



Seven Deadlies: A Cautionary Tale

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New York Times?bestselling author Gigi Levangie Grazer returns with *Seven Deadlies*, a witty and wildly different novel set amid the sinful reaches of Beverly Hills, narrated by a captivating, gimlet-eyed Mexican-American heroine.

Perry Gonzalez is not like the other kids in her Beverly Hills high school—a full-blooded Latina on a scholarship, living in a tiny apartment with her mother, she doesn't have much in common with the spoiled, privileged kids who are chauffeured to school every morning. But Perry is a budding young writer with her sights set on Bennington—and her seven deadly stories are her ticket to the Ivory Tower. To pay her way, Perry's been babysitting (correction: teenage-sitting) and tutoring the neighborhood kids, and she has seen the dark side of adolescence: lust for the “Judas Brothers” that leads to electrocution at a private birthday party concert; wrath that inspires new and perverse family bonds; and greed, in a young Bernie Madoff acolyte who conceives of a copycat Ponzi scheme involving his own grandmother.

Seven Deadlies: A Cautionary Tale Details

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Author : Gigi Levangie Grazer

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From Reader Review *Seven Deadlies*: A Cautionary Tale for online ebook

Megan says

I'm sorry, but fuck that epilogue. It ruins the book.

2/5

Jennifer says

Amusing diversion with an ending that really threw me for a loop, and, thus, changed how I felt about the entire book & the time I spent reading it.

Each story of *Seven Deadlies* reads as a short story. For me, this is usually a fatal-flaw: I am not a fan of short-stories as I detest getting drawn to a character only to have the tale end in 20-30-40 pages! However, for this, it worked. Perry was an intriguing character: quirky, smart, observant, and determined. And she tied the stories together wonderfully. I was really enjoying this peculiar look at Beverly Hills teens through the eyes of a Latina who didn't quite fit in but obviously wanted to. Until the last two letters – then I was tossed into a well of confusion. The 2nd to last letter confused me but I could write it off as a quirk of the character. The last letter threw the story in a totally different direction – and I didn't like the confusion over where it was supposed to take me. Had the book ended before the last two letters, I would whole-heartedly recommend this book as a very entertaining read. But those last two letters? Well, I'm just stumped because it took a book I enjoyed and just flushed it ... and its rating.

Additional note: While I thought Cecilia Ruiz's illustrations were interesting, they seemed out-of-place all flung together at the end of the book. Why there and not at the start or end of each chapter?

Mazy says

Hmm. This book is hard to review. I admit that I liked it, as did my 8 year old son. I found the book kinda funny, in a grim way. I liked that there was a Latina protagonist/narrator. I even liked the frame set-up (a collection of short stories written as a college essay). The book was clever, cute, and a fun throw-away read.

However, this book fell flat in many aspects. The cleverness of both the structure and the protagonist became a bit tiresome & heavy handed. It was not executed quite right either; a bit disjointed to be one piece, yet at the same time none of the stories would hold up on their own. It was also a little confusing as to who the book was for. At the beginning I felt a little embarrassed, thinking it was intended for a pre-teen or young adult audience. But quickly I felt that it was beyond that and definitely meant for adults. My son read it and found it "funny & fantastic" and says that he thinks it was intended for middle schoolers...so... I'd rate this book solidly as OK.

Dennise Pendergrass says

I'm sorry, but, what did I just read? If half stars were a thing, 1.5 stars for this one. ***SPOILERS AT THE END***

Intriguing title and blurb, interesting cover design. The book was okay, for the most part. This is a series of stories Perry Gonzalez is sending to an elite college with a focus on writing. The stories are about kids she tutors, and how they relate to the seven deadly sins. Sounds interesting, right? The stories are "true", but ya know, artistic license. It kind of felt like reading A Series of Unfortunate Events. I was interested to know what happened to most of the kids. The stories take themes from our everyday youth and times them by 1,000. (addiction to video games, overprotective mothers, wanting to be like others, wanting everything for yourself, etc, etc.) If left in this vein, this could have been a 2.5 star book, but then came the epilogue. Totally ruins the book.

I feel let down. Such a strong premise, but poor execution. And a terrible, horrible, no good epilogue.

SPOILERS FOR THE EPILOGUE

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This kid believes she's the child of an angel, and her mother follows up with an apology and explanation that Perry is not any of the things she's presented in the book.

Erin says

It's not often I give a book one star, so I feel the need to explain.

Seven Deadlies is a disappointment not just because it was poorly executed, but because it was a promising premise that was poorly executed. Even the audience is confusing -- I can't tell if this is supposed to be targeted to young adults or new adults or just people who want to waste a few hours of their life on a heavy-handed, preachy collection of snarky short stories.

Told in the voice of 14-yr-old Perry Gonzales through the frame of a private school admissions essay, Seven Deadlies tries to cast a comic light on the modern foibles and excesses of the American upper class -- especially entitled teens and their parents. Unfortunately, it's not funny. It's awkward. It's oversold. And worst of all, it seems disconnected from page 1 to the ill-conceived twist ending.

I've heard good things about the author's other work, so I assume this is not reflective of her writing in

general. Seven Deadlies just didn't work for me. Proceed with caution.

Randy Briggs says

Particularly disappointing, since I loved her last one. Cliched and over-moral (is that even a word?), this book failed to fall into any particular genre; was it written for smartass teens or particularly stupid adults? So now my most pressing question has been answered; yes, it IS possible to outsnark yourself.

Jan De la Rosa says

Read from a Netgalley ARC

Well, that was weird. There was very little in this book I could enjoy. Perry as a character is very compelling (and I would say her mother Yelena is even more interesting) but the narration was just too much of many complicated things just thrown together in a very messy fashion.

The stories articulated by a per-case report of the seven deadly sins that could have been rooted on folk or be intimate and powerful, are just gruesome and detached: Perry presents herself as a model student that tutors those monsters that are so consumed in their own flaws that are totally cartoonish and impossible to like.

There were multiple opportunities to balance the story with the interesting pieces of the rich heritage that pop here and there: both Perry and Yelena are Mexican-americans and even the little bits written in Spanish feel contrived and forced.

And it's sad, really, because the story, framed as something else, could have been almost cool but no this time, not for me and not ever.

It was a very uneven read with spots of brilliance that don't add up at the end. The epilogue just sealed the deal for me and that new information introduced at the end, left there to be taken by the reader, is a horrible pace error.

Rachel says

Inane.

Feels more like it was written for juveniles - but I wouldn't want to insult younger readers with this risible attempt at writing.

Made it through 1.5 sins.

Tracy says

I wanted to like this book but I didn't. I struggled through each chapter and finally I had to make a decision

to not finish the book or skim it. I couldn't do that because I want to read 100 books this year so I just started skimming the pages until the very last page. Even that was a struggle. It was just too over the top for me from beginning to end.

Debby says

1 stars

When I was offered to review *Seven Deadlies*, I thought, "...Cool!" There weren't many reviews on Goodreads, despite the fact that it was already released, but at least from the summary it sounded like something I would like. With its unique premise of being written like a college admissions letter, combined with the seven deadly sins and some illustrations, this should have been a hit with me. It... wasn't. And I'm deeply sorry. But it just didn't work out.

Seven Deadlies is set up as seven short stories, each for one of the sins, an introduction and an epilogue. The introduction explains why Perry is writing to the university in spite of the fact that she's only 14. She has had strange experiences while working for various babysitting/tutoring jobs and aspires to be a journalist, so she wanted to practice writing about these stories.

So we get into them and.. what? Instantly it becomes clear that this is very much a middle grade novel, despite it claiming to be young adult, as we start with a Lust story that has nothing to do with sex or anything, but just people (including adults) drooling over a derivative of the Jonas brothers. I was confused. What was that supposed to be? In the next stories, we get into the other sins and... it was bizarre. With things like kids who started playing video games at 1 year old, whose parents are totally okay with that because they are too occupied with their own lives, to **THAT GLUTTONY STORY OH MY GOD *shudders*** **It got creepier and creepier and further detached from reality.**

Parts of the writing style didn't work for me. I disliked the way that in each story (bear in mind each one is like 20 pages), Perry repeats her mother's full name, paired with some praise like "the inestimable Yelena Maria Gonzales". She'll continually remind you her mother is a registered nurse. She also insists on using parentheses to explain certain things, most pointedly the pronunciation of the names of her clients. In one of the stories, she repeatedly puts the pronunciation in brackets and each time writes it differently - and none of them sound remotely correct. Apparently Willhelm = VIL-h-eye-m = VEEL-home = VUL-chum = VAL-ham... NO. Was that supposed to be funny? Because look at my face. **I'm not laughing.**

At first Perry sounded quirky and fun, but the further I got, the more exasperated I got with her writing style. It grated on my nerves. But I suppose there was a reason for that, because Perry was not a normal girl. Now, before the epilogue, I didn't now how to feel about this book. It was rather bland. Some of the attempts at humor succeeded, some didn't. I thought it was unrealistic, and I quickly got bored. Then the epilogue explains that (view spoiler) It should have made me think differently about the whole story. But instead of that desired reaction, I just did another shrug and sigh of exasperation.

I think ultimately **this book will be read in two ways**: either you think from the beginning that it's a fun yet exaggerated and unrealistic read purely for the entertainment of middle grade readers, or as you read you feel more and more disconnected and bored until the ending happens. In case of the former, you reach the epilogue and you hate it and want to toss it out because it took all the fun out of it. In case of the latter, likely like me, you'll still feel unsatisfied because there weren't enough indications that the story would take that

kind of turn - you were just still bored and skeptical all the way through, and though the ending should make you feel differently about all of it, it likely won't.

Summing Up:

The book just sadly didn't work for me. I liked that the story didn't get overly religious and that it featured a POC for the main character, but that's about all I can say that I liked. While the ending should have thrown me for a loop, the book had dwindled too long in the unrealistic and detached area of I-can't-bring-myself-to-care to have the desired effect. I'd say you're better off skipping this one. I do, however, wonder how it would fair in the hands of a middle grade reader. (But, honestly, this should not be marketed as being young adult.)

GIF it to me straight!

K. says

I received an ARC of *Seven Deadlies: A Cautionary Tale* via NetGalley and was eager to read it - I loved the cover illustration and was intrigued by the book's premise (a Latina student crafts short stories about other students at her private Los Angeles high school and uses them as her admissions essay to Bennington), so I was saddened when this fell so far below my expectations.

In general, the "precocious and highly observant child narrator" is a device that only works about half of the time. While I think that books like *Harriet the Spy* and *Special Topics in Calamity Physics* use their narrators to great success, Perry (the narrator of *Seven Deadlies*) comes across as moralizing, judgmental, and (perhaps worst of all) boring. Perry's stories are intended to satirize modern America's supposed constant overeating and overspending while drawing attention to weakening family relationships, decreased interest in "real life" experiences (vs. digital ones), and all-consuming self-interest, but Grazer's writing is so heavy-handed that these stories end up falling flat on their faces.

Don't get me wrong, I can appreciate a good jab at modern America (and there's certainly a lot to jab at), but *Seven Deadlies* makes Perry's classmates so obviously "bad" and Perry so obviously "good," that the push and pull between warring impulses and ideals that makes a discussion of 21st century America so interesting is totally absent from *Seven Deadlies*. Add to this Gigi Levangie Grazer's penchant for giving Perry's classmates "clever" names that allude to their rude and shallow nature ("the Wankre family," "the Blogsnot family") and her insistence on mixing real and made up pop culture references (one character has an obsession with a made-up family of singing brothers called "the Judas Brothers") and the book feels dated less than six month's after its release.

The one aspect of *Seven Deadlies* that I did really appreciate was the relationship between Perry and her mother, Yelena. Perry frequently turns to Yelena for advice and Yelena's observations regarding the situations Perry finds herself in are thoughtful and provide much-needed counterpoint and nuance to Perry's

black and white moralistic worldview. I would have loved to see this relationship developed further and used to greater effect in the book as a whole.

The book's final chapter and epilogue do make an attempt to complicate the narrative by implying that Perry isn't as perfect as she seems, but the final chapter comes off as too little too late and the epilogue itself seems like a cheap plot to inject the previous seven stories with a degree of edge and vitality. I still think that *Seven Deadlies* had a great premise for a YA book, but it's execution just didn't work for me.

Katie says

I am not actually sure of the book's target audience. I am sure it wasn't aimed at adults - I only happened upon it because I decided to try a few books my local dollar store has on offer. The mix of real and faux references would likely bother a young adult reader and I'm not sure a middle-grade reader would necessarily get all of the satire.

Perry as a character is...difficult. She's very proud - and I don't just mean in the chapter about pride. No, she seems to view herself as above her charges. Better than them, even. And in context, sure, she is. But...it bothered me.

The chapter on Gluttony bothered me more than the others. It made me remember Shel Silverstein's "Hungry Hungry." The difference in the two, of course, is the tone of the delivery. "Seven Deadlies" tone is definitely darker.

I don't regret reading it. It was entertaining at times and after all, I only paid \$1 for it. Maybe I would feel more negative if I'd spent more. Maybe not.

I noticed lots of people were unhappy about the epilogue but I honestly didn't care enough to have strong feelings on it. It is simply how things end.

Paula Phillips says

Perry Gonzales is not like the other people who attend the prestigious school of St. Marks, she is Latina, on a scholarship, intelligent and from a single parent family. She dreams of one day going to University and studying Journalism. After school Perry is the go-to girl for those needing tutoring and she tutors a whole bunch of pretentious spoiled rich kids. During her tutoring experiences she decides to write her college essay in the format of the seven deadly sins with each client being or portraying one of the seven sins. *Seven Deadlies* was a fast paced book that will have readers not wanting to put it down. What I loved most about the *Seven Deadlies* book was the OMG, I did not see that twist coming at the very end of the novel. It made me go WOW. If you are wanting a fast paced and enjoyable story with a bit of a supernatural twist, then check out Gigi's book "Seven Deadlies".

Pamela says

I was rather looking forward to this title, as I'm always up for a reimagining of the seven deadly sins. Lately, with the ARCs I've received, I either love them or really, really, really dislike them. Unfortunately, this falls in the latter category.

I quit this one halfway through for many reasons. At first, I liked that the narrator, Perry, had strong opinions and a no-nonsense attitude. This, however, also means that she is the best tutor at her school and somehow gets saddled with *tutoring* (I use the term *VERY* loosely) fellow students who each represent the seven deadly sins. First up is a female classmate who has everything pink, everything expensive, and is obsessed with the Jonas Brothers. Oh, excuse me, the *Judas* Brothers, as they're called here. Wasn't that a big thing, like, 3 years ago? ANYWAY. She "lusts" for them in that she's a silly, obsessed fan, and then she dies for her sin. Woo-woo. Even the death part felt like a weak attempt to be shocking (ha! pun intended in the context of the story only). It was like, "Oooh, how can I be edgy? I know! Kill her!"

Each of Perry's subsequent encounters with clients who represent the various sins is written as a separate story. This isn't really a collection of short stories, it's more like ... a bizarre book made up of vignettes that happen to be connected by a theme. Ostensibly, this is Perry's college application (I think?!?!?). Each of these stories follows the same predictable pattern, goes for the same flat laughs, and ends in a manner that I think is attempting to be twisty or surprising, but just feels contrived.

The more I read, the more I found myself making contorted faces at the ridiculousness of the whole thing. I am really surprised that a publisher thinks this would find an audience ... speaking of which, who is the audience here, anyway? Perry talks like an adult, but is ostensibly in her early teens. Her charges are also supposedly her age, but they seem like they're about 5. Help! I'm so confused!

Not recommended. At all.

Collin says

This is the definition of a 3-star book. Promising premise, nice cover art, lovely interior design, an entertaining narrator - all set to the tune of the written, physical story that is thoroughly... okay.

I expected more. I could have gotten less. *Seven Deadlies* is a collection of seven short stories written inside a very fun frame story. Perry is a great narrator, and with a stronger story that actually connected more to /her/ than to just the short stories, this could have been great. But the focus was sloppy, the tones were uneven between stories, and the final two segments of the book - an epilogue sort of thing entitled "#coda7" - just smashed the frame story altogether in way that was basically meaningless.

I think the main problem was lack of focus. All the materials were there to make something really laser-sharp and drumskin-tight, but the lens wobbled so much. The first couple stories were okay, moralistic tales that read like Aesop - admittedly a bit of a dark Aesop, but Aesop nonetheless. Then there was a sudden jerk to what can only be described as "attempted horror" - but because the first few stories weren't really horror, there was no buildup for me. I wasn't EXPECTING horror, so I wasn't properly... horrified, until the final page (which was, to be fair, pretty horrifying). Also, that jump to horror jerked me out of the genre. The book started out as a pretty standard contemporary fiction, no speculative elements whatsoever. (The twins in

"Wrath" having that telepathy thing - Perry /is/ a fourteen-year-old girl and twins /are/ kind of romantic. I don't count that as speculative as much as just windowdressing.) But in "Gluttony" and "Sloth," especially, there's an unsettling, Twilight Zone-esque attempt at horror/terror and it just feels... forced. The inconsistency in Seven Deadlies's believability really hurt the book, imho.

I don't know, I just wish it would have been better, because I really, really wanted to like it. And I did - at least I enjoyed Perry herself. She's lots of fun, and she has a great voice. But... sigh. A very average three stars.
