


To Be Perfectly Honest: A Novel Based on an Untrue Story

Sonya Sones

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Her friends

have a joke about her:

How can you tell if Colette is lying?

Her mouth is open.

Fifteen-year-old Colette is addicted to lying. Her shrink says this is because she's got a very bad case of Daughter-of-a-famous-movie-star Disorder—so she lies to escape out from under her mother's massive shadow. But Colette doesn't see it that way. She says she lies because it's the most fun she can have with her clothes on. Not that she's had that much fun with her clothes off. At least not yet, anyway...

When her mother drags her away from Hollywood to spend the entire summer on location in a boring little town in the middle of nowhere, Colette is less than thrilled. But then she meets a sexy biker named Connor. He's older, gorgeous, funny, and totally into her. So what if she lies to him about her age, and about who her mother is? I mean, she has to keep her mother's identity a secret from him. If he finds out who she really is, he'll forget all about Colette, and start panting and drooling and asking her for her mother's autograph. Just like everyone always does.

But what Colette doesn't know is that Connor is keeping a secret of his own...

To Be Perfectly Honest: A Novel Based on an Untrue Story Details

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From Reader Review To Be Perfectly Honest: A Novel Based on an Untrue Story for online ebook

Kate Stericker says

Although I've really enjoyed some of Sonya Sones' more recent work, *To Be Perfectly Honest* was disappointing. The central gimmick--that Colette frequently lapses into elaborate lies--felt like an annoying distraction rather than a clever narrative device. It was always frustrating to learn that certain episodes of the story didn't actually occur, particularly since there was no real payoff--I just had to strike the section from my memory and continue reading. There were also several incidents which I was certain would be revealed as lies but never were (such as Connor bumping into Colette at the fair after their only contact had been passing on the highway or the single stanza in which Colette and Connor are described as going hang gliding, seeing a meteor shower, and learning to juggle in the space of a week). Although these improbable events may have been intended to intensify the impression that Colette's narration isn't trustworthy, they just lowered my investment in the narrative.

An additional issue with this book is that the fun, jokey tone of the narration seems mismatched with the content of the plot, which involves a manipulative 21-year-old seducing a 15-year-old and making repeated attempts to have sex with her, including one effort which involves feeding her pot brownies without her knowledge. Between a storyline that made me extremely uncomfortable and a narrative gimmick that left me frustrated, I did not enjoy *To Be Perfectly Honest*. If you're interested in Sonya Sones' books, I would strongly recommend you start with *Saving Red* or *What My Mother Doesn't Know*.

Jade Walker says

Holy mother of unreliable narrators, this takes compulsive liars to the brink! I was a little bit wary going into this book because I've never read anything in verse before but Sones masters it - the verse is perfect and reads so well, only going into noticeable verse at some points which worked really well. I was totally sold on the idea of an unreliable narrator and I was expecting this book to be a bit heavier. This book does deal with some heavy issues but it deals with them so well, I loved watching Colette's growth and seeing how she matured throughout the novel. The last part of the book was fantastic, when Colette realises that she needs to stop lying and face up to her life.

To start with I really liked Connor, he seemed really genuine which I guess is why Colette liked him so much as well, but then the reader begins to see through him. I was screaming for Colette to get a grip and realise what was going on! Despite the fact that she was an unreliable narrator, I really did like Colette - she was a unique character but she has her issues in life and deals with them the best that she could. I absolutely loved little Will, he was a joy in this book!

To Be Perfectly Honest is a short book and so it doesn't go too deep into any of the characters or the issues, but I really think that it does what it intends to - nothing less and nothing more. It was a fun book that dealt with some less than fun issues and it's executed very well.

Overall Rating: B

Katie G says

It's been a long time since I've read a novel in verse, but I have to say that I liked it. This book was a fast read, one that I really enjoyed.

Colette is addicted to lying. Lies come more naturally to her than the truth. This made for an interesting read because a lot of what she says isn't true. As she points out, she is a very unreliable narrator. Of course, she always fesses up to her lies (at least to the reader), so this wasn't a hard book to follow. You didn't have to try to shift through all the stories and figure out what was true and what wasn't, which was nice.

I don't usually like liars, but I found myself starting to connect with Colette and feel sort of sorry for her and even like her. Her mother's so wrapped up in her own life that she doesn't seem to realize what she's doing to her kids. Will is sort of annoying sometimes but it still one of my favorite kids in books. Usually little kids are annoying all the time and are only really there to make me want to put the book down (or at least that's what it feels like to me). But Will was a good kid. He was annoying at times, but more often than not he went along with Colette and made her happy, which was nice to read about. It seemed like a realistic relationship.

Even Colette's mother seemed realistic. I've read a lot of books with an evil mother character, so it was nice to see that Marissa wasn't all bad. I hated her in the beginning, but she came around eventually, which I appreciated. That felt more like a real relationship. She's selfish sometimes and loving other times. Just like real people are.

Connor's a fascinating character. He and Colette were on the same wavelength most of the time, and that made it really easy for me to believe why she became obsessed with him so fast.

That's not to say that this book was perfect. Some parts were sort of cheesy. The ending, especially, seemed a bit sudden and not that realistic. Still, the rest of the book was good, so I can deal with a sort of cheesy ending.

I will definitely be reading more from this author in the future.

Kelly says

Colette's mother is a movie star, and this summer, she's shuffling Colette and her little brother away from their home and the promise summer in Paris to a small town in California where she's filming her next movie. Colette's beyond bummed about this, but when she meets Connor, she starts to sing a little bit of a different tune. Maybe it won't be so bad when there's a cute boy around.

Something to know about Colette: she's a liar. She lies about everything. And it's not that she's an unreliable narrator. She's completely reliable -- if you accept she's a liar.

Colette and Connor are in lovvvee or so it feels. And when Colette tells her mother she needs alone time with Connor, away from her brother, her mother grants this wish to her. She even leaves a box of condoms, in order for them to be truly safe.

But Colette's not ready for that quite yet. Even though she's told Connor she's 18 (she's not -- she's 15) and that she's experienced (she's not -- she's a virgin), when the time comes for them to take their relationship somewhere more physical, she takes a stand and says no.

That's when Connor gets back at her for her lies.

(view spoiler)

The turnaround in Colette is believable and I was appreciative of it. I didn't love her as a character but that's why I was compelled by her. In fact, when she was prepared to take Connor for a ride herself, I was really invested. Would she REALLY go through with her plans or was this a rouse on us, as readers?

(view spoiler)

I felt the end of this book was almost a cheap way out of the story. But I had to remember the main character is 15 -- just turned 16 at that point -- and so it was less of a cheap way out and more of a realistic way out of HER story. I believe her and it, even if it wasn't my favorite ending.

Sones masters verse novels. This is how verse WORKS. It plays with the story, and it tells enough, leaving enough UNSAID to make the reader wonder where and how Colette is leading us on. Her voice is spot on, and I thought the relationship she had with her learning-disabled younger brother was sweet and authentic. The wrap up with her mother and her mother's boyfriend was a little schmaltzy for me, but it was believable in context of the story.

This one is for YA readers who like challenging characters, who like verse novels, and who are good with "tough" topics like sex, drugs, and drinking in their books. Even though Colette is on the younger side, this is one to hand to younger teen readers only if they're ready and like those topics tackled in their books (and many do!). I wouldn't put this on the level of Ellen Hopkins in terms of content, but I'd say it's a stepping stone to readers who will go to Hopkins down the road.

Longer review to come!

Rivkasilver says

A compulsive liar is telling you a story...

Should be interesting, I think.

I think wrong.

Because all the great potential I thought would be lived out in the book tumbled to the ground (of my mind) like a card tower. After. The. First. Chapter.

So yeah-- that whole "unreliable narrator" factor doesn't exist, because although Collette lies a ton, it is always obvious to the reader when she is lying. There's no moment during a long, elaborate lie-spiel when you're like, *oh my gosh, I can't believe this is happening!*, because it is always painfully obvious that Collette is lying to you.

And the romance sucked. And the characters sucked. And the cover kind of sucked too, so I guess all this book has going for it is an intriguing title.

Katherine Cowley says

This book was perfectly brilliant, but it also made me question my faith in humanity. I'll talk about the perfectly brilliant part for the main portion of the review; the questioning my faith in humanity has to be saved for the spoilers section, because I don't want to ruin the book for you.

To Be Perfectly Honest tells the story of Colette, the daughter of a famous movie star and a self-admitted liar. Colette lies--or tells stories, depending on how you look at it--constantly, because despite her privileged life, she's actually pretty miserable. She's stuck spending the summer in a middle of nowhere town, babysitting her younger brother while her mom shoots a film. Luckily, she meets this awesome guy which makes things much more interesting, though she worries that he'll discover her lies.

What's brilliant about this book is that it's a contemporary story told in poetry form. The poems are readable and natural, yet the verse significantly adds to the storytelling. I loved the way the author integrated the titles of the poems into the story itself, sometimes making it a snippet of the dialogue or a part of the first sentence, and yet always choosing something that was representative of the poem. Each poem or chapter is only 1 or 2 pages long, and I found myself unable to stop between one poem and myself.

Despite being constantly reminded this is fiction, I found myself constantly thinking how real-life this felt and wondering if it really happened. Lies and truth are constantly interwoven, creating a powerful story. If you're feeling in the mood for some YA contemporary fiction, I definitely recommend this novel.

And now for the spoiler-packed part of the review....

(view spoiler)

Jennifer says

The original review of this book can be found on my blog.

I love this book! I would recommend it to anyone who likes Ellen Hopkins or books written in verse.

Colette lies. A lot! She loves to make up stories and that is going to be her downfall. She uses the excuse of her mothers stardom as the reason she lies/reinvents her life.

I did find it kind of rude that Marissa Shawn changed her kids summer plans at the last minute for selfish movie star reasons. I know this probably isn't really how famous peoples children live but I am glad that my parents are boring and normal.

Will was an adorable little brother. He was definitely wise beyond his years. When I read the line saying "thith ith either about bacon or thex." I died laughing. Oh, yeah, bacon is a staple in this book. Which for most people would have them instantly sold. But I don't like bacon. So the book had to use other charms to draw me in.

Enter Conner. He seemed like such an awesome, amazing guy. I was hoping he would be good for Colette and help her learn to not lie. In the end, he did help her start to not lie, but for entirely different reasons than what I was initially hoping for.

With Conner, Colette met her match. You'd think with how much she like to make things up that she would be about to tell when someone is doing the exact same thing. But the reality is, ever liars don't like to believe that other people lie.

I did and I didn't like the ending. I was kind of hoping the Colette would go through with her revenge plot. I understand that she wanted to "do the right thing" but sometimes people do really need to be taught a lesson.

I am glad that Jack truly wanted to stay in the picture. Having him around will probably help balance Colette out and make her life more family oriented. I am also glad that by the end of this book Marissa Shawn seems to be more of a motherly figure than she started out as.

I have heard people say that books written in verse are stupid/pointless because you don't get much of a story out of it. These people, honestly, couldn't be more wrong. I feel that I got more out of this book than I have gotten out of any of the 500+ page books I have read that were written with the tiniest font.

Overall, I gave this book 5/5 stars. In short, I would say, sometimes the truth hurts, but lying is much worse.

AryaTheFangirl says

This book was really nostalgic for me. I didn't know she had written another book and I was really excited to

read this.

Rebecca McNutt says

I tried to like this book, really, and its plot initially sounded very intriguing, but I didn't really like its poetry format or the main character's special snowflake routine. The entire time I was reading I kept thinking to myself, "oh, cry me a river already! Stop whining!".

Lindsey says

3.5 stars. This definitely kept me entertained. It's written in verse so it was super quick to read. There were a few parts that really made me angry, but overall a solid read.

Jenni Arndt says

A couple of months ago I got an email from Simon & Schuster with a list of galleys they had available and was quick to take a fast glance at the synopsis and cover for *To Be Perfectly Honest* and put my request in. Upon receiving the book I was sure that the swiftness with which I requested it had surely come back to bite me in the butt because I opened it and realized that the book is told in verse. But I requested it so I had to see what it was all about, and I have to say that the way in which it was told wasn't bothersome to me at all though I did have a few issues with the actual story itself.

First of all, let me say that reading verse books makes you feel like a speed reading machine! This book was just shy of 500 pages and I read it in one sitting in the beginning part of a Sunday afternoon. Saying I breezed through this thing doesn't even describe the quickness with which I finished it. I had also worried that the writing would feel choppy to me, but it didn't. It actually read in my head just like a regular book would have, to the point that I wondered why it was told in verse and not just written like a regular book. I mean there were a few rhyme-y parts here and there but for the most part it felt just like reading a regular book with weird lines to me. I guess all the classic poetry you get stuck reading in school has you frightened of huge words and imagery that you can't quite grasp, but rest assured that this is nothing like that. It felt incredibly natural and I actually enjoyed how much I was able to get from the book with it's straight to the point writing.

So as far as characterizations and plot go I have to say that I was also surprised with how well our MC Colette was developed. She wasn't someone that I would like in real life, she was a liar, a huge liar. This girl lied about the most trivial things and was pretty proud of herself about how good she was at it. She took compulsive liar to a whole new level. That being said, I did feel like I understood her. Looking back, I lied about some pretty stupid stuff when I was her age as well (though definitely not to this extreme) so I think I was able to connect with her a little bit even though I didn't expect to be able to. I also really liked her little brother Will. He had a lisp and everything he said was written in such a cute way and I found myself trying to decipher his words and giggling to myself a bit here and there.

We get to go through a tumultuous summer romance with Colette and see her realize first hand how her lying affects those around her. We didn't get to see as much growth as I was hoping for because the ending felt

incredibly rushed. And really, to get to the end we had to wade through quite a bit of outlandish happenings. We had to cherry pick what we believed in the story and all of the lying gets taken to some pretty weird extremes. So I guess I am saying that while I breezed through this novel and was interested enough in it, I didn't really connect to any of the happenings. It felt really over the top to me, which I think it was supposed to, but that kept me from getting lost in it as anything more than a fun passive read. On the bright side, I came out of it not so scared of verse books anymore!

An Advance Reader's Copy was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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You can read all of my reviews at Alluring Reads.

Liza Wiemer says

To be perfectly honest, I really got into this free verse poetry novel about a girl who has a tendency to lie, lie, lie. Things that I really enjoyed:

1. Colette and her honesty about lying.
2. Her movie star mother - though I thought she was a little lax on letting a 15-year-old girl spend a weekend with a boy?!?!?
3. The brother Will and his lisp.
4. The pacing of the story was great, and I was taken in by the characters.
5. The farmer's market was cool.
6. A great ending.
7. Let's be perfectly honest . . . well . . . most of the time!!!!

Anyone who enjoys free verse poetry will appreciate this novel very much. Great for reluctant readers.

Jennifer Clausen-greene says

Addicted to lying is an understatement for Colette, half the time I could not tell when she was lying and telling the truth! I think I need to keep this book away from my daughter, less she gets some ideas. lol. I dont want to give anything away in the book, but I found myself highly upset at Connor at the end and was impressed with the how Colette handled the situation. I have to say there were moments that shocked me with the mom. I mean I cannot imaging handing my 14 year old daughter a box of condoms as a gift and giving her a hotel for the weekend! Insaine-even for a "movie star."

This was a fantastic, light hearted, funny 2 day read just when I needed it. It lightened my spirits and took me back to when I was a teenager myself. The characters were humerous, and drew you into their lives.I felt the character growth was right on target for their ages and situations they went through in the book. I remind my daughter all the time of the extreme boys will go to to get "the goods" that are rightfully her husbands alone, despite how it will tarnish her. My sons I remind them on how easily it is to ruin a young ladies reputation and to treat a girl as they want to see their sister and mother being treated-with repsect and dignity of a future wife.

I would recommend this book for anyone ages 13 and up who want a great summer read to lighten your heart.

Disclaimer: I received an advance copy of this book from Simon and Schuster in exchange for my honest opinion.

Angieforlife says

I finished this book a while ago and it was like literally the best love book ever! I love Sonya Sones books but this was my favorite there was like so much adventure and more!!!!!!

Sesana says

A book narrated by a compulsive liar should maybe be a bit more interesting than this. Not that this is bad, just a fairly ordinary story about a girl getting caught up in a summer romance. Colette's lying does add a bit of interest, and her character arc is certainly convincing. There's also a very precocious and actually lisping little brother, who borders on annoying more than once.
