



2009

Before I Fall

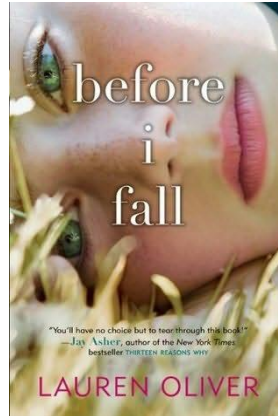
Debbie Barr

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Oliver, Lauren. *Before I Fall*. HarperCollins, 2010. ISBN 9780061726804. \$17.99. 470 p.

Reviewer: Debbie Barr

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Popularity--Juvenile fiction; Conduct of life--Juvenile fiction; Dead--Juvenile fiction;

Books--Reviews;

Samantha Kingston has everything. She's popular, pretty, has an amazing boyfriend, and an awesome group of friends. February 12th should be just another perfect day of school and partying. Instead, a twist of fate ends the day with a car crash that kills her. However, Sam is given the chance to re-live the day of her death seven times. Each day reveals secrets about herself, her friends, and the events leading up to her death. As Sam re-lives this day over and over, she changes. Most importantly she learns that the "mean girl" actions of her group of friends have driven someone to the edge. Juliet Skyes, a girl much like herself, takes her life on the same day Sam dies. In the end, Sam learns that "it's never too late" and finds peace when she sacrifices her own life for Juliet's.

This character-driven novel is a fascinating look into the issues surrounding popularity and bullying in high school. Samantha is by no means a sympathetic character at the beginning of the book. The actions of her and her friends are both selfish and cruel. However, Sam's progression as a character ends the story in a hopeful way, despite her death. The plot stays compelling because the events change with each "new" day as Sam tests out different possibilities. It should be noted that some readers may be uncomfortable with the content, as the characters participate in sexual activity and drug use, so it is recommended for mature readers only. Nonetheless, it is a well-crafted novel with provoking thoughts that stay with the reader, even after the story is finished.

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