didn't catch any moral and uniqueness than from any other contemporary books. It was just so bland and plain and we all saw what was coming. I won't say that

I was extremely bored, because I obviously wasn't, but what was the meaning of this? I seriously have to call a philosopher and tell them to read this book and tell me.

Close your eyes. (Obviously you won't and can't cause you need to read this.) But picture two guys and five girls writing about their love lives and problems in a journal. Doesn't that sound cheesy? I know right. I was dumb for picking this up, though. Just because your favourite author has written a new book, doesn't mean that you should pick the book up. Just look at Maggie Stiefvater's **The Raven Boys** and **The Scorpio Races**!

The characters in this book were okay, I have to admit that. I all loved and enjoyed reading their POVs equally, and they all had different wacky personalities which really brightened up the book. Everyone had something different and cute about them!

Here was what the romance was like:

THERE WAS NO ROMANCE WHATSOEVER. Sure there was some flirting and maybe a few kisses here and there, but I'm very surprised because this is written by The Lisi Harrison- master of making girls' hearts squirm. And this is just another reason why this book was so immature and weird.

This whole book didn't really have any events. We were on a hill to the top the whole time, and then in the end, it just ended where everything just began, if you know what I mean. This is very horrible to do to the reader, but I made it.

Although I completely recommend it to someone who doesn't really want a plot, I don't think I'll be interested in reading the sequel and the rest of this series.

Colette says

Loved it! Can't wait to find out what happens in the rest of the saga!

Anna says

A reminder that I'm too old for these kinds of books. I've never read the Clique series, but Lisi Harrison has a good presence in the adolescent genre and if she tried, her writing can appeal to a more mature audience. The real big problem I had with this book is that there isn't a clear satisfaction that the reader can take away since the book's seemingly only purpose is to set up the characters, the backgrounds, and their problems only to find that the end is a cliffhanger. I don't think it could be possible to have a favorite character or a favorite moment, but perhaps this can be traced back to the fact that I'm nearing the quarter-life-crisis where most thoughts of fictional teenagers seem banal. Or maybe I'm missing out on something because I've gotten this advanced copy before the actual publication date, and some things may change. Otherwise, I felt like three-quarters of the book is missing, and I would actually have to put my money into getting the second book to finish the first. This must be what getting an Xbox One feels like.

Eden says

I know that over 80% of my books are rated at least four to five stars. I should really rate how I want to, and not try to be nice. THIS book isn't one of them! I rated it with five soaring stars because I liked how the story alternated points of views. Each story was hmm... Maybe five to eight pages each? I think my favorite character (s) were Vanessa and Sheridan. Sheridan reminded me of myself, since she's UBER-dramatic about things, as I am. And Vanessa cares about her grades, I do too, but not as much. I care if they are As and Bs -- lower, I cry. I felt bad for Lily, because she liked Duffy, and he just sold her the clothes [that were meant for boys] and didn't give any second thoughts. I sorta' see Blake and Lily together... But you know how Blake is.

The only thing I didn't like was the cliffhanger. I think Ms. Harrison meant for the reader to be excited because.. Wait. Drumroll please...

She's making another book!!! It's gonna be a series!!!

♥ Innocent Lamb ~ Forever Reading ♥ - AKA Smarties says

My reaction to this book can be summed up in one little gif:

For me, the highlight of this book would probably be the blurb and the deceptively pretty cover.

Unfortunately, the lowlight would have to be everything else.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Little, Brown Books for Young Readers and Netgalley.)

5 teenagers, 5 diaries, what will happen?

Unfortunately, this book was just boring.

The characters –

Lily – certifiable (due to delusions). Originally told us she was 5-months pregnant with triplets, not sure if this was true, but if it was, why was she still going after other guys?

Vanessa – certifiable (due to inability to deal with reality). Totally focused on school, achievements, and grades. Also totally in denial about the state of her parent's marriage.

Sheridan – certifiable (due to delusions of grandeur). Pretends her entire life is a movie scene, where she is a famous actress. Even when her life is nothing like a movie.

Duffy – Lacks intelligence. Who is stupid enough to accept dodgy clothes off a dodgy bloke, and \$2500, with a promise to sell said dodgy clothes to friends? Yes, Duffy.

Jagger – certifiable (due to inability to come to terms with certain life events). Jagger seems to be having

issues coming to terms with the fact that his parents are in jail, and probably shouldn't spend so much time alone.

The storyline in this was just pitiful. There was the stupid storyline with Duffy, who was stupid enough to get himself involved with some crook, but as for other storylines I didn't really find any.

This whole book was nothing more than 5 teenagers moaning, and moaning, and making stuff up, and making stupid decisions, and moaning some more. Ick. And if that wasn't bad enough, the story didn't even end. We got left with multiple cliff-hangers, and although I was pleased when the end appeared at 93% (yay! I don't have to read any more!) Why wasn't more resolved?! What was in the darn suitcase that Duffy found on his doorstep and called the police about?! Is Lily really pregnant?!

Urgh!

Overall; dull, filled with teenagers moaning, and had multiple cliff-hangers. Save me!

3 out of 10.
