



Two Girls Staring at the Ceiling

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This novel-in-verse—at once literary and emotionally gripping—follows the unfolding friendship between two very different teenage girls who share a hospital room and an illness.

Chess, the narrator, is sick, but with what exactly, she isn't sure. And to make matters worse, she must share a hospital room with Shannon, her polar opposite. Where Chess is polite, Shannon is rude. Where Chess tolerates pain silently, Shannon screams bloody murder. Where Chess seems to be getting slowly better, Shannon seems to be getting worse. How these teenagers become friends, helping each other come to terms with their illness, makes for a dramatic and deeply moving read.

Two Girls Staring at the Ceiling Details

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Author : Lucy Frank

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From Reader Review *Two Girls Staring at the Ceiling* for online ebook

Taylor says

This book hit a bit close to home since I was diagnosed at 16 like Chess. I remember having similar feelings and thoughts as her, but my disease was more severe like Shannon. Like Shannon I was rushed into emergency surgery on my 17th birthday which saved my life. This book was a walk down memory lane. I wish I would have had something like this to read when I was sick and undiagnosed or even newly diagnosed to help take some of the negative stigma and loneliness that comes with having IBD.

E. Anderson says

I've long been a fan of novels in verse, and this new verse novel by Lucy Frank comes with a twist. *TWO GIRLS STARING AT THE CEILING* is the story of Chess, who is hospitalized the night after what should have been a high-school-movie-esque-party-turned-romance. But everything went impossibly wrong, and now she's sharing a room with a sad old lady and one of the angriest girls she's ever met. Chess' room mate Shannon has a story to tell, too. And her no bullshit way of thinking -- and talking -- is crossing the curtain that divides their living space in the hospital. Here's the twist: In this novel, the aforementioned curtain is represented by a line down the page. Each girl has her own space, her thoughts and her dialogue on whichever side of the curtain she happens to be standing. It could be considered nothing more than a clever gimmick, but the story is strong enough to power past this label.

Chess is so embarrassed by her evening gone awry. And when she finally comes out of her meds-induced delirium, finding herself parked in a hospital room, she pretty much wishes she could just disappear. Chess never wants to see her crush again, and doesn't even want her friends to visit. (A bestie's brand new dress was ruined in the mortifying incident that landed her in the ER.) And she definitely doesn't want anyone to know her diagnosis: Chron's disease. Known also by it's way less appealing (and much more humiliating) name, inflammatory bowel disease.

The thing is, Shannon isn't going to let her wallow. Shannon has been through what Chess is dealing with, and she's not going to pull any punches when it comes to giving unsolicited advice, going hard on the hospital staff, or asking for exactly what she wants. Chess is a please-and-thank-you sort of girl. But maybe there's something she can learn from her bristly room mate. Her diagnosis -- something she's been trying to avoid, ignoring the pain, telling herself that every incident has been a coincidence -- is terrifying. But maybe, with Shannon at her side, she can find the strength (despite the "evil juice" that is her medication) to face the rest of her life.

For fans of Sonya Sones and Wendy Mass, this is the type of book that sticks with you, opening up the world of an underrepresented illness and creating characters that are not only in the story but in your heart. Reluctant readers will love the unusual style and format, and verse novel lovers will gobble this one up as well. Get it on your shelves for fall!

Maha says

This book was awesome. It was so great that it had me staying up in bed with a flashlight. I really love novels in verse. They make me feel....different, I guess. This novel showed me the beauty of love and that level of having so much pain and feeling so unimportant that the best thing to do is just die. I felt sad for Chess as time passed by, but I felt even more sympathy for Shannon's situation. All throughout the book, I wanted to know the answer to a very big question: What happened on the island on the night of the party? I wanted to know what had caused her hate for David. I am just very glad it all turned okay in the end. I love the way Shannon accepts her illness rather than feeling mortified about it the way Chess does. Shannon's motto is "We don't take stress, we give stress". Shannon knows that she will probably die soon because of the disease, but she doesn't want to die, because she is trying her hardest to fight the disease. I really love the way this story is told, and I will probably read it again soon.

Melissa Chung says

Well this was a journey. I was definitely skeptical going into this book. Picked it up thinking it was a mental health book. It's not. It's a fictional story about Crohn's disease in verse. Which is super random. 3 stars.

Let's start this review off with the book itself. I love the cover. I love that the front and back of the book is a picture of two different patients. I love that the title goes up the naked spine. That title reminds me of the curtain between the two girls in the hospital room. Which brings me to the format of this book. I love that the story/dialogue is separated by a line down the middle of the page. The line represents the curtain. The first page of the book explains how to read the story which I found helpful.

Now let's talk about the contents of the book. As a story it was just okay. It's about two girls who have Crohn's disease. Chess doesn't know anything about the disease. Is taking the whole thing pretty hard. Shannon has had it for awhile. Is the veteran. She is also loud, negative and the typical cliché "bad girl" patient. I've read books like this before where there are two teens around the same age. The veteran/ all knowing kid that has to show the ropes to the new comer.

How did I like it written in verse? Well this is my first taste at a book written this way. I wasn't digging it at the beginning, but towards the end I got used to it. Did it make the story better, being written in verse? Not really. I enjoyed the visual of the line/curtain, but that could have been done in a regular written novel as well. Reading the story in verse kind of made it choppy. Because there is no he said/ she said, I didn't know who was talking. I knew when our main characters were talking but that's about it.

Lastly let's talk about the Crohn's disease aspect of the book. There is nothing in the book that says the author is close to the disease. All it says is that it's entirely fictional and she tried her best with the help of a doctor to get the medical details right. So why write about it? I've heard about Crohn's briefly on HOUSE the t.v. Show. I'm sure teens out there dealing with this autoimmune disease will be interested in reading a book that they can relate to. I just kept saying how random. Maybe this book will bring more awareness to this disease.

I found the book just okay. I would need to read more by Lucy Frank to get an idea on how I like her writing.

Disability in Kidlit says

“Teenagers’ bodies are already battlegrounds in our society and on a personal level, and I really related to Chess’s shifting experience: she’s been unhappy with her weight in the past, then found a new accommodation with her body through running, and now she has to get to know it all over again as the Crohn’s makes her weight drop. Having Crohn’s in your teens can mean you go from worrying about whether you’re growing in all the right ways to worrying about whether you’ll grow at all.”

Read contributor Angeline B. Adams' full review at [Disability in Kidlit](#).

Eden Grey says

Literary Merit: Excellent

Grades: 8-12

Characterization: Good

Recommended: Highly Recommended for libraries and schools

While the physical format of the book may be daunting to some readers, it will inevitably intrigue and fascinate others. Told in verse physically divided on the page in a representation of the curtain separating the characters' hospital room, this novel tells the story of two girls' very different struggles with Crohn's disease. The narration is well-written and easy to follow. The 2 girls are quite different, and their voices really reflect that. They have different outlooks on their disease and treatment, which is really fascinating to see. I really enjoyed the novel, particularly because I got to see the inside of a long-term hospital stay from the perspective of 2 teenage girls. All of the typical teenage issues are stripped away because these girls are struggling to simply survive and be healthy. Their struggle is something that teens with chronic health issues could definitely relate to.

Fatima says

The author did a great job writing about a rather sensitive topic. What threw me off was the formatting and the flow of the story. I usually enjoy stories written in verse but this one was just a little off for me. The different perspectives were really interesting though, and I loved the subtle similarities and differences!

Wen Baragrey says

Having Crohn's myself, I absolutely adored this story, the first I've ever read relating to Crohn's that wasn't informational. At first, it was confronting to see so many aspects about this disease laid out there in a way that felt almost too familiar. But that quickly passed and became the sort of familiarity that has you nodding and cheering and feeling a sort of relief that you didn't have to say all of this stuff yourself.

All in all, I can't recommend this book highly enough, whether you're living with, interested in, or supporting someone with this or a similar disease, or just want a short but hard-hitting read.

Ava Jae says

I don't read much novel-in-verse, but this was great. Really appreciated the thoughtful and respectful chronic illness representation with not one, but two main characters. I don't have Crohn's, specifically, but some of the lines especially about being young and ill, or about not being able to trust your body really resonated with me.

Angela says

Books in verse might not be for me.....

Kelly says

I read the eGalley of this one, and the author's note about the format made me wonder if I'd miss something...and from other reviews, it looks like the lack of formatting on the eReader might be okay? I had no problem following this at all.

Told through the voices of Chess and Shannon, this novel in verse is about two girls dealing with Crohn's disease, one who has been working with the illness for a long time and one who, after an unfortunate incident with a boy she was beginning to like, is newly diagnosed. It's fast paced and engaging, and the two voices are distinct and interesting. It's primarily ABOUT the time in the hospital and about the diagnoses; there's not a whole lot else going on, which isn't a bad thing.

Readers who are interested in stories about chronic illness but don't want a cancer story will find a lot to dig into here. I don't love the verse format here, but I think for the story, it suits -- if this had been standard prose, it wouldn't have been a full book. There are details about what Crohn's does, and I think that honesty and forthrightness in the story is fitting. Teens especially who read this and may relate will appreciate the candidness, and those who aren't familiar will find it interesting (I take issue with the effects of illness being "interesting" for the sake of being interesting or propelling the plot, but it WORKS here because Crohn's isn't one of those things that is widely talked about and it's something that, as Chess discovers, can be really tough to talk about or accept as part of being human and dealing WITH chronic issues).

Kendall Earles says

When I first picked up this book I had extremely high expectations. It is hard to find books that specifically cover IBD, and I was hoping to feel deeply moved and connected to the novel. Instead I simply found that the book was only a grazing of stereotypical teenage emotions in the time of any disease. Very little of the book actually touched on the hardships of learning to live with chronic illness. Instead, meager things such as petty relationships and worries about friends reactions were at the forefront. Some readers may find this

relatable, but the book almost seemed like a slap in the face to me as a teenager with ulcerative colitis. All in all, a rating of 2 stars is generous, and only given because I was pleased to find a central character that has IBD.

Mrs. McGuire says

This review is based on an ARC provided to me by the publisher.

An excellent novel in verse, appropriate for 8th grade and up. Chess and Shannon have only their illness in common. As they both recuperate from medical crises they teach one another to endure. The story flows beautifully, unfolding at just the right pace.

Nancy S says

I read this in a couple of hours, and liked it a lot, because I liked the girls, and the fact that they acted, and thought, like teenagers. There is not all that much of a story line, but one is not really necessary.

An interesting way of writing, and one I was not sure I would want to read, but in the end, pretty effective.

Sesana says

Interesting format, keeping what happens on each side of the hospital room on its respective side of the page. I also appreciate that Frank decided to tackle an unusual topic. There are a lot of YA books about girls with all kinds of illnesses, but I can't think of any others that cover Crohn's.
