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The Boyfriend List: (15 guys, 11 shrink appointments, 4 ceramic frogs, and me, Ruby Oliver)

Marsha D. Broadway

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Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway  
Reading Level: Young adult  
Rating: Dependable  
Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;  
Subject: Dating (Social customs)--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; High school--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Fifteen year old Ruby "Roo" Oliver is having panic attacks after a series of social debacles and humiliations. She is seeing a psychiatrist at her parents' promptings. Roo's road to self-discovery is mapped through a psychiatrist-requested, self-created list of 15 guys who have been unofficial and official boyfriends. Motivated by sessions with her shrink, Roo recounts the insecurities and irritations of her sophomoric existence. She comes to the realization that she is not honest in her relationships and that she is much like her self-absorbed mother.

The stream-of-consciousness narrative is arranged by chapters that bear a boyfriend's name, although most of the text is about Roo and her feelings and not about the boys. The main character consistently portrays overpowering teen angst that can come of every source--appearances, friends, non-friends, parents, flowers, and foibles real and imagined. The other characters are not well developed and serve almost as props for Roo's beleaguered life. Roo's growth is marginal and the conclusion seems rushed. The first person narration is expounded through explanatory footnotes, which are off-putting, and sexually-charged situations are frankly discussed. Definitely a chick book.