



Bird

Crystal Chan

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A girl who was born on the day her brother Bird died has grown up in a house of silence and secrets. When she meets John, a mysterious new boy in her rural Iowan town, those secrets start to come out.

Bird Details

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Author : Crystal Chan

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From Reader Review Bird for online ebook

C.G. Drews says

I'm actually procrastinating this review! (Proof: I just found this super sweet GIF of Sam and Frodo after they nearly drown.) Why am I procrastinating?

It was so dang good I can't turn it into words!

5-stars isn't even enough! It tore up all my feels and hit all my heartstrings. I just want to gather up EVERYONE in the book and hug them. (I don't even do hugs. But they all need one.)

It's totally sad and beautiful all at once. Can I just mention that this is a debut?! Imagine how fantastic the author is going to be with her next book...and her next. The writing is stunning. At times, I'd have preferred the paragraphs to be shorter. But the imagery was beautiful. The voice of the narrator (Jewel) was so intimate and relatable.

The characters? I looooved the characters. It's narrated (in first person) by Jewel. Can you imagine being born on the day your 5-year-old brother died? She doesn't even know the person her family have spent the last 12 years grieving about. I got very riled up as I read the book...Jewel feels unwanted and unloved. Her parents...argh! Her parents! They blamed her for things they did. They never had time for her.

I love how she finds a friend in John. I love the simplicity of their friendship. Climb trees. Eat. Awesome friendship.

See how hard it is to write a logical review? I hope you appreciate what I'm going through.

Is it Middle-Grade or Young-Adult? Jewel is 12, which makes it MG, right? But it deals with so many themes: superstition, feeling unwanted, death, being mixed-race, complicated families, betrayal, and friendship. Those are BIG things to cover in any book! I felt the voice was definitely tailored to younger kids, but there is a lot to chew on. It's not light and fluffy.

All you basically need to know is: **read this book now.**

Nomes says

When I first heard about Bird from Text I felt really excited. It sounded gorgeous and special and a little bit mysterious. Plus the cover is seriously something else (in person it is even more striking). I dove straight in the day it arrived and had no idea what to expect. It took less than a paragraph to feel hooked, and less than a chapter for Jewel to set up camp in my heart.

Jewel is my favourite kind of heroine: fierce and creative and lonely and marching along to the beat of her own drum. She's daring and smart and unashamedly stands out from the crowd. She's surrounded by a tragedy that's coloured her entire existence and yet her optimism shines, thumps along even as danger and mystery shroud her. Things go from bad to worse and revelations leave her (and us - the readers) reeling.

It wasn't just Jewel (love her) or the mystery (I had no idea how things were going to turn out) that kept me turning the pages -- Chan's prose is truly gorgeous, just the right blend of humour and sentiment, poetic but never flowery, succinct and cutting right to the core of emotions. The dialogue is awesome, and being inside Jewel's mind is a treat -- she thinks beautiful and unexpected things, ever hopeful and always loveable. This book feels like it was a labour of love -- and it makes it a treasure to behold.

My reviews always tend to focus on how I responded to a book -- I like to leave the plot a surprise, but here's a taste of what you will find inside *Bird*: small isolated town (the setting is sublime, engaging all the readers senses), Jamaican culture, a mysterious and fun new friendship (but can it be trusted?), duppies (discover for yourself...), family secrets and a heroine with a heart so big she bursts from the page. Jewel is younger than the usual YA heroine - but she's a perfect voice for upper MG, YA and adult readers to connect to.

Bird's fairytale vibe an intoxicating blend of whimsy and realism that left me feeling like anything could happen. An astonishing debut that I highly, completely recommend.

Kelly (Diva Booknerd) says

Win a copy of *Bird* <http://www.divabooknerd.com/2014/02/b...>

Bird was a beautifully haunting and poignant story about love, loss and how sometimes a family needs to fall apart before we can put it back together. Jewel is an intelligent and empathetic young lady, who deserves to be seen, to be nurtured and to be loved. Her parents may not have intentionally placed expectations upon Jewel, but Jewel certainly has. She sees herself as the replacement child for her brother Bird. Where Bird had the best of her family, now Jewel getting only what remains. Her story is incredibly sad, until John enters the picture. John shares his name with Bird, his real name that is, and may even be a mirror of what Bird may have looked like at the same age. The family believe it may be a sign, whether one of evil or not is yet to be seen.

Unbelievably, this is a debut novel. Crystal Chan is a storyteller who paints a vivid picture for her readers, and fills it with indepth characters that will take your emotions to the limits. I absolutely loved Jewel's character. She may be only twelve, but she felt like an old soul that deserves more than what life has given her. Her parents weren't cruel, but too busy grieving for Bird, that even twelve years later they can't find the strength to provide a life for their living child. With no one to talk to, Jewel finds solace in the earth. Each grievance is placed upon a stone and buried, using it as a coping mechanism as she's scared to upset her parents any further. It takes her grandpa who begins to form a relationship with Jewel to see how special this young lady truly is. Her journey was heartbreakng, often leaving me highly emotional which for me is the sign of a brilliant author. As the story built and reached a crescendo, I found myself quietly sobbing, smiling and sighing.

Bird is the middle grade equivalent to *The Fault in our Stars*.

Christy says

Okay I just finished this and I'm still wiping the tears away. "Grandpa stopped speaking the day he killed my brother John". Yeah that's the first sentence in this book so if you have a heart at some point your going to

cry during this book.

This is a must read. Seriously. I didn't want to put it down.

Ilse says

Secrets, silence and little lies

Joy is like a child... You feed it or it dies.

Where was all this joy, and where does joy go when it leaves your family? Does it goes to someone else's family, soak into the earth, or does it dissolve away like your breath in the winter? And if it doesn't leave like this, then why isn't there any left for me?

This was the 7th out of 8 novels that were selected for the KJV contest 2015-2016 and by far one of the finest young adult novels of the selection. Bird pleasantly surprised me: I wouldn't have picked a novel dealing with intense emotions like anger, loneliness and grief responding to the loss of a child, about grief, guilt and remorse freezing the affected family spontaneously.

I was delighted this sublime debut novel really resonated with the boys in the YA discussion group I had been assisting. They were genuinely amazed by the artful skills of the writer, the credible evocation of a world entirely unfamiliar to them (what magic does Chan use that I actually believe this weird story could have happened for real, one of them exclaimed). Feeling privileged by observing this breathtaking moment of consciousness-raising on the power of words with these 13 year old boys, I optimistically got home with a broad smile on my face, enjoying once more the connectedness books induce between people.

(Gabriel Isak)

Jewel, the 12 year old narrator is a bright young girl of mixed origins with a passion for geology, living in Caledonia, Iowa. She is largely ignored and left to her own devices by her embittered and grieving parents and grandfather, who are devastated by the death of Jewel's 5 year old brother. John, nicknamed "Bird", fell off a cliff the day Jewel was born and his death encumbers Jewel and her family ever since. They live together in murderous silence and misunderstanding, isolated from other people. There is no place for joy or peace. Chan aptly uses the theme of the family's silence to explore human communication, for better and for worse, as a healing power, but also as a weapon:

In my house we wield silence like shields and swords: we use it to push people away or injure them.

As Jewel feels unseen and unwanted by her family, she creates her own secret places to withdraw herself to. Not an ordinary girl, she climbs into trees at night to meditate on her life – occasion on which she meets another outsider, who will become her only friend, a soulmate with a similar zeal for science, particularly for astronomy and space travelling. Observing her family from a distance, she eventually wants to find out what the omnipresent silence at home is covering up and what she is not supposed to know about the death of her brother. The encounter with her new friend stimulates her to look for new horizons, broadening her mind and breaking the silence. Jewel's insightful reflections and lovely observations make up a great deal of this novel's charm. And the story is written in gorgeous, poetic prose, with an outstandingly vivid depiction of nature – trees, birds, landscapes, rocks and the weather. Poignant, beautiful imagery relates the characters to

natural phenomena; Jewel's friend, a boy much out of place like herself, is like the erratic granite boulders swept away by glaciers aeons ago, ending up million miles away from the roots.

The significance of nature to Jewel almost turns nature into a character itself, not just an decorative element, but profoundly bound to the lives of the characters. The references to Jamaican culture are how Chan deals with the themes of superstition, belief and fate are imaginative, original and convincing.

A moving and heartwarming 'coming of age' story on family, identity, loss, friendship, trust, betrayal and forgiveness. In the end the feathers ruffled by Bird's death are somehow smoothed. The tense family ties are soothed and strengthened at the same time.

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

Actual rating: 3.5 stars

I did not RUE my decision.*

My experience with Bird by Crystal Chan really reaffirms my love of audiobooks. See, this is a book I NEVER would have picked up were it not for the fact that I'm powerless against a celebrity narrator. The blurb of the book really didn't appeal to me, but Amandla Stenberg is adorable, so I had to try this book. Though it's very much not my usual type of book, Bird by Crystal Chan really worked, particularly due to Stenberg's performance.

Read the full review at [A Reader of Fictions](#).

* This is narrated by Amandla Stenberg, who played Rue in *The Hunger Games*.**

**I sense your groans and they please me.

Gina says

Inspired by nature, superstition, and tradition Bird by Crystal Chan is a stunning middle grade debut. In a small Iowan town Jewel is born on the day her brother dies. Now 12 years old for Jewel living in a home filled with silent grief and secrets is all she has ever known, until she finds a boy in her favorite climbing tree.

I thoroughly enjoyed this read, the writing style is so down-to-earth. Chan takes time to beautifully describe our connection with the natural world, a central theme in the novel. I was most impressed with the evolution

of Jewel's relationship with her grandpa as well as her friendship with the mysterious boy in the tree. Both developments had me smiling and offered levity when Jewel faced tough times. Sensitive to the real issues a sibling encounters when a family endures with the loss of a child the novel does possess a darker tone - addressing anger and the damage silence can do, but Chan also demonstrates how silence can heal so there is always a bit of light on the next page. Jewel's voice remains strong and thoughtful from beginning to end, you gain a realistic sense of her growth as she questions loneliness, joy, and the traditional beliefs of her multiracial family. A poignant read about family, friends, and forgiveness. 4/5 stars.

Eugenia (Genie In A Book) says

This review also appears on the blog Chasm of Books

Thank you to Text Publishing Australia for sending me a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review

Nothing matters, I realized. Only Bird Matters. And he flew away.

I found *Bird* to be a beautifully written novel of grief, friendship and the idea that although things might not always be what they seem, things can still work out in the end. Crystal Chan has used some evocative imagery throughout the book to set a lovely scene for how one girl grows through her new experiences.

As Bird's life ended, Jewel's was only just beginning. On that one fateful day her brother John believed he could fly, and jumped off the cliff as a result. Jewel's grandpa stopped speaking after that. Her father takes after grandpa in his belief in spirits and that is what 'duppies' which made Bird (John) do what he did. As Jewel's family is still trying to piece things together and patch the hole that Bird left in his wake, tensions rise and the cracks begin to show. Through meeting a new friend and realising what else is out there with the importance of the cliff, Jewel develops as a character and grows as a person.

What the author did superbly well with this book was write it with such pictorial language. Everywhere, scattered throughout the story were some lovely similes and metaphors which immediately added to the depth of the novel and its potential. A book that is simply entertaining is one thing, but to be written in such a beautiful style is another talent altogether. The vivid descriptions of the cliff and how it felt for Jewel to be there were executed perfectly and really set the scene for the reader in their minds.

Also, the characters in the book were all distinguishable and unique with their own special features. Jewel was a great character in particular, and the author captured her age on the cusp of adolescence really well. The rest of her family were also invested in, and each had both their perks and downfalls. The drama that ensued in certain parts of the novel gave it a sense of reality and fit in well with what was going on in the story. Jewel's relationships with her parents and new friend John were more complex than they first appeared. Everything that Crystal Chan envisioned in the characters came through clearly, with enough subtlety to match the writing style.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Bird* is a novel that I would highly recommend for contemporary fans. Both older middle-

grade readers and those who like the young-adult genre are sure to appreciate this book for its beautiful prose and a storyline with a journey of self discovery.

Tara says

This middle-grade book has gotten much attention, and rightfully so. Chan has a fluid, wise, poetic prose style and a large heart that leaves everything on the page. As someone who is biracial, I wish I had had this book growing up. The narrator, Jewel, is of Jamaican and Mexican descent, and Chan manages to weave in culture, geology, astronomy, and the supernatural all in one touching tale of loss and healing. In a world where children are becoming slaves to the screen, I wish for them Chan's world of cliffs and trees, and grasses and lakes. And while this is for younger children, teens and adults are reading it and getting much from her artfully woven story.

Every reader of any age can relate in some way to Jewel's search for acceptance and joy. "Joy is like a child ... you feed it or it dies." We all need to be reminded by children like Jewel how to be joyful and how to treat each other. Buy this book for every MG reader you know. It's an important, winning debut.

Emre says

"Büyükbabam, a?abeyim John'un ölümiine neden oldu? u günden sonra bir daha konu?mam??" Sf:7

Mara says

My ARC of *Bird* was sent to me by the publisher through Goodreads First Reads giveaway. I was not obligated to write a positive review. This is my full and honest opinion.

Cover Blurb: Yes or No? There's nothing very exciting about the cover art, and normally I wouldn't pay it much mind. But I do have a thing for silhouettes, and once I saw the silhouette I decided to read the synopsis. And that's what really caught my attention. Intrigue-level aside, it is aesthetically pleasing. I love the blue-purple color and the watercolor style of it.

Characters: Jewel was easy to emotionally connect with. She tries to do everything her parents ask of her, including never talking about what happened to her brother, and they constantly ignore her and never listen to what she needs or wants. Normally, a character in this situation can come across as bratty, but I totally sympathized with Jewel and really didn't like her parents all that much - especially her mom. It took me a while to warm to the "mysterious boy" - John. He had a great sense of humor and listened to Jewel like a good friend, but at times he was too disrespectful of Jewel's house and its rules. It made me want to slap it him, but overall he was a cool character.

The Romance: There isn't any! I was worried at first reading about a "mysterious boy," but all Jewel and John have is a really good friendship.

Plot: Everyone knows that it's Grandpa's fault that Jewel's brother Bird died when he was five. If Grandpa hadn't given him that nickname, it wouldn't have attracted a mischievous spirit - a *duppy* - that convinced

Bird that he could actually fly. And Bird would not have leaped off that cliff. Ever since that day, Grandpa has never said another word. And on the day that Bird died and Grandpa lost his voice, Jewel was born. All her life, her family has been cast in shadows and sorrow because of Bird's death. No one will talk about it and her parents are too wrapped up in their old grief to pay much attention to their daughter. Jewel has learned to keep her hopes and dreams to herself. She's definitely never told her parents that she visits the cliff where her brother died and buries pebbles for every concern and dream she ever has. One summer, though, things change. Jewel finds a boy sitting in her favorite tree, named John - the same name as her brother. Grandpa is convinced that John is an evil *duddy* come to take Jewel away, while her dad believes he at least is a bad omen. But Jewel thinks that John is something much more; a chance to change her life. John listens to her dreams for the future and he shows her how to laugh again. But she can't deny the odd coincidence of his name being the same as Bird's, or that the silence in her household has grown into anger and malice. *Is* John a *duddy* or just a boy trying to change Jewel's life for the better? When I first read the synopsis for *Bird*, I thought it either would be inspirational or would take a dark and twisted turn with the whole *duddy* concept. It took the first path. While there certainly is more to John than at first meets the eye, this is mostly an inspirational story about a young girl fighting to be heard in a family swept in unimaginable grief. I don't like inspirational reads. Nine times out of ten, they're depressing and have no real purpose. However, *Bird* wasn't one of those. I connected so deeply with Jewel and had such moments of frustration with her parents that I couldn't help but be swept away by the story. It was a very emotionally charged book. I don't normally get into books like that, but there was just something about this one that wormed its way into my heart.

Believability: Nothing to complain about.

Writing Style: First person, past tense. Jewel has an excellent narration voice. It's emotional, it's hopeful, it's filled with pain and a burning need to be seen by her family. The descriptions are rich and deep; I just couldn't help but be pulled in by it. I felt Jewel's emotions almost as if they were my own, and that's hard to do in a story - to get your Readers to feel everything the protagonist does.

Content: None.

Conclusion: Probably the most emotionally charged moment in the book, and also surprisingly intense. I felt Jewel's fury building and I knew it would end in relative disaster. However, this isn't a bittersweet ending - not exactly. And that's part of why I liked *Bird* so much. I hate inspirational reads that end with everyone dying of illness or killing themselves. This isn't one of those. Every once in a while, I will find an inspirational read that I actually like. *Bird* was amazing; I laughed, I cried, I got incredibly angry at certain characters, and fell in love with others. There was just nothing about *Bird* that I didn't like.

Recommended Audience: Girl-read, really appropriate for any age, though this is a Middle Grade read that will appeal more to adults. Fans of inspirational reads will love it.

Sam says

I received *Bird* on Christmas Eve, it was a great early present. I dived straight into reading it as I won the book in a giveaway and was asked to review it. Reading the first few pages it jumps straight into what the young girl has coped with through her life. Instead of some books where they take a while to get to the backstory, with *Bird* it is in the first few lines. *Bird* is a different genre style to most books as I stick usually to, paranormal and fantasy. But this book has definitely opened my mind to other styles. The story is a moving and emotional ride, some people could relate to the narrator Jewel whom is a young teenager she

feels separated from society. With her brother dying the day she was born and her grandad secluding himself from the family and refusing to speak, she believes she has no one to comfort and relate with her. Until one day a boy named John comes along and changes her life for the better. As they both aspire to have unusual jobs, astronaut and geologist, Jewel finally believes there is someone there to hold her up. Jewel altogether is a strong and mature young girl, and Crystal Chan has done amazing portraying this character. I fully recommend to anyone who wants to read a different style to what they usually choose. Will be definitely looking out for more Crystal Chan books :)

Melanie says

See more reviews at [YA Midnight Reads](#)

4.5 stars

Bird really surprised me--the writing was absolutely spectacular, I loved the prose so much and I found it hard to put it down because of it. Crystal Chan also mastered the characters. They are perfectly flawed (which sounds awfully contradictory) and I felt myself growing onto them when I close the book.

The presence of family is obvious and the drama within was also handled well. You know what? Bird ticks all the boxes for a successful contemporary novel.

A lot of things happened when Bird died. Jewel was born, her grandfather stopped speaking and her family was left in a grief that never seemed to have an end. Jewel's parents blame Grandpa. See, Bird's real name was John but Grandpa said he looked more like a Bird, they way he flapped his arms so much--as if he was about to take flight. And when Jewel was born, Bird took this chance to go to the cliff and see if he could really fly--his father even claims that it was the duppies (spirits). But he could not fly. When Bird jumped, he fell, down down down to his death.

Like I had aforementioned, what shines most in this book was Crystal Chan's prodigious ability to write. Anyone who picks up this book is going to struggle to put it down--I'm that certain. Here's just an example:

I closed my eyes as I stood there, my back muscles relaxing, my arms stretched out, settling into their openness. I didn't know how long I stood there, but I listened to everything I could, to the mice rustling through the leaves, to the bending grasses, to the hollowness of the air over the cliff.

I know I only have this 4.5 stars even though I've mentioned no flaws--but I'll be honest, I don't give those out until I get blown off my feet completely. Still, I highly recommend this to all readers--not just contemporary fans. A novel about acceptance and forgiveness, finding yourself and that making mistakes is totally okay. I am eagerly waiting for the author's next books--she better write more because this beautiful prose should not be just just shown off in one book.

~Thank you Text Publishing for sending me this copy!~

Zohal says

All I can really say about this gorgeous book is that it resonated a lot with me.

I randomly picked this up because it looked and sounded interesting and I was taken by surprise. I was not disappointed at all. A very refreshing read and it made me realise that I'd love to see more YA Fiction novels from the perspective of younger teens. Rather than the 15-16 age group it would be interesting to see more novels from the perspective of a twelve year old as the mindsets of the different ages is very distinct and refreshing to read from.

I definitely recommend this to anyone! The writing is gorgeous! I love poetic writing that's not pretentious. :) :D

Amanda says

Bird is Crystal Chan's debut novel. Set in Caledonia, Iowa, the story revolves around twelve year old Jewel Campbell. Jewel lives with her parents, her grandfather, and their grief. On the day of her birth, her five year old brother jumped off a cliff, believing her could fly. Her grandfather has never spoken since that day and Jewel has lived with the feeling that she is a sub-par replacement to the son her parents loved so dearly.

I was hooked as soon as Jewel started telling her story; she's so lonely, honest, and desperate for love from her parents. She's never celebrated her birthday, she lives with parents that pay so little attention to her that she regularly sneaks out of the house at night, going for walks and climbing trees. The only grandfather she knows is an angry, silent one. Her father has drummed into her the importance of protecting their house from duppies, and she can recall the rare occasions on which her mother truly smiled. Her life was so, so sad and I wanted to snap her parents out of their stupor and make them love her like she so deserved.

I found the writing beautiful and clever; I adored that when Jewel used similes they related to her love of geology eg. 'John's face went hard, like onyx' and 'She always looks for wrinkles or something on her smoky quartz skin' – this added to the depth of Jewel's character and showed how much thought went into creating her.

The family dynamic was explored closely; it was interesting to see the traits Jewel had inherited from her parents and the ways in which she dealt with her anxiety. The addition of her father and grandfather's Jamaican culture was unique and well researched, I loved the power that the music and food had over them, how they helped to forge new relationships. The mystery surrounding Bird's death and the appearance of new-John was so intriguing and it all came together so well. After all the sadness I found the amount of hope at the end was just perfect.

After finishing this book I could not shake the sadness that permeated my heart, I felt wrung out from crying. *Bird* is beautifully captivating, absorbing, and utterly heartbreakingly. I cannot recommend this book enough, to both YA readers and adults.

I know it's only January but it's not too early for me to say that this is one of my favourite books of 2014, and of all time.

** Giveaway open to Aus/NZ residents (ends Feb 5) **

Thank you to the wonderful people at Text Publishing for my review copy.
