



We Were Liars - Book Review Amelia Parry

I have read a lot of books in my lifetime. Whether it be a murder mystery, romance, drama, or a classic, I love to curl up to a good book. I love Agatha Christie's sense of thriller and questioning in her writing or Nicola Yoon's playful romance in every tale. However, to me, the most pleasing aspect of reading is discovering new authors.

I'm sure everyone knows famous authors such as John Green or Jane Austen; these authors deserve the credit they receive. But the feeling of reading an excellent book by a lesser-known author that not many others have been able to appreciate is extra special.

Today, I will make my secret favourite book by one of my favourite secret authors not so private anymore. Emily Jenkins, who sometimes uses the pen name 'E. Lockhart' has written many books, newly releasing one in June of 2020. I have eaten up every inch of writing that Emily has published.

Having studied at Columbia, her writing is exceptionally mature yet fits right into the young adult genre. Her writing style is unique, involving a poetic structure contrary to the standard multi paragraphs. Her characters are so relatable, quirky and weird, somehow addictive.

We Were Liars, written by E. Lockhart in 2014, demonstrates Emily's strength as a writer. I have read it four times, bawling each time I turn the final page. The novel is centred on the wealthy, seemingly perfect Sinclair family, who spend every summer gathered on their private island in Massachusetts. Their family hides dark secrets behind their high cheekbones, and perfectly golden blonde hair, merely masking them with their exquisiteness.

Now, let's introduce our protagonist. 17-year-old Cadence Sinclair is the eldest grandchild of the wealthy Harris Sinclair. Although her family pretends to be perfect, Cadence knows that beneath the surface, wealth and privilege have taken an insidious toll on her family; the unhappiness or odd behaviour is ignored or repressed to perpetuate the image of refinement. Cadence is an outlier in her family.

Each summer, Cadence and her family go to their private island, visiting her extended family. There are her cousins who she gets along with best; Johnny, described as 'bounce, effort and snark,' and Mirren described as 'sugar, curiosity, and rain.' Then there is Gat, who Emily describes as 'strong coffee and ambition,' a guest of her uncles, and a future love interest later in the novel. Gat is poor, coming from an immigrant household, who is rejected by the Sinclairs

due to his indifference. The four teenagers are known as “The Liars” to the rest of the family. The summer Cadence is fifteen, which she refers to as ‘Summer Fifteen’, Gat and Cadence fall in love and begin a relationship.

That Summer fifteen, Cadence suffers a fatal head injury, only recalling that she struck her head on a rock at the beach. She loses a majority of her memories of that summer and begins to suffer from migraines. For the next two years, her world comes crashing down on her. After becoming addicted to Percocet and repeating a year of school, she tries to reach out to her cousins after months of quiet, yearning to know what memories escaped her brain. Her dogmatic mother decides that idea is not good, instead, sending her to Europe to spend the summer with her estranged father.

Now, Summer seventeen. Cadence is allowed to go back to the island, trying to discover what actually happened the day she hit her head. Things are strange on the island; her once powerful, distinguished grandfather is now suffering from horrible dementia. Her aunt is falling apart, not speaking to Cadence without an explanation. Her mother is being even more private, giving her simple answers to the endless questions Cadence has for her. The Liars, Johnny, Gat and Mirren are distant to her, not telling her what actually happened that devastating day two years ago. As the novel unfolds, more secrets are discovered, and a horrible ending is revealed.

I love this book so much because it's not like your usual mystery where the killer is revealed, and it's not like the typical romance where it's lovey-dovey in the end, and everything is perfect. Emily's twist ending left me miserable for days, making me ponder about why I never thought about it in the first place. This book is timeless, fitting into many genres, and touching on many sensitive topics. It discusses addiction, first love and privilege. *We Were Liars* is a whirlwind of drama and an ocean of emotions. I truly recommend this book.