

The Princess Diaries Study Guide

The Princess Diaries by Meg Cabot

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Overview

Mia Thermopolis abruptly learns that she is a princess and the heir to the principality of Genovia. A socially insecure high school freshman, Mia struggles to achieve self-actualization and normality while coping with her new highly publicized identity. Shocked, she initially resists accepting the role of princess but agrees to learn her royal duties and conform as much as possible to expectations by agreeing to compromises with her father. Her demanding grandmother, however, is oblivious to Mia's discomfort and expects her to transform immediately into a suitable royal representative. Mia gradually adjusts to the disruptions in her life and her revised identity.

About the Author

Meggin Patricia Cabot always aspired to be an artist. Born on February 1, 1967, in Bloomington, Indiana, Cabot grew up in a home which encouraged creativity.

Her parents, A. Victor Cabot, a decision and information systems professor at Indiana University's Business School, and Barbara Cabot, supported their daughter's artistic interests. Visiting the Monroe County Public Library, Cabot eagerly read books ranging from classical literature written by Jane Austen to popular fiction penned by Barbara Cartland and Judy Blume. *A Wrinkle in Time* and *Beauty and the Beast* were her favorite stories.

Like her best-known protagonist Mia Thermopolis, Cabot kept a journal in which she documented her opinions and emotions while attending Bloomington High School South. She credits her diary with helping her retain a perspective of adolescence because "it is all fresh in my head" (teenreads.com). Fond of dramatic expressions, she participated in theater. Like Mia, Cabot also experienced a romantic crush on a senior boy when she was a freshman.

After her father's death, Cabot dealt with her mother dating one of her teachers. Cabot graduated in 1985 and enrolled in her hometown college.

Cabot received a bachelor's degree in fine art from Indiana University in 1991.

Hoping to become a freelance illustrator, she moved to New York City where she found the urge to write more compelling than drawing. Cabot secured employment managing a New York University dormitory in order to finance her writing pursuits. She wrote mostly on weekends, at night, or during the day when her supervisor was not monitoring her.

In 1993, she married poet and financial writer Benjamin D. Egnatz. They live in a Manhattan apartment with a one-eyed cat, Henrietta. Cabot's affinity for and understanding of felines is evident in her cat characters, particularly Mia's companion Fat Louie.

Cabot did not intend to write books for children and young adults. Initially, she wrote only adult romance novels, using the pseudonym Patricia Cabot. St. Martin's Press published *Where Roses Grow Wild* in 1998, followed by *Portrait of My Heart* that year and *An Improper Proposal* the next. Critics admired Cabot's creation of mysterious plots and humorous, appealing heroines. While she began to achieve acclaim as a writer of young adult romances, Cabot also created *A Little Scandal* (2000), a novella for the anthology *A Season in the Highlands* (2000), *Lady of Skye* (2001), and *Educating Caroline* (2001). She warns that her adult romances are too racy for younger readers.

She admits that *The Princess Diaries* is based on some aspects of her high school experiences and that characters are composites of people she knew. Comparing herself



as most like Lilly Moscovitz, Cabot says that she and people she knew have personality traits similar to those of Mia and other characters. Surprised that she gained fame as a young adult author, Cabot explained to her hometown newspaper that, "I guess it makes sense, though, because I have the mindset of a sixteen-year-old. And these books justify my obsession with 'Buffy the Vampire (Slayer)'" (Herald-Times, July 28, 2001).

The February 2002 Seventeen magazine printed an excerpt of Cabot's third Princess Diaries novel as a short story about Mia.

Cabot published her first young adult historical romance, *Nicola and the Viscount*, in summer 2002 and introduced the *Ail-American Girl* series that autumn. Cabot also publishes young adult supernatural mysteries and suspense books using the pseudonym Jenny Carroll for *The Mediator* series, featuring teenaged protagonist Suze Simon who transacts communications between ghosts and humans, and the *1-800WHERE-R-YOU* series in which lightning-induced psychic Jess Mastriani seeks missing people.

The Princess Diaries was listed on the New York Times bestseller list. The American Library Association named *The Princess Diaries* a Top Ten Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers selection and a Best Books for Young Adults selection in 2001. Her sequels about Mia have been similarly recognized. Cabot has earned other writing honors, including a 1999 Romantic Times Reviewers Choice Award for Best British Isles Historical Romance for *An Improper Proposal*.

Movie studios purchased film rights for several of Cabot's books. Disney bought rights to adapt *The Princess Diaries*. Because she lacked screenwriting experience, Cabot declined an invitation to advise writing the screenplay. The film, directed by Garry Marshall and starring Anne Hathaway as Mia and Julie Andrews as her Grandmere, premiered in August 2001. Cabot attended the Hollywood premiere and described the film as a "sweet, adorable interpretation of the book" (teenread.com). She accepted variations in the movie because the "important thing to remember is that the film is spreading the gospel of Mia." A film sequel is planned.

Because of her literary success, Cabot is financially able to write full time and publish both young adult and adult novels.

While listening to rock music, she writes from nine to five daily and advises aspiring authors to practice writing constantly. She belongs to the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Romance Writers of America, and the Author's Guild.

Cabot plans to write additional books about Mia to chronicle her entire high school years. "I hope to write about her for as long as people want to keep reading about her," Cabot told Teenreads.com. "I think the reason people want to read about Mia is that she is a genuinely nice person, who always tries to do the right thing," she commented, "except that sometimes she messes up—which is very human and appealing." Cabot emphasized, "I wish I could be more like her!" (teenread.com).



Plot Summary

The Princess Diaries spans twenty-seven days in the life of Mia Thermopolis, a high school freshman living in New York with her mother, Helen Thermopolis. Mia is fairly sophisticated for her age, having been raised in an artist's loft in the multi-cultural milieu of Greenwich Village. Her father is a politician from the fictional principality of Genovia, modeled after the real-world principality of Monaco. Mia is presented as an ordinary American teenager. She is bright and interesting but doesn't fit in with the popular clique at school, despite her crush on the popular Josh Richter. She is a tomboy who favors combat boots and sports Greenpeace logos on her school backpack. A strict vegetarian, Mia prefers the natural look, meaning no makeup, hair dye or fingernail polish. She is intelligent and aware of current trends in politics, sociology and the environment. Her best friend Lilly Moscovitz is an amateur investigative reporter with her own public-access TV show, and Lilly's smart older brother Michael publishes a weekly online magazine as an ongoing school project. Mia is interested in Michael, but she would never consider upsetting Lilly by admitting her feelings.

In fact, Mia has a hard time admitting how she really feels about a lot of things because Mia prefers to avoid conflict and tries to make everyone else happy, sometimes even at her own expense. For this reason, Mia's mom presents her with a diary in which to record her true feelings when Mom starts dating Mia's algebra teacher, Mr. Gianini. This is a problem for Mia, who is failing algebra and is forced to spend an hour a day after school with Mr. Gianini for review sessions. Mia's mom is so happy, though, that Mia, as usual, keeps her feelings to herself. However, the reader is privy to all of Mia's inner thoughts, which she records faithfully in her diary.

Into the mix of Mia's everyday life comes a stunning revelation: Mia discovers that she is actually heiress to the crown of Genovia. Her dad, upon learning that he can no longer father any more children, informs Mia that she must assume the role of princess of Genovia. Phillippe Renaldo has long kept his princely status a secret from his only daughter, under the assumption that one day he would marry and produce a legitimate heir. He never thought that Mia, product of a brief, youthful romance with Helen, would be forced to succeed him on the throne. Now Mia's life is turned upside down as her daunting Grandmire arrives in New York and seeks to turn tomboy Mia into an elegant, refined royal lady.

To complicate matters, Mia is determined to keep her new status secret from her fellow students at Albert Einstein High. She especially does not want her socialist-leaning best friend Lilly to find out that Mia is now part of the aristocracy that Lilly believes keeps the common man in financial bondage. However, someone leaks the story to the press, obligating Mia to face up to her royal heritage. In the process, she discovers who she really is at heart and learns to stand up for herself and the rights of others. Mia also discovers who her true friends are and that dating the most popular boy in school is not all she hoped it would be.



Tuesday, September 23-Tuesday, September 30

Tuesday, September 23-Tuesday, September 30 Summary

Tuesday, September 23: In this initial diary entry, the diary's owner, a self-described five-foot-nine, flat-chested freshman, explains the purpose for the diary. Her mother has given it to her as an outlet for expressing her true feelings about her mother dating her algebra teacher. The diary's owner cannot believe her mother would stoop to dating her teacher, and she hopes that no one at school will find out. Meanwhile she assures her mother that it doesn't bother her.

Wednesday, September 24, Fifth Period: The diary owner, Mia Thermopolis of Albert Einstein High School, spends fifth period writing in her diary. She writes that her algebra teacher, Mr. Gianini, picks on her to avoid creating the impression that he favors her because he is dating her mother. Mia's friend Lilly likes Mr. G, but Lilly is not failing algebra like Mia. Mr. G cruelly forces Mia stay after school every single day for algebra review sessions. Worse, Mia imagines him sticking his tongue in her mother's mouth. He and her mother haven't even had their first date yet, so Mia hopes they won't be French kissing any time soon. She saw Josh Richter stick his tongue in his girlfriend Lana Weinberger's mouth, and Mia thought it was totally gross. Mia wouldn't mind it if Josh kissed her like that, though. Mia is convinced he has a deep and caring soul. Lilly disagrees. Lilly also thinks Mia should tell her mom how much she hates her dating Mr. G, but Mia refuses because Mom seems so happy.

Tagged onto today's diary entry is Mia's to-do list, which includes homework, household issues like rent and laundry, being more assertive and spending less time thinking about Josh Richter.

Thursday, September 25: In algebra class, Lana Weinberger calls her a freak. Mia wonders what Josh sees in Lana. Josh is the best-looking boy in school, and unlike Mr. G, his nostrils don't stick out. Lilly tells Mia that the nostril thing is an example of Mia transferring her anxiety over her poor grade in algebra to the fact that her teacher is dating her mother. Lilly calls this displacement, a term she has learned from her parents, who are both psychiatrists. Mia bemoans the fact that her best friends' parents are trying to psychoanalyze her. Last time she was at Lilly's, Dr. and Dr. Moscovitz subtly worked the conversation around to Mia's feelings about her mom dating Mr. Gianini. Mia lied and told them she feels fine about it, but to her chagrin, Lilly's older brother Michael overheard the news.

Although Michael is a senior, Lilly and Mia share a fifth period Gifted and Talented class with him. The G & T class is a study hall, which Mia is supposed to use to practice her algebra. Michael is supposed to spend the hour working on his webzine, *Crackhead*, but



the G & T teacher never checks their work. Mia begs Michael not to tell anyone about Mr. Gianini, but she's not sure he will keep her secret. She compares Michael to Josh in her diary. Josh is on the crew team, also a senior, and like Michael, he gets straight As. Both Josh and Michael will probably go to an Ivy League college. Unlike Josh, Michael is not popular and does not belong to many school organizations. Michael spends a lot of time alone in his room, and Mia and Lilly cannot figure out what he does there. Mia has noticed that Michael has a very nice chest and well-defined stomach muscles. Lilly tells Mia that Michael is sexually harassing Mia, but to Michael's irritation, Mia hasn't noticed. Mia's algebra notes fill the bottom of the diary page.

Friday, September 26: Mia has copied down Lilly Moscovitz' list of the ten hottest guys, adding her own commentary beneath each name. She agrees with Lilly about Josh Richter, but she strongly disagrees with Lilly's belief that fellow G & T student, violinist Boris Pelkowski, is attractive.

Later on Friday: When Mia's father calls, she lies and tells him that her mom is at the studio. Mia doesn't feel comfortable telling him Mom is on her first date with Mr. Gianini. During Mia's mandatory after-school review with Mr. G today, he asked her if she wanted to discuss her feelings about him dating her mother. Mia again lied and told him she is totally comfortable with the situation. Mr. Gianini said that he really likes her mother, at which point Mia surprised herself by threatening to *kick his butt* if he makes her mom cry. Mr. Gianini gave her permission to do so, but claims he has no intention of making her cry.

Mia thinks her father sounds funny on the phone, but he often does given the transatlantic long distance connection. Dad called to talk to Mom, which is unusual. Mia wonders if there's a problem with Grandmire. She does not like her grandmother very much.

Saturday, September 27: Mia writes that she was asleep by the time Mom got home from her date. Mom is in a good mood this morning. Mr. G took her to a nice restaurant followed by a beer garden where they talked till two in the morning. They have a second date this coming week. Mia is thoroughly grossed out, but she can't argue with anything that makes her mom this happy. She has bigger concerns anyway, as Lilly is shooting a spoof of *The Blair Witch Project*, to be aired on Lilly's TV show. They film in Washington Square Park. At the end of the day, the girls see the Blind Guy crossing Bleecker Street. He is feeling up an unsuspecting German tourist. Lilly wants to report him, but they agree the Sixth Precinct will consider it a low priority item. A to-do list follows, itemizing homework, laundry and the rent payment.

Sunday, September 28: Dad calls again, but this time Mom really is at her studio. Mia asks Dad why he sounds weird, and he denies that anything's wrong with Grandmire. She chatters about things she's learned at school that might interest her dad as a politician. He lives in Genovia, which makes much of its income from tourism. It is a principality like Monaco. Mia spends her summers at Grandmire's chateau in France, Miragnac. Mia says her Grandmire hates anyplace you can't order a decent sidecar, which is her favorite drink. Algebra notes follow this entry.



Monday, September 29, G & T: Mia scrutinizes Mr. G in class to gauge if he had as good a time on his date as her mom did. He appears to be in a good mood and even encourages Mia to try out for the fall musical, *My Fair Lady*. Unfortunately, this nice overture merely leads to Lana Weinberger teasing Mia about playing Eliza Doolittle. Lana makes fun of Mia while waiting for Josh, whose locker is next to Mia's. Lilly tells Lana to curl up and die. Josh hears their quarrel and walks away in disgust, and Lana chases after. A to-do list and algebra notes follow this entry.

Tuesday, September 30: Mom tells Mia that Dad can no longer have any children due to the testicular cancer that he conquered several years ago. The doctors have just informed him that the treatment, while successful, has left him sterile. Mom tells Mia to be understanding, but Mia can't understand why it's a big deal. After all, he has her, even if they only see each other summers and Christmases. Besides, her dad is busy running Genovia, and his many girlfriends keep him busy, too. Dad must be very upset, though, because he is flying to New York tomorrow to discuss the issue with Mia and her mom. Mia presses for more information, but her Mom says to ask her father. Algebra notes follow this entry.

Tuesday, September 23-Tuesday, September 30 Analysis

In this initial section, which spans a week in the life of protagonist Mia Thermopolis, the author establishes the pretext that the text of the novel is actually Mia's diary. To support this conceit, the narrator, Mia, explains that the diary has just been given to her by her mother as an outlet for Mia to write about her feelings. In this way, the author establishes Mia's character as being someone who suppresses her feelings and avoids conflict, often to her own detriment. As the story progresses, Mia will be challenged to overcome this passivity, and that challenge will form her character arc as Mia grows into a more assertive young woman.

Mia's everyday life is also established in this first week of diary entries. The diary format allows the author to indirectly convey important information about Mia's character and habits. The to-do lists scribbled in the margins indicate that Mia takes on a great deal of adult responsibility in her home. The reader learns that Mia lives with a single mother and that her father is a rich diplomat from a fictional country based on the principality of Monaco. Mia's daily concerns center on high school life. Two potential love interests are introduced. Josh is the stereotypical popular jock, while Michael is introduced as a computer nerd. The author displays greater depth in her characterization of Mia's best friend, Lilly, who is Mia's defender and gives voice to all of the feelings Mia keeps locked up inside. Yet Lilly can be vocal to the point of being abrasive, while oftentimes Mia is wise enough not to say something that would be hurtful. The girls are a good match because they would each benefit from being a bit more like the other. All in all, Mia's adolescent world is portrayed as vibrant and interesting, with no major conflicts. This section ends, however, with a touch of foreshadowing as Mia announces that her father is flying in from Genovia to speak to Mia about some mysterious issue.



Wednesday, October 1-Friday, October 3

Wednesday, October 1-Friday, October 3 Summary

Wednesday, October 1: Mia reports that her father is in town, staying at the Plaza as usual. Mia hates the Plaza because of their strict dress code. Once, Mia was turned away because she showed up to visit Dad in her cut-offs. Her dad spoke to the concierge, after which the staff apologized to Mia. Today in school, Lilly conjectures on Mia's father's psychological response to losing his fertility. Mia writes a list in her diary of things she intends to start doing. The list includes being nice to everyone and being honest about her feelings.

Notes from G & T: Mia and Lilly write notes to each other during fifth period. Lilly says that Boris is cute, but Mia puts him down. Lilly asks what's wrong, and Mia replies, "NOTHING!!!!!" (pg. 35)

Thursday, October 2, Ladies' Room at the Plaza Hotel: Mia has escaped to the ladies' room to ponder the shocking news that her father is the prince of Genovia. Mia realizes that all the signs were there all along, but she just never caught on. Two years ago she had to write a fact sheet for class on every country in Europe, including Genovia. The prince of Genovia was listed in the encyclopedia as Artur Christoff Phillipe Gerard Grimaldi Renaldo, which she hadn't connected with her father, Phillipe Renaldo. The picture in the encyclopedia showed her father with hair, but he's been bald ever since Mia can remember.

Mia writes to clarify her thoughts. She realizes that even the staff at the Plaza must have known that she is a princess. When Dad tells Mia the news over lunch at the Plaza's Palm Court, she comes down with an embarrassing case of hiccups. Dad continues to talk through her hiccup attack, advising her that he and Mom hadn't wanted Mia to be raised with this knowledge. Dad says a palace is no place to raise a child. In any case, Dad had never foreseen that Mia would become heir to the throne. He was only twenty-five when he had her, and he always expected to one day marry, settle down and produce additional heirs. At this point, Mia's hiccups get worse, so she excuses herself to the ladies' room where she writes this entry.

Mia recalls how Grandmire always takes her shopping in Genovia every summer, but they always go to the stores before or after the official store hours. Mia thinks about how beautiful Genovia is and how Grandmire's neighbors at Miragnac must have known who Mia's father is even though Mia hadn't. She recalls Grandmire pointing out the palace in Genovia as if it were merely a tourist attraction. Grandmire never mentioned living there.

Later on Thursday, Penguin House, Central Park Zoo: Mia hides out in the Penguin House at the zoo, picking up her story. When she returns to the table at the Palm Court, her father explains that Grandmire is the dowager princess of Genovia. Then he drops the bomb. Mia is no longer Mia Thermopolis; she is now Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi



Thermopolis Renaldo, Princess of Genovia. Mia cries when she hears the news. Catching sight of her reflection, she feels she looks nothing like a princess with her ugly dishwater blond hair, big feet and flat chest. Mia has never been good at being girly. Her backpack sports SUPPORT GREENPEACE and I BRAKE FOR ANIMALS bumper stickers. Dad tells her that she'll enjoy living in the palace at Genovia with him and that she can return to New York to visit as often as she likes. Upon realizing that Dad expects her to move, Mia gets angry. She yells at her father for lying to her and runs out of the restaurant. Eventually, she tires of running and wonders where to go. She can't go to Lilly's because Lilly is vehemently opposed to monarchies, at least according to her recent World Civ report. Mia worries what the kids at school will say if they find out she's a princess.

Even Later on Thursday: When the zoo closes, Mia reluctantly returns home. Both her parents wait at the kitchen table looking worried. Mercifully, they leave her alone. Mia ends her day with a long bath. She can hear her parents talking long into the night. Her father's voice and presence reminds her of Captain Picard on Star Trek.

Friday, October 3, Homeroom: Mia wakes up in a good mood since it is Friday. In the kitchen she finds her mom not only cooking, but cooking vegetarian style for Mia. Then Mia realizes that her dad is there. When he says that they need to talk, her good mood evaporates. Mom mentions the good points about being a princess, but Mia is unmoved. She cries that her mother is sending her away so that she can have more time with Mr. Gianini. Mom assures Mia that's not the case. Mia insists that the best thing for her is to finish high school right here in New York. Afterwards she plans to join Greenpeace and save the whales. Her father informs her that she will attend college, not join Greenpeace. Mia prepares to leave for school, but instead of taking the subway as always, her dad insists that Lars will drive her to school. Lars will even pick up Lilly on the way. Mia realizes now that Lars is more than just her dad's limo driver. He is also a bodyguard. As Mia leaves with Lars, she hears her dad asking Mom who exactly this Gianini fellow might be.

More Friday, Algebra: Lilly can tell something is wrong. Mia cannot bring herself to tell Lilly the truth because she keeps "thinking about how disgusted Lilly sounded during that part in her oral report when she mentioned how Christian monarchs used to consider themselves appointed agents of divine will and thus were responsible not to the people they governed but to God alone" (pg. 58). Despite Lars' presence, Lilly asks Mia if she's experiencing PMS or if she's failing another subject. Embarrassed, Mia mumbles something about her dad. Lilly, in a loud voice, asks if her dad is still upset about the infertility thing. Lilly launches into a lecture about the Jungian tree of self-actualization. Mia survives the embarrassing ride and now, in algebra, life looks a little brighter. After all, no one can force her to be a princess.

Really Late on Friday, Lilly Moscovitz's Bedroom: Mia admits to skipping her help session with Mr. G today. Lilly gives her a hard time about it, but she still agrees to let her spend the night. Mia's mom does not agree to let Mia stay at Lilly's, despite Mia's story about Lilly needing protection from her stalker. Lilly has acquired a stalker named Norman through her weekly cable television show. Norman is a foot fetishist, and he



used to send Lilly gifts with the promise of more gifts to come if Lilly would show her bare feet on the show. Lilly teased Norman with on-air promises to show him her feet, which she never kept. Norman became angry and began following Lilly. One day he accosted Lilly and Mia, but the girls ran to the safety of the nearby Sixth Precinct. Norman was hospitalized and has just been released. Lilly's parents have told her "not to torment him anymore, because he's just a poor obsessive-compulsive with possible schizophrenic tendencies." (pg. 62) However, Lilly plans to devote tomorrow's show entirely to her feet, hoping to drive Norman over the edge. Mia stays at Lilly's over her mom's objection that Mia needs to come home and talk this princess thing out with her parents.

Wednesday, October 1-Friday, October 3 Analysis

This brief span of days marks a major turning point in Mia's life. She learns that she is not the girl she thought she was. She is actually the hereditary princess of Genovia. Author Meg Cabot attempts to modernize the classic story of peasant girl turned princess with an unusual twist, that Mia doesn't want to be a princess. Mia considers this development utterly tragic, at least initially. The author attempts to make this response believable by painting Mia as a Doc Martins-wearing, tree-hugging, tomboy vegetarian. As a modern American girl, Mia is nothing like the fairytale princesses of old. She is concerned with politics and the environment, and she is not interested in material pursuits like attending fancy balls or learning formal social etiquette. Mia believes that one's character, not one's station in life, is what is most important.

While her position is admirable, this portrait of Mia is inconsistent. Mia doesn't cry when she hears the news because she is a socialist at heart and hates monarchies. Mia cries because she doesn't think she looks like a princess. As a tomboy, she feels wholly unprepared and inadequate to take on her new role. The reader is left to resolve this contradiction. Either the author has improperly characterized Mia, or the author is making a subtle point about Mia's character through this contradiction. Possibly Mia's current image is as little reflective of her true heart's desires as her words often are. Mia may be hiding, behind her boyish haircut, a lifelong desire to look more like the gorgeous Lana Weinberger. Perhaps Mia and Lilly put Lana down because they are jealous of her good looks and popularity. If this is the case, then Mia will eventually embrace her good fortune and enjoy being a princess. However, it is not always easy to let go of one's illusions about oneself, and Mia's rebellion in this section makes it clear she would rather be forced into her new role than have to admit to herself and Lilly that she relishes it.



Saturday, October 4-Tuesday, October 7

Saturday, October 4-Tuesday, October 7 Summary

Saturday, October 4, Early, Still Lilly's Place: Mia has a wonderful time at Lilly's. The Moscovitzes' maid remembers to prepare a vegetarian meal for Mia. Also, Lilly's parents run a more organized and efficient household than Mia's mom does. Mia usually makes sure that the bills are paid on time and the grocery shopping gets done. Mia also makes sure her mom, an artist, meets her painting deadlines. At Lilly's house, Mia can relax and be a regular teenager. Last night, Lilly's older brother Michael knocked on Lilly's bedroom door to tell Mia that her dad was on the phone. Mia's dad had been calling for hours, but Michael was updating his e-zine, *Crackhead*, and tying up the phone line with his Internet connection. Seeing the look on Mia's face, Michael agrees to take a message for her.

Afterwards, Mia asks Michael who he would choose as his life partner, between Xena the Warrior Princess and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Michael chooses Buffy, and then Mia, Lilly and Michael pose similar questions to each other. Lilly asks Michael who he would choose between Mia and Lana Weinberger. Michael chooses Mia, who assumes he simply didn't want to insult her to her face. Then Lilly asks Mia if she would choose Michael or Josh Richter. To Mia's relief, Lilly's parents interrupt the conversation at this point. Alone with Mia, Lilly asks the question again. Mia chooses Josh. Privately, however, Mia has second thoughts about this decision. She doesn't want Lilly to know that she feels anything for her brother Michael.

Later on Saturday: Mia hangs out at the Moscovitz house as long as possible before returning home to face the music. She is not in the habit of staying out without permission. Mia would have stayed at Lilly's all day, except the Moscovitzes found out about Lilly's plans to torment her stalker by dedicating her TV show to her feet. They sent Mia home so they could have a talk with Lilly. At home, Mia finds her parents waiting. Instead of yelling, her mom gives her a hug, and both parents apologize. Dad promises to help ease the transition for Mia, and together the family drafts the Thermopolis-Renaldo Compromise. Mia can finish high school at Albert Einstein, but she must also agree to fulfill her new duties as princess of Genovia.

Saturday Night: Mia bemoans the social death implied by spending a Saturday night at home with her father. To make matters worse, Dad feels left out because Mom is on another date with Mr. Gianini. Dad gets jealous when he sees Mom's black Victoria's Secret mini-dress, but Mia thinks she looks wonderful. Mom meets Mr. G outside to spare him an awkward encounter with her ex. Mia's dad spends the evening watching the sports channel and makes no effort to converse with Mia. Since Dad is such poor company, Mia tries to call Lilly. She thinks Michael must be online because the phone is busy for hours. Finally, she sends Michael an instant message asking him to get offline so she can call Lilly. Michael teases her about liking Josh Richter in a return instant message. However, Michael does log off the Internet, as evidenced by Lilly's phone call



a few minutes later. The Moscovitzes have revoked their financial support of Lilly's TV show, called *Lilly Tells It Like It Is*, which costs \$200 per episode.

Sunday, October 5: Mia is furious that Mr. G told her mother about Mia skipping Friday's algebra review. Mia's dad punishes her by spending all day Sunday drilling her on the quadratic equation. Dad threatens to send her to summer school in Genovia if she doesn't pass algebra. Mia writes the quadratic formula on the sole of her Converse high-tops for tomorrow's quiz.

Monday, October 6, 3 a.m.: Mia can't sleep. She worries about being expelled for cheating.

Monday, October 6, 4 a.m.: Mia tries to wash the quadratic equation off her sneakers, but the ink remains perfectly legible despite her best efforts.

Monday, October 6, 7 a.m.: Mia decides to wear her Doc Martins instead of her sneakers to school, but the Docs have a broken shoelace. She is forced to wear the high-top sneakers.

Monday, October 6, 9 a.m.: In the car on the way to school, Mia realizes she could have re-laced her Doc Martins with the shoelaces from her high-tops. Now it's too late. Lilly continues to embarrass Mia in front of Lars by talking about her dad's overreaction to being infertile. Lilly does not know Mia is a princess, and so she thinks Mia's dad is simply being overprotective. Lilly encourages Mia to take a stand against her parents.

Monday, October 6, G & T: Mia admits to peeking at the formula on her shoe during the quiz. Despite the fact that she cheats, Mia still misses every problem on the test. Mia complains about her terrible life.

Tuesday, October 7: Mia composes an Ode to Algebra and a homework list.

Saturday, October 4-Tuesday, October 7 Analysis

This section is predominantly devoted to developing Mia's character. Mia lies to Lilly about her feelings for Michael, but the author is not trying to say that Mia is a liar. Rather this is another example of Mia covering up her true feelings to avoid upsetting someone she cares about. She doesn't want to upset Lilly by admitting that she likes Michael. Mia's character is further developed through the incident in which she writes a cheat sheet on her shoe for the algebra quiz. Mia's remorse is communicated clearly by the multiple late night diary entries in which she guiltily tries to scrub the formula off her shoe. Clearly Mia is not experienced at cheating, and based on her internal sense of right and wrong, it is doubtful she will try a stunt like this again.

An important bit of foreshadowing is interwoven into this section as well. Mia's father's behavior will be paralleled later in the book by the behavior of Josh Richter. Her dad, who lives oceans away from Mia and sees her only twice a year, has an opportunity to spend a Saturday evening with his daughter. Dad spends the whole evening watching

sports and ignoring Mia completely. This behavior is indicative of the way he relates to women, and it sets him up as the adult version of Josh Richter. The link between Dad and Josh explains Mia's interest in Josh, but it also foreshadows the fact that their relationship is ultimately doomed to fail as her parents' relationship failed.



Wednesday, October 8-Saturday, October 11

Wednesday, October 8-Saturday, October 11 Summary

Wednesday, October 8: Mia is dismayed to report that her Grandmire is in town, staying at the Plaza with Dad. Mia states that "if anybody could start World War III, it's my grandmother." (pg. 90) Mia cites an example of Grandmire's bullying behavior. One time Grandmire gave a dinner party and instructed her cook to leave one of the female guest's plates empty during the foie gras course. Mia tried to give the lady her foie gras, because as a vegetarian, Mia doesn't eat foie gras, but Grandmire intervened to prevent this. After the party, Grandmire explained to Mia that the female guest deserved such treatment because she bore a child out of wedlock. Mia pointed out that Grandmire's own son had Mia out of wedlock, but Grandmire ignored her. Now Mia worries what Grandmire will think of the loft she and her mother live in. Grandmire has never visited Mia at home, and Mia just knows she will hate the Village. Mia thinks Grandmire will make it impossible for Mia to keep the fact that she is a princess secret.

Thursday, October 9: Grandmire is here to give Mia princess lessons!

Friday, October 10: Mia complains that she must now go straight from her after-school algebra review to the Plaza each day for princess lessons. Her dad says she has no choice. Mia's first lesson, the previous day, starts badly. The doorman at the Plaza again refuses her entry due to her outfit, but the beefy Lars convinces him to change his mind. She finds Grandmire dressed head to toe in royal purple, and Grandmire immediately begins pointing out flaws in Mia's appearance. Grandmire asks Mia why she burst into tears upon learning she is a princess. Mia explains she is not princess material, and Grandmire insists that she has duties to Genovia.

Grandmire assigns Mia homework. Mia must bring a list of the ten women she admires most and explain why she admires them. Also, Mia must wear pantyhose, school shoes and lipstick to her next lesson. Today Mia borrows her mom's pantyhose and lipstick and stashes them in her backpack. Mia styles her hair with mousse, and Lilly makes fun of her in the car on the way to school. After algebra review, Mia sneaks into the bathroom to change. Michael spots Mia exiting the restroom. He has stayed after school for a Computer Club meeting. He asks if she's going on a date all dressed up like that. Mia begs him not to tell Lilly and then escapes with Lars. Grandmire does not approve of Mia's attempts to dress up, calling her a *poulet*, which Mia later learns is French for prostitute. She wishes her grandmother were the nice type that bakes cookies. Mia is hurt that her grandmother insulted the list of women Mia admires. Grandmire insists that Mia return tomorrow for another lesson, forcing Mia to skip helping Lilly film her latest TV episode. Lilly intends to do an exposy on the Asian delicatessen across the street from Albert Einstein High. The owners, the Ho family, give unfair discounts to Asian



students. Mia is not too sorry to miss this, as she feels Lilly is being too hard on the Hos.

Following the diary entry is Mia's list of *The Ten Women I Admire Most in the Whole World*. The list includes Madonna for paving the way for other female entertainers, Princess Diana for her independent and kind nature, Hillary Clinton for sticking with her marriage and career goals, Picabo Street for winning Olympic gold medals, Lilly Moscovitz for being smart and fun and Helen Thermopolis for her talent as an artist, her principles and for always making time for Mia.

Saturday, October 11, 9:30 a.m.: Lilly has accused Mia of being against her boycott of Ho's Deli. Mia tells her that she had to spend Saturday with Grandmire. While it's true that Mia was with Grandmire, it's also true that she doesn't support Lilly's boycott, although she doesn't tell Lilly. Lilly calls her codependent for not being able to say no to Grandmire. Mia points out that she is saying no to Lilly right now. Lilly demands to know why she has never met Mia's Grandmire in all the years they've been friends. Mia admits in her diary that Grandmire hates children, and that's why she's never introduced her to Lilly. Now, of course, she has another reason for keeping them apart, since Mia doesn't want Lilly to find out she's a princess.

Saturday, October 11: Mia swears to her diary that she will never go to school or even leave the loft again. The reason for this is the new haircut her Grandmire has tricked her into getting. Mia spent the day with a stylist named Paolo who colored and cut her hair and gave her fake fingernails. Mia admits that the luxurious spa atmosphere lulled her into complacency. She was treated like a princess all day. Now, she is remorseful because she no longer looks like Mia Thermopolis. She thinks Grandmire is trying to change her into someone else. Her mom, looking fabulous for her date with Mr. Gianini, tells Mia that the kids at school will find out sooner or later that she's a princess. Mia doesn't want to be treated like a freak, which is how the kids at school treat Tina Hakim Baba, who gets dropped off in a limo each day and is followed around at school by her bodyguard. Mia's parents tell her that the press may eventually get hold of the story. Mia asks how that would ever happen, and her father responds by opening his wallet. He offers her money and asks Mia to consider being a princess like having a job. She refuses the money, but then Dad offers to donate a hundred dollars a day to Greenpeace in her name if she will give her full cooperation in the princess department.

Later on Saturday: Mia is furious because Lilly was so mean about her new hairdo. Lilly is upset that Mia's hair is now the same color as Lana Weinberger's. Mia explains that her Grandmire forced her to get the haircut. Lilly asks her if she is completely passive. Lilly goes on and on about how Mia needs to be more assertive. Finally Mia, for the first time in her life, tells Lilly to shut up. Mia says she is tired of Lilly putting her down all the time. Lilly asks Mia what her problem is, and Mia responds that Lilly is the one with the problem. Mia also stands up for the Ho family. Michael overhears the fight. At home now, Mia decides her hair looks pretty good. She also decides not to apologize to Lilly. Lilly must apologize first.



Wednesday, October 8-Saturday, October 11 Analysis

Irony is the key component in Lilly and Mia's relationship at this point. Lilly has known Mia for a long time and is not afraid to share her perspective with her friend. Lilly correctly, and frequently, points out that Mia is too passive. Indeed, Mia would benefit from asserting herself. Yet ironically Mia most needs to assert herself to Lilly at this juncture. Mia feels too guilty to enjoy her new status as princess because Lilly has taught her that being beautiful, popular and admired is a terrible thing. Lilly is a very engaging young woman with many fine qualities, but her attitude towards the beautiful people at Albert Einstein High is one of the proverbial sour grapes. Lilly is short and unattractive by shallow high school standards. This has caused Lilly to develop her other strengths, but it also leads her to put down anyone who makes an effort to look nice. Lilly also enjoys dominating others, and even as she goads Mia to assert herself, Lilly benefits from Mia's passive personality. Lilly enjoys being the leader in their friendship, and when Mia does start to assert herself with Lilly, Lilly doesn't like it.



Sunday, October 12-Tuesday, October 14

Sunday, October 12-Tuesday, October 14 Summary

Past Midnight, Sunday, October 12: Mia writes that Lilly still hasn't called to apologize.

Sunday, October 12: Mia is hideously embarrassed because she has just caught her mom and Mr. G eating breakfast in the kitchen. They were rather surprised to see her, too, thinking she was spending the night at Lilly's house. Mia wishes she had stayed there as she planned before the fight because then she would have never have seen Mr. Gianini in his boxer shorts.

Later on Sunday: Mia's mom comes into her room and lies to her, telling her that Mr. Gianini spent the night on the couch because there was a problem with the trains last night. Mia prefers to believe this lie, despite what she knows Lilly would say. Mia comes out of her room to find Mr. Gianini, fully dressed now, making jokes to ease the tension. His strategy works. This entry is followed by two lists. One contains five reasons to make up with Lilly. The other contains five reasons why Mia should not make up with her friend.

Even Later on Sunday: Mia gets an instant message from Michael Moscovitz on her computer. He asks what happened last night. Lilly has told him that Mia has been acting weird ever since her dad came to town. Lilly is also upset that Mia doesn't support her Ho boycott. Mia and Michael agree the boycott is stupid. Michael offers to tutor her in algebra during G & T class. She confides in him about finding Mr. Gianini in her kitchen this morning, and Michael makes her feel better about it. Mia gratefully accepts his offer to help her with algebra. She thinks she should fight with Lilly more often if it makes Michael behave so nicely towards her.

Even Later on Sunday: Mia's dad calls to inform her she's having dinner with him and Grandmire at the Plaza. At least the doormen don't give her any trouble, since by now they recognize Lars. Mia is bored at dinner when Grandmire turns the meal into an etiquette lesson. Dad makes her uncomfortable by asking a lot of nosy questions about Mr. Gianini. Mia doesn't tell her dad that Mr. Gianini spent the night. Mia can only recall three other men staying over in the past fourteen years, and she figures the relationship has become serious. Mia thinks her dad is a hypocrite because he has a new girlfriend every two weeks. However, Mia stays quiet, not wanting to give her Grandmire any more ammunition against her mom. Mia gets through the dinner by reminding herself that she's already earned \$200 for Greenpeace.

Monday, October 13, Algebra: This morning, when Lars pulls up in front of Lilly's building, the doorman tells them she's already left. This is the longest fight Mia and Lilly have ever had. As Mia walks into school, Boris Pelkowski hands her a petition to sign to boycott Ho's Deli. Mia refuses to sign it. Algebra notes follow this entry, along with another poem about algebra.



Later on Monday, French: Lilly has become "the queen of the cause cylibre." (pg. 136) Even if they were speaking to one another, Mia still wouldn't have been able to sit with her at lunch because so many kids crowd around Lilly at the table where they normally eat. Mia stands awkwardly with her lunch tray, wondering where to go. She considers and discards the jock and cheerleader table, rich kid table, hip-hop table, druggie table, drama table, honor student table and foreign exchange student table. She is left with no other option than to ask to sit with Tina Hakim Baba, who always eats alone with her bodyguard. Tina is reading a romance novel, but she gladly sets it aside when Mia sits down. They talk about the upcoming Cultural Diversity Dance. Mia is chagrined to learn that even the socially outcast Tina has a date, a boy from another school. Tina gets up for another diet soda, and her bodyguard goes with her. Mia thinks she would die if Lars ever shadowed her around school. In Tina's absence, Lana shows up with Josh and begins making fun of Mia's new hairdo. When Tina returns, Lana makes fun of her, too. Before Tina's bodyguard can say anything, Mia picks up an ice cream cone and jams it at Lana's cheerleader sweater. Mia swears the bodyguard is laughing as he follows her and Tina to another table. She thinks she hears some applause from some students as well. Mia thinks that Lilly will now have to revise her diagnosis that Mia is unassertive.

Later on Monday: Mia waits in the lobby of the principal's office, in trouble for stabbing Lana with the ice cream cone. Mia has never been in the principal's office, and she was shocked to be pulled out of G & T class. Michael Moscovitz was tutoring her at the time. He told her she lacks concentration, but Mia thinks that's only because Michael was sitting so close.

Monday Night: Mia reports that she has detention for a week, in addition to her after-school math review and her secret princess lessons. She didn't get home until nine tonight. Dad is threatening to sue the school for punishing Mia when all Mia did was "defend the weak." (pg. 143) Mia realizes she gave Principal Gupta no other choice because Mia refused to apologize to Lana. Mia is so upset that she actually tells her Grandmire about it. Grandmire tells her she had a similar problem with a girl when she was in school. Mia asks what Grandmire did about the problem. Grandmire gives an evil laugh and maintains that she did nothing at all, which Mia certainly does not believe. Mia wonders if the girl is still alive. To change the subject, Grandmire gives Mia a quiz consisting of both etiquette and political questions. Mia does well.

Tuesday, October 14, Homeroom: Mia makes Lars stop by Lilly's house on the way to school, just in case, but Lilly has already left. Mia and Tina Hakim Baba get dropped off by their respective limos at school that morning. They see each other and share a smile. Tina thanks her for what she did to Lana. Tina has told her parents about the incident, and they have invited Mia over for dinner Friday. Tina shyly asks if Mia would like to spend Friday night at her house. Mia, feeling sorry for Tina, agrees to come. Mia admits, though, that she does kind of like Tina, who is actually nice to Mia. Another to-do list follows this diary entry. It includes a shopping list for the house and Mia's decision to stop waiting for either Lilly or Josh Richter to ever call her.

More Tuesday, Algebra: A brief, horrified diary entry indicates that Lilly has a date for the Cultural Diversity Dance with Boris Pelkowski.



More Tuesday, English: Mia writes that no boy will ever ask her out.

More Tuesday, French: In G & T, Michael compliments Mia on her handling of the Weinberger situation. He tells her it's all over school. Mia asks if Lilly is still saying mean things behind her back, but Michael insists she never has. Lilly is just confused as to why Mia "blew up at her like that." (pg. 152) Mia tells him she is tired of Lilly putting her down and being unsupportive. As they talk, Lilly shoots them looks from behind the Ho-Gate poster she is working on. The boycott has received mixed results. Initially it was well received, but now the popular kids have returned to Ho's because there is nowhere else near campus they can buy cigarettes. The Asian students frequent Ho's more often now that they know they will get a discount. Michael asks Mia if she is free on Saturday. Just then, the teacher interrupts their discussion. Mia avoids him at the bell because she assumes he is going to suggest she study algebra on Saturday. French exercises and a homework list round out this diary entry.

Tuesday Night: Grandmire approves of Mia's new friend Tina Hakim Baba, whose father is an Arabian sheikh and whose mother is a relative to the king of Sweden. As a hostess gift, Grandmire insists on ordering breakfast from Balducci's to be delivered Saturday morning when Mia wakes up at the Hakim Baba's.

Sunday, October 12-Tuesday, October 14 Analysis

The conflicts in Mia's life, such as they are, reach their peak in this section. All of Mia's worst fears come true. This section of rising conflict is admittedly lacking, for the author has failed to create any serious obstacles for her protagonist to overcome. However, the obstacles Mia does face grow proportionately. Mom's relationship with Mr. Gianini becomes serious, while Mia's relationship with her best friend Lilly appears to be at an end. These events force Mia to move out of her comfort zone and grow as an individual. Without Lilly to protect her, Mia begins to become more assertive. She befriends Tina, and now Mia takes on the role of Tina's defender, just as Lilly has been Mia's defender. Mia is embracing a part of herself that she has heretofore rejected. Her assertive, strong side is symbolized by her Grandmire, and Mia's growing closeness with Grandmire shows that she is embracing this part of herself at last.



Wednesday, October 15-Thursday, October 16

Wednesday, October 15-Thursday, October 16 Summary

Wednesday, October 15, Homeroom: Lilly is gone when Lars and Mia pull up to her home before school. Lars suggests they will make better time if they skip this stop in the future. Mia agrees, but she misses Lily. As they pull up to Albert Einstein High, Mia can tell something strange is going on. Students mill around outside and stare at Mia as she passes.

Later on Wednesday, Before Algebra: At Mia's locker before Algebra, she is stunned when Josh Richter greets her. He never speaks to her although their lockers are next door. Mia is thrilled.

Wednesday, Principal Gupta's Office: Mia thinks her life is over. Everyone has found out that she's a princess. The *New York Post* ran an article on it today, which explains why everyone has treated her so strangely all day. The photo of Mia in the article was taken as she exited the Plaza Sunday night. The papers refer to her as Princess Amelia. Amelia is her first name, although she has always preferred to use Mia. Mr. G saw the article and called Mia's mom. Mom was unavailable, so he had to call Mia's dad instead. Dad insisted that Mr. Gianini send Mia to the principal's office to ensure her safety until Dad can get there. The newspaper describes Mia as "the statuesque beauty who is the product of Helen and Phillippe's tempestuous whirlwind college romance." (pg. 160) Mia scorns this description of her beauty.

More Wednesday, English: Mia's dad won't let her go home. He insists she stay at school and deal with the situation as befits a princess. Mia thinks the baby seals better be grateful for the \$100 a day she is earning them. Mia accuses her father of leaking the story to the press. He denies it and tries to blame Mr. Gianini, who says he never even heard of Genovia before today. Mia is upset because she, like Tina Hakim Baba, must now walk the school corridors with a bodyguard in tow. Her father insists that Lars must be her armed escort at all times. Principal Gupta blushes when Dad flirts with her, and she calls him Your Highness.

More Wednesday, French Class: Mia has suddenly become popular. At lunch Lana invites her to sit at the cheerleader table. Mia refuses and sits with Tina. Lars and Tina's bodyguards find they have a lot in common. Tina is afraid she will lose her new friend now, but Mia only feels anger for the people who have judged Tina and avoided her because she's different. She likes Tina and tells her they need to stick together. During G & T class, Michael asks her about being a princess. Lilly eavesdrops and feels compelled to enter the conversation. She asks if Mia knows that her father has a net worth of over three hundred million dollars. Lilly wonders how much of that fortune "was



amassed by taking advantage of the sweat of the common laborer." (pg. 168) Michael stands up for Genovia and informs Lilly that there is no income or property tax in Genovia. Michael also indicates that Genovia has the lowest inflation, unemployment and infant mortality rate in the Western Hemisphere. Lilly accuses Mia of plying Michael with propaganda. Mia didn't even know any of this before Michael said it, though. Michael tells Lilly that she's just mad that Mia didn't let her in on the secret. Lilly accuses Michael of having libidinous feelings for Mia, and Mia doesn't know what that word means. Michael asks Mia if Lars would go with her if she attended the Cultural Diversity Dance this weekend. Mia tells him yes, and just then the teacher interrupts their conversation.

Wednesday Night: Mia and Lars exit the high school and confront a gang of reporters. Mr. Gianini informs her that news vans have been arriving all day. Principal Gupta has been forced to call the police to restore order. Lars creates a path for Mia through the encroaching crowd, and they duck into a car driven by another bodyguard. Dad waits in the car. Mia suggests that they could have given Mr. Gianini a ride home, too, but Dad gets huffy. Mia asks if she can transfer to another school, making Dad even huffier. He reminds her that she insisted on attending this high school, and therefore she will continue to do so. Lars will continue to accompany her. The thought of Lars following her around upsets Mia, and she tells her father that she is quitting her job as princess. Her dad informs her that she can't quit. The newspaper announcement has cinched the deal.

More Wednesday: Mom thinks that Grandmire tipped off the press. Dad accuses Mr. Gianini but stops when he sees the anger in Mom's eyes. Mia disappears to her room as they begin to argue. Mia listens to Britney Spears music. She secretly loves Britney Spears, but she can't tell Lilly, who would make fun of her. Mia bets Tina wouldn't have a problem with it. Mia is beginning to enjoy her new fake fingernails. Today, Grandmire suggested that Mia hold a press conference or give interviews. Mia thinks that maybe Grandmire did tip off the media.

Thursday, October 16, Homeroom: Mia's face graces the front pages of the *Daily News* and *New York Newsday*. *The New York Times* publishes her school photo. The school photo could only have been obtained by a family member or someone at Albert Einstein High, which looks bad for both Grandmire and Mr. G. Reporters again crowd the school. Despite Grandmire's fashion rules, Mia wears her combat boots in case the reporters get rough, and she wears all her Greenpeace and anti-fur buttons hoping to publicize her favorite causes. Lars drags her inside without letting her stop to answer questions. At the end of this diary entry, Mia writes out an action plan for herself which includes getting Lilly to like her again, to stop being such a wimp and to stop lying or at least improve the quality of her lies. She chides herself to be more independent and mature and to stop thinking about Josh and Michael.

Thursday, Algebra: Mr. Gianini has a tough time keeping the students focused on the Cartesian plane today with all the news vans outside the school. Lilly is irritated that the students care more about the media presence than about her anti-Ho's Deli campaign. Lana asks Mia a friendly question about being a princess, to Mia's surprise.



Thursday, G & T: At lunch, Tina Hakim Baba tells Mia about the chadrah that Saudi Arabian girls must wear. It covers them from head to foot and is designed to protect them from the lustful glances of men. Tina says the girls in her family wear Gap jeans underneath, and when no adults are present, the girls ditch their chadrahs and hang out with boys just like American girls. Of course, Mia has no boys to hang out with. She wonders what is wrong with her that she can't get a date to the Cultural Diversity Dance. Suddenly, Lana and Josh arrive at the table and ask if they can sit down. Their popular friends sit down, too, and Josh takes a seat next to Mia. He greets her and starts eating. Tina and Mia exchange glances. From across the room, Lilly stares wide-eyed.

Lana invites Mia to Josh's big dance after-party. His parents will be out of town, and it will be a big bash. Mia explains that she can't come because her mother would never let her go to such a party. This is true, but the full truth is that Mia has heard of such parties and feels they are beyond her current scope. She wouldn't know how to act, and besides, she tells Lana, she doesn't drink. Actually, Mia drinks wine with dinner every night at Miragnac. "You don't drink it for fun, though. You drink it because it goes with the food. It's supposed to make the foie gras taste better. I wouldn't know about that, since I don't eat foie gras, but I can tell you from experience that wine goes better with goat cheese than Dr Pepper does." (pg. 189) Mia shares this only with her diary, however. To Lana, she simply explains that she tries to be respectful of her body and not fill it with a lot of toxins. Lana is about to make fun of Mia, but Josh intones that he can respect Mia's position. Lana protests that Josh drinks more than anyone. Josh pierces Lana with a hostile stare and says that maybe he should quit. Mia and Tina finish quickly and get out of there.

More Thursday, French: Before class, Mia finds Josh waiting at her locker. He smiles and commends Mia for her cool attitude about respecting her body and not drinking. Josh asks her if she has a date for the dance. Mia admits that she does not. The bell rings, and Josh says he'll see her later. Underneath this entry is Mia's homework list. Unfortunately, Josh's blue eyes have driven all other thoughts from her head, and she cannot recall what homework she's been assigned today.

Thursday Night: Grandmire is not surprised that a boy has shown interest in Mia. She assures Mia that she is turning into a wonderful young lady thanks to Paolo's styling wizardry and Grandmire's etiquette help. Mia resents the implication that no guy would like Mia for who she is, only for who Grandmire has made her into. She thinks that Grandmire is vain, self-centered and mean. For example, Grandmire takes Mia to dinner outside the hotel to give Mia some practice in dealing with the press. However, there is only one reporter hanging around when they leave the Plaza. Grandmire runs back inside for a moment, and by the time they arrive at the Four Seasons, reporters are lined up and waiting for them. Mia accuses Grandmire of calling the press, and she does not deny it. Mia accuses her of leaking the story to the media in the first place, and Grandmire admits it. Mia yells at her Grandmire. It must have worked because by the end of dinner, the media is gone. At home, Mia informs her father that Grandmire, not Mr. Gianini, leaked the story. Dad hangs his head and says he knows. Mia demands to know why he has not confronted her. She believes he is afraid of Grandmire.



Wednesday, October 15-Thursday, October 16 Analysis

This section marks the turning point in the storyline. Mia's secret is out at last. The fact that Grandmire turns out to be the catalyst who leaks the story to the press adds to the symbolic role that Grandmire plays in the story. Grandmire represents an aspect of Mia's personality that she is only gradually beginning to embrace. By forcing Mia to publicly acknowledge her role as princess of Genovia, Grandmire is forcing Mia to own the part of herself that is powerful, dominant and assertive. This is tough for the formerly passive Mia to accept. Left to her own devices, Mia would have transferred to another school and avoided the whole issue. However, her father and Grandmire insist that Mia weather the controversy. Because of this, Mia's character will be forced to complete her transformation.

The allusion to Mia's fondness for Britney Spears' music is a telling analogy. Britney Spears is a real-life popular entertainer who embodies the image of a blonde beauty queen. Britney Spears represents everything which Lilly is not, and which therefore Lilly puts down. Mia has always joined Lilly in putting down people like Britney Spears and Lana Weinberger, but in her heart, Mia wishes to become more like them. Mia has never told Lilly of her fondness for Britney's music, just as she has never expressed to Lilly her desire to look like Lana Weinberger. Yet Mia has the capability to be as beautiful as Britney or Lana, and now that Mia has become a princess, she can definitely embody the beauty queen image as well.

The author takes an unusual approach to a teenage story because most books aimed at kids this age talk about inner beauty and the futility of trying to achieve this image of visual perfection. Certainly trying to attain such beauty and perfection is a ridiculous goal which is only achievable if one has a personal trainer, makeup artist, wardrobe specialist, good plastic surgeon and of course the money to afford all this help. The media image of perfection is damaging to women because it is too perfect, and therefore unreal. This unreal image is a disservice to women everywhere, whose natural beauty often goes unappreciated because it doesn't resemble the magazine covers. Yet the author's point is well taken, because all women have a unique and natural beauty, even Lilly. If Lilly were to try some of the beauty tips in the magazines instead of rejecting her natural good looks, she might discover that beauty comes in many shapes and sizes and that she is beautiful in her own right.



Friday, October 16-Sunday, October 19

Friday, October 16-Sunday, October 19 Summary

Friday, October 17, English: Mia proclaims that Josh and Lana have broken up. He asked for his class ring back last night. Today, Lana looks awful for the first time in Mia's recollection.

More Friday: At the lockers, Josh asks Mia to the dance. She immediately thinks that he is only asking her out because she is a princess. She doesn't care about his motivation, and she holds out hope that he might actually like her for who she is. Mia manages to accept his invitation nonchalantly. Fortunately, Lars is with Mia, because Mia is so thrilled that she has no recollection of Josh telling her he will pick her up at seven. A to-do list is scrawled at the bottom of the diary page. Mia needs to get a dress and have her hair and nails done.

Friday, G & T: Lilly is speaking to Mia again, but only to say that Josh is a lousy date to take to the dance. Mia discounts Lilly's concerns. Lilly points out that Mia tends to over-rationalize when she's worried. Mia tells herself that nothing can make her feel bad about going to the dance with the hottest guy in school. However, it bothers her to see Lana looking so sad while Josh appears completely undisturbed by their breakup. At lunch, Josh and his entourage sat with Mia and Tina. Lana and her friends were back at their regular cheerleader table. It also bothers Mia that Josh didn't talk to her at all over lunch. He merely sat by her and talked to his jock friends. However, Mia appreciates the fact that Tina was enthusiastic about Mia's going to the dance, and unlike Lilly, Tina hadn't said anything mean about Josh. Michael asks Lars if he will be accompanying her and Josh. Lars indicates that he will be there, and he and Michael exchange meaningful looks.

Friday Night: Mia's lesson with Grandmire is shorter today because of Mia's plans to spend the night at Tina's. Grandmire is enthusiastic about helping Mia prepare for the dance. Mia is grateful for her help considering she has to get a dress at the last minute. Grandmire sets up an appointment with Chanel for the following day. The rush job will cost a lot of money, but Grandmire does not mind. Mia hadn't realized all the details that go into making a girl look beautiful, but Tina knows all about it. Tina's room in the lavish Hakim Baba home is decorated in pink, and Tina owns a lot of women's magazines. The Hakim Babas' cook prepares a Middle-Eastern vegetarian meal, which Mia finds delicious. Tina's parents and siblings are all friendly to Mia, and Mia notices that in her home life, Tina is much more outgoing and bubbly. Tina's dress is a Nicole Miller design in a sea foam color, and Tina looks more like a princess than Mia ever will.

The girls watch Lilly's TV show together. It is the exposy of Ho's Deli, filmed before Lilly called off her boycott for lack of interest. Although Mia disagrees with the topic, she admires Lilly's professional style of journalism. She likes her new friend Tina, but she still misses Lilly.



Saturday, October 18: When Mia returns home, Mr. Gianini is at the loft. When he finds out about Mia's date with Josh, he is uneasy. He tells Mia's mom that Josh is a fast boy, and Mom decides she better consult with Dad. Mom says that Mia shouldn't be dating seniors. Via speakerphone, Mia's dad agrees. Fortunately for Mia, Grandmire shows up. Grandmire has never been to Mia's home before, but all Mia can think about is that her parents are trying to prevent her from going to the dance with Josh. Grandmire sniffs haughtily at Mr. Gianini and then takes the phone from Mia's mom. Grandmire informs her son that Mia will be going to the dance with Josh. Grandmire has not gone to all this trouble to find Mia a dress for no reason. With the matter settled, Grandmire slams down the phone and begins insulting the loft.

More Saturday: Mia wears her new dress, shoes, nails and panty hose. She has had her legs and underarms professionally waxed and her hair and makeup professionally done. It is after seven, though, and there is no sign of Josh. Mia's dad thinks he has stood her up, and Lars keeps checking his ammunition clips. Mia's parents have agreed to let her go to the dance with Josh only if Lars goes too. Mia was expecting Lars to accompany her, but she pretends to be upset about this development so that her parents will not feel that they have given in too easily. Grandmire has explained that Dad is afraid Josh will treat Mia the way Dad has always treated his girlfriends. Mia feels gorgeous in her pale blue silk dress and matching heels. By seven-fifteen, Dad is offering to take Mia out to a Broadway show. Just then, Josh rings the buzzer.

Saturday Night, Ladies' Room, Tavern on the Green: Mia's diary doesn't fit into her tiny clutch purse, but she convinces Lars to carry the diary for her. Mia is getting a lot of looks from men in her new dress, but she is not enjoying dinner. Josh looks terrific and has charmed her parents, but Mia knows that the corsage he pinned on her was purchased for Lana. In the car, Mia and Josh hadn't found much to say to each other. Mia thinks how easily conversation flows with Lilly's brother Michael. At the restaurant, Mia is relieved to see Josh's friends waiting for them. She was dreading an entire meal filled with awkward silence. Josh' senior friends are more mature and friendly than Lana. Yet she is dismayed to see that Josh is drinking heavily. She wonders if Lars weren't driving if Josh would actually get behind the wheel in this state. Josh orders filet mignon for the whole table. Mia is forced to eat only salad and bread rolls since she doesn't eat meat. The drunker Josh gets, the more he touches Mia under the table.

Later Saturday Night, Girls' Room, Albert Einstein High School: This diary entry begins with the question, "WHY ME?" (pg. 219) Mia pours out the story of what Josh has done to her. After consuming nine bottles of champagne, Josh and his friends finally decide to go to the dance, which started an hour earlier. When they pull up to the school, Mia sees a sea of media personnel waiting for her arrival. Lars swears in another language as Mia wonders who tipped off the press this time. Mia doesn't believe it could have been Grandmire because she and Grandmire have resolved this issue. Yet somebody has informed the press.

Josh suggests they make a run for it while Lars parks the car. Lars tells Josh to park the car while he and the princess make a run for it, but Josh ignores him and pulls Mia into the crowd. The press mobs them immediately. Mia puts her trust in Josh and holds



tightly to his hand. He pulls her to a stop. Mia thinks Josh has only stopped to open the door for her. He does not open the door, though. The press begins chanting for Josh to kiss her, and he pulls her to him and smashes his mouth to hers. Mia's first kiss contains no feeling of any kind, other than the feeling of being used. Josh pulls her inside through the glass doors. Tina, Lilly, their dates, Mr. Gianini and the rest of the school look completely astonished. No one is more stunned than Mia herself.

Mia realizes that Josh must have called the press himself. He only broke up with Lana to get a little publicity by dating a princess. Mia thinks how the people close to her have always warned her that she internalizes her feelings too much and avoids confrontation. This is why her mother gave her this diary in the first place, to provide Mia with an outlet for those suppressed feelings. She whirls on Josh and demands to know why he made a big media spectacle of her by kissing her like that. Josh is surprised to learn that Mia didn't appreciate his kiss. Josh insists that he likes her for who she is, not because she's a princess. Mia responds that Josh has made no effort to get to know her. Josh insists that he does know her. Mia says if so, he would never have ordered a steak dinner for her. The crowd gasps. Mia's friends know she's a vegetarian even if Josh doesn't. Josh apologizes for the steak and asks Mia if she's ready to go to the dance. Mia turns on her heel and walks away from him.

Mia can't exit the building because of the press, so she heads to the girls' room. Josh realizes she's walking out on him and complains that it was just a kiss. Mia informs him that it was a media event, not a kiss. She tells him she doesn't need him to get publicity. Then she holds out her hand to Lars for her diary and stalks into the bathroom. Now, Lilly and Tina enter the bathroom to check on her. Lilly apologizes for having been a bad friend. She tells Mia that Michael is here without a date. Mia decides to join the dance.

Sunday, October 19: Mia wakes up in Lilly's bedroom. She can hardly believe that she and Lilly made up, that Mr. Gianini has raised her F to a D, that a bombing in the Middle East supplanted the news story of her and Josh kissing and best of all, that she and Michael Moscovitz slow-danced. She recalls the previous evening joyfully. After she exits the bathroom with Lilly and Tina, they all sit together at a table with their dates. Michael appears and sits with Mia. They converse long into the evening, and then Michael asks her to slow-dance. Mia describes slow-dancing with the right boy as less about dancing and more about feeling. Afterwards, the whole group adjourns to the Moscovitz house and takes over the rec room. Mia finally learns what Michael does in his room all the time. He writes songs and plays guitar. He plays her a song he wrote about a tall, pretty girl who is unaware that this boy loves her.

Sunday Night: Grandmire and Dad arrive at the loft to see how the dance went. Mia confides the ordeal with Josh to Grandmire, who listens with interest. On the way to Grandmire's car, they spot the Blind Guy. He pretends to be blind so he can feel women up when they offer to help him cross the street. Grandmire, unaware, insists Mia help the man. Mia refuses, and so Grandmire leads him across. Moments later, Grandmire is whacking the pervert with her purse as her bodyguard rushes to assist. Mia doesn't think the Blind Guy will show up on her street again.



Friday, October 16-Sunday, October 19 Analysis

The final section contains the climax and resolution to the story. The Friday and Saturday afternoon entries, leading up to the plot climax, foreshadow the pending resolution of Mia's date with Josh. On Friday, Mia eats lunch with Josh and is disturbed by the fact that he makes no attempt to speak with her. In this way, Josh makes it clear that Mia is merely window-dressing, an attractive and royal accessory that he can wear on his arm to the dance. His behavior parallels Mia's father's behavior on the previous Saturday night, when Dad also made no attempt to hold a conversation with his daughter. As Grandmire explains to Mia on Saturday morning, Dad is afraid Josh will treat her in the same way Dad has always treated his model-type girlfriends. Neither Josh nor Mia's father relates to women on a personal level. Their women are treated as status symbols, nothing more.

Yet by making Mia's beloved father so similar to the immature Josh, the author succeeds in showing both Dad and Josh as fully fleshed-out three-dimensional characters, despite their one-dimensional behavior. Rather than asking the reader to hate Josh for his poor treatment of Mia, the author indicates that Josh's immaturity is not so unusual. Josh is a poor choice for a relationship at this time, and perhaps even twenty years from now he, like Mia's father, will still handle his relationships like a juvenile. Yet Mia's father is also a dedicated leader and a loving father, which helps the reader see that Josh, for all his faults, must certainly have redeeming qualities as well. On the whole, the author presents a well-balanced and thoughtful overview of these immature male characters.

By contrast, the Moscovitz family shines. Lilly, for all her flaws, is still a great friend to Mia. Lilly is not afraid to tell Mia that dating Josh is a bad choice. Mia may not wish to hear this at first, but this action nonetheless shows Lilly's courage and integrity. She is willing to point out the negatives in the situation to her friend despite the risk of further jeopardizing their friendship. Lilly is a true friend, and in the end both Lilly and Mia have grown as individuals. In contrast to Josh, Michael Moscovitz is shown to be a mature and caring young man. If Josh's immaturity is not an unusual quality in a boy of eighteen, then Michael's well-developed maturity is a rare and valuable asset. Despite the fact that Michael doesn't share Josh's poster-boy good looks, he is clearly the better man and a better choice for Mia.



Characters

Mia Thermopolis

The gist of the novel centers on the protagonist's attempts to reconcile the two seemingly irreconcilable aspects of her character. Is she plain old Mia Thermopolis from Albert Einstein High, or is she Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo, Princess of Genovia? Mia, when first introduced, is a social activist tomboy who loves Greenpeace, combat boots and the vegetarian lifestyle. Mia and her best friend Lilly make fun of the shallow socialites at their high school who seem to care only about making sure their lipstick matches their nail polish. Secretly, though, Mia longs to allow herself such feminine luxuries. In fact, Mia's self criticisms all center on her appearance. She wishes she looked like popular Lana Weinberger, but she is afraid to cross her best friend Lilly, who embraces her homely appearance like a badge of honor.

When Mia first learns that she is really a princess in disguise, she feels miscast in the role. She has denied her inner yearnings to embrace her femininity for so long that she has convinced herself that she prefers to look like she doesn't care about her appearance. The first time Mia styles her hair before school, Lilly mocks her attempts. After Grandmire sends Mia to a top-notch stylist, Lilly acts betrayed that Mia would dye her hair a similar color to Lana's. As Mia gradually embraces her developing beauty, she begins to realize that Lilly's attitude towards surface appearances is every bit as shallow as Lana's. Why can't Mia be both intelligent and gorgeous? Does a beautiful appearance detract from Mia's personal integrity and caring heart? By the end of the novel, Mia has learned to reconcile both aspects of her personality. This reconciliation is symbolized by the fact that her two friends, activist Lilly and stylish Tina, also become friends in the end. The threesome now embraces the best of both worlds, and Mia realizes she can be Princess Amelia and still be herself.

Lilly Moscovitz

Lilly, the daughter of two psychiatrists, lives a relatively privileged lifestyle in New York's Greenwich Village. Her household has a maid, and her family shops at high-end stores. There is no question that Lilly and her brother will be able to attend Ivy League colleges if they so desire. Lilly's parents are socially active, and she has perhaps inherited her activist streak from them. They encourage their daughter by paying for her weekly public-access television show, at least until Lilly starts using the show as a platform to torment a psychologically unstable viewer. To her credit, Lilly has taken full advantage of the opportunities her parents have been able to provide her. She takes her education seriously and intends to use her guts, brains and personal integrity to make a positive difference in the world. Additionally, Lilly is an extremely loyal friend. She is not a perfect friend, since Lilly rather likes to boss Mia around. Lilly is a true friend, however. She is not afraid to confront Mia with unpleasant facts, such as the fact that Josh is using Mia, in order to help her best friend avoid the negative consequences of making poor



choices. In the end, Lilly is willing to face unpleasant facts about herself, too. She eventually acknowledges that she has behaved like a bully towards Mia. Lilly ends the novel determined to work to improve this aspect of her character, and she maturely asks for her friend's forbearance in the meantime.

Josh Richter

Mia describes Josh Richter as the hottest guy in school. Not only is he good looking and popular, but he is also a straight A student and a gifted athlete. What more could a girl want? Josh has his future all planned out. He intends to go to an Ivy League college and major in a career that will guarantee him a minimum annual salary of \$80,000. Josh is interested only in money and power. He is a one-dimensional character, but this is not because the author has failed to flesh him out. Josh is simply too immature to care about anything other than surface appearances. This is a life stage that many adolescents flirt with, and so his character adds value to the storyline. Josh tempts Mia into enjoying the shallow perks of popularity. By dating him, she can win acceptance with the in crowd, but in return she must give up the possibility of connecting with her man on a human level.

The parallel between Josh's character and Mia's father is one of the highlights of the storyline. Mia's father represents a man who has succeeded admirably in his professional life but has not yet begun to work on his personal life. Mia's father is portrayed as the forty-year-old version of Josh, and for this reason Dad is highly suspicious of Josh Richter. He recognizes in Josh a kindred soul, and he does not want Josh to treat his daughter the way he has treated Mia's mother. The interplay between these two male characters provides an interesting ironic twist to the story.

Michael Moscovitz

Michael is a senior at Albert Einstein High and Lilly Moscovitz's older brother. Unlike his rival for Mia's affections, Josh Richter, Michael is not popular, and he is definitely not in the running for best-looking boy in school. Yet Michael is still the better catch by far. He is extremely intelligent, but he does not use his intelligence to put others down. Michael is generous with his intellect. He runs an online magazine dedicated to informing his peers about political and social issues, and when Mia finds herself failing algebra, Michael volunteers to help her improve her grade. He is a patient and kind tutor, and despite his interest in Mia, Michael seeks nothing in return. His reward lies in her success.

Michael has another hidden facet to his personality that he manages to hide even from his own sister. It turns out that Michael is a gifted musician. He has secretly taught himself to play the guitar without ever taking a single lesson. In addition to playing music, Michael is a lyricist and writes songs for himself to play. This multi-faceted young man is also extremely mature for his age. He looks out for Mia's best interests when Mia naively insists on dating Josh. Michael and Mia's bodyguard, Lars, conspire to make



sure Mia is adequately chaperoned at all times during her date with Josh. By the end of the novel, Mia has learned that Michael is a good candidate to be the caring, considerate boyfriend she seeks. Given Michael's deep sense of respect for Mia and his understanding of the fact that she is only a freshman, the reader can imagine that no chaperone would be required for at least a year if the two of them were to start dating.

Artur Christoff Phillipe Gerard Grimaldi Renaldo

The crown prince of Genovia usually goes by the shorter name of Phillipe Renaldo. Mia, of course, calls him Dad. Dad, as Mia describes him, looks like a cross between the actors Yul Brenner and Patrick Stuart. He is roguishly charming and wears his power comfortably. While his character is not developed in any great detail, it is apparent that he finds it easier to rule a country than to enforce rules on his teenage daughter. This contradiction carries a lot of comedic potential, which the author unfortunately fails to explore. His most important function in the book is to model the type of adult that a young man like Josh Richter will most likely become.

Helen Thermopolis

Helen Thermopolis is portrayed as a typical American single mother. However, this successful avant-garde artist is not the average single mom struggling to make ends meet. Helen lives in an artist's loft in New York's trendy Greenwich Village, and her daughter Mia is the product of Helen's youthful affair with the crown prince of Genovia. Helen's paintings sell for six figures, making her one of the most prominent artists of her day. Helen has passed down to Mia her old-school liberal feminist beliefs, and Mia can often be heard spouting dated feminist propaganda from the '60s. Helen's views on life seem to have been formed in college and have not changed substantially since. Perhaps this is because she leads an ivory tower lifestyle as an artist. Helen is not interested in the day-to-day responsibilities of raising a child, and it is usually Mia who makes sure that the bills are paid on time and that Helen completes her art projects by her deadlines. Mia greatly admires her mother, but Helen's character is a stereotypical and fundamentally inaccurate portrait of an artist. She lacks the depth required to be a great artist, and her supposedly artsy worldview is completely lacking in originality.

Lana Weinberger

Lana Weinberger represents the queen bee of the social hive at Albert Einstein High School. Although she is only a freshman, Lana is accustomed to being the most popular girl in school, a status she acquired in junior high. One month into her high school career, Lana has already snagged the most popular senior boy, Josh Richter, as her steady boyfriend. Unfortunately, Lana's social success goes to her head, and she uses her popularity to put down those who are less socially fortunate. Lana gets her comeuppance in the end when she learns that Josh has only been using her to further his own social status. When Mia's status as a princess eclipses even Lana's popularity,



Josh immediately dumps Lana in order to woo Mia. Lana's character is not allowed any character growth within the span of the novel, so if she learns anything from all of this, the reader is not informed.

Mr. Gianini

Mr. Gianini is the freshman algebra teacher at Albert Einstein High. When young Mia begins to fail in his class, he calls her mother in for a parent-teacher conference. As a result of this conference, Mr. Gianini begins dating Mia's mother. As far as Mia is concerned, this means social death for her at school. However, Mr. Gianini makes her mom very happy, and so Mia eventually comes to accept their relationship.

Tina Hakim Baba

Tina Hakim Baba is the reason Mia cries when she first learns she is a princess. Tina, the wealthy daughter of Arabian and Swiss royalty, is forced to attend school each day with her bodyguard in tow. The other kids at school treat Tina like a freak because of her bodyguard, and so Tina has no friends and is forced to eat lunch alone with her burly protector each day. This fate is precisely what Mia fears when she learns that she, too, comes from a royal family. When Mia gets to know Tina, she realizes that Tina is not a freak at all. Tina is kind, bubbly and generous of spirit, and Mia realizes that Tina has been treated unfairly by the student body at Albert Einstein High. The two girls become fast friends, and by defending Tina, Mia learns to stand up for herself.

Lars

Lars is first introduced as Mia's father's limousine driver. However, as Mia learns that her family is Genovian royalty, she comes to realize that Lars is actually a bodyguard. He carries a gun and has been professionally trained. Part of the humor inherent in the storyline is that such a tough man would be forced to attend high school every day with a fifteen-year-old girl. By the end of the novel, it becomes apparent from Lars' treatment of Mia that he feels affection for his young charge and will do everything in his power to keep her safe.



Objects/Places

The Diary

The author employs the literary conceit that the novel is actually the main character's diary. The diary is worked into the storyline, as Mia carries it everywhere she goes. At the high school dance, when her clutch purse is too tiny to accommodate the diary, Mia has her bodyguard carry it for her.

Albert Einstein High

Albert Einstein is the name of Mia's high school, where she is currently a freshman.

Miragnac

Grandmire's summer home in France, where Mia spends all her summers, is called Miragnac.

The Loft

Mia's home is an artist's loft in Greenwich Village, where she and her mother, a painter, have lived for as long as Mia can remember.

The Thermopolis-Renaldo Compromise

Mia and her dad enter into a written agreement that allows her to complete her high school education at the Albert Einstein School in exchange for Mia's voluntary participation in fulfilling her new duties as princess of Genovia.

Lilly Tells It Like It Is

Lilly Moscovitz's weekly public access TV show is called *Lilly Tells It Like It Is*.

Crackhead

Michael Moscovitz's on-line webzine is published through the school's Computer Club and deals with relatively sophisticated social and political concerns.

Mia's High-Top Sneakers

Worried about an algebra quiz, Mia writes the quadratic equation on the sole of her high-tops. Stricken with guilt, Mia stays up all night before the quiz trying to wash off the



incriminating equation. Unable to remove it, Mia winds up cheating on the quiz by peeking at the equation. However, due to her problems with basic subtraction, she fails the quiz anyway.

Ho's Deli

The Asian delicatessen across the street from Albert Einstein High, run by the Ho family, becomes the target of Lilly's investigative journalism piece. Lilly hopes to inspire the students at Albert Einstein to boycott Ho's Deli, but her boycott fails for lack of student interest.

Palm Court

The Palm Court is an upscale restaurant at the Plaza Hotel in New York City. Here, Mia learns that she is a princess. Unable to face the news, Mia rushes out, leaving her father alone in the restaurant.



Setting

Readers are introduced to Mia in September, when school has just started. The season could represent the new beginnings in her life. She takes her diary everywhere with her so that she can comment on her surroundings. Mia has mastered the Manhattan landscape where she lives. Her Greenwich Village loft apartment, especially her room, and the Moscovitz and Hakim Babas apartments shelter her from the hostile environment outside. Although Mia expresses fondness and loyalty for her community, she admits that the city is not always pleasant. She comments that sometimes people spit on her for no reason. Mia also disgustedly tells about the blind man who gropes bewildered tourists and unsuspecting people who help him cross the street.

Mia frequents New York City landmarks, including the Plaza Hotel and Tavern on the Green. The opulent hotel contrasts with Mia's crowded apartment. At the hotel, she encounters snobbery based on her age, appearance, and attire. Only when her relationship to her father is revealed do hotel staff treat Mia courteously. The tearful Mia retreats to the hotel's lavish bathroom, with elaborate dressing tables in each cubicle, which serves as a sanctuary as she processes the information her father divulged.

The Plaza is where Mia endures her princess lessons and confronts her grandmother and herself as she begins to accept her new identity. Mia begins to realize that Josh Richter is not her soul mate when he orders meat for her at the Tavern on the Green.

The zoo in Central Park also serves as a safe zone where Mia can hide from her parents. She identifies with the captive animals. The private Albert Einstein High School is a mostly antagonistic setting for Mia. Educating a diverse group of students representing almost two hundred types of ethnicities, religions, and countries of origin, the school should inspire its students.

Instead, students find the school stifling to their imaginations and maturity. Mia is horrified when the press descends on her when she attends the Cultural Diversity Dance at school. She realizes that Josh alerted the press so that he could be seen publicly kissing a princess. Mia finds sanctuary in her limousine and bathrooms. She often writes her emotional reactions when she has fled to those private spaces.

Mia remembers childhood visits to her Grandmere's castle Miragnac in France, as well as shopping excursions to Genovia.

That one-mile-long principality is described as the smallest European nation with a population of 50,000. Coincidentally, Mia prepared a report on Genovia as a school assignment but did not recognize the ruling family's surname as being the same as her father's. Situated on the Mediterranean Sea between France and Italy, the fictional Genovia resembles Monaco. Mia takes her European travels for granted and does not consider Genovia to be exceptional.



Social Sensitivity

Mia's social conscience resonates throughout this novel. Readers quickly realize that Mia is a dutiful daughter who respects and takes care of her overwhelmed and often forgetful mother. Mia values family, whether it exists as the comfortable trio of her, her mother, and Fat Louie in the loft, or extends to her absent father and stern Grandmere.

Striving to become a better person, Mia rebukes herself for lying. She tries to be nice and kind. Mia attempts to behave in a manner that causes no harm to others and tries to fix potentially detrimental situations.

She is a humane person who values animal life. Mia devotedly attends to Fat Louie's needs. Empathetic towards all animals, Mia is committed to vegetarianism and strictly monitors what she eats to avoid consuming animal flesh. She insists that her mother and friends respect her choice to abstain from meat.

Mia also aspires to work with Greenpeace in order to save seals, and she donates the money her father gives her as reward for enduring princess lessons to the organization. Mia stubbornly insists that she will pursue future work with that group instead of attending the prestigious colleges her father has selected for her. She is loyal to her friends, especially Lilly, and attempts to retain her lifestyle and minimize her royal status in order to prevent others from feeling jealousy or discomfort around her. Mia yearns for love but does not act promiscuously to attract male attention or secure popularity. She is repulsed by the sexual harassment a blind man perpetuates on passersby.

The social activism mindset of Mia, Lilly, and other characters, such as the Drs.

Moscovitzes' charity donations, are compatible with Mia's new identity. Royals often assume roles of responsibility and accountability as part of their duties to subjects.

Mia's ideas to help people, animals, and the environment, however, often are contrary to those of her father's and grandmother's.



Literary Qualities

Mia's informal narration through her journal invites readers to become part of her world. The use of a confessional teenage first-person voice is welcoming. As narrator, Mia willingly reveals various sides of her personality. She can seem serious and depressed at times. Her humor, though, is the novel's primary tone. She is prone to sarcasm, puns, and exaggeration. Words appearing in all capital letters emphasize her outrage or joy about situations. Cabot often uses one-word interjections or incomplete sentences which make Mia's thought and speech processes more realistic. The abstract algebra problems she attempts to solve reinforce Mia's sense of mathematical despair.

Mia never speaks pretentiously or formally. Ironically, she does not seem like a princess. At times, she appears more ordinary than extraordinary. Although Mia's life is charmed, neither magic nor supernatural elements are involved. Readers can identify with Mia. Because Mia strives to do the right thing and is appealing, genuine, and familiar, readers can easily imagine her as their friend.

Cabot deftly uses vocabulary and expressions which are familiar to teenagers at the turn of the twenty-first century. She knows how teenagers think and expresses their angst. Aware of high school culture and social structure, Cabot convincingly portrays easygoing interactions between Mia and her friends, as well as Mia's awkward encounters with her adolescent foes. Through scenes, dialogue, and journal entries, Cabot shows how high school can be an excruciating experience for everybody. She makes fun of school policies and reveals absurdities such as the gifted and talented class teacher using the class period to talk to friends.

The chronological presentation of journal entries guide readers through one month of Mia's life. Some entries provide clues which foreshadow future plot and character developments. In addition to her commentary about events at home, school, and in the city, Mia jots down homework assignments, lists, computer instant messages, and dialogue from conversations. She includes essays that she wrote for school and provides insights about her personality and enhances the characterization. Mia notes popular culture icons and refers to television and movies. Celebrity cameos also are appealing to readers. The brief passages and vignettes quickly advance the plot as Mia reveals her anxieties and triumphs while coping with her new identity.



Themes

The Search for Identity

The search to discover one's individual identity and place in life is a universal theme in literature. Popular novelists, philosophers and classical authors have explored this theme in various forms such as dramas, comedies, non-fiction works, stage plays, romances and tragedies. In *The Princess Diaries*, author Meg Cabot takes a light-hearted approach to the American adolescent quest for identity. American teenage culture has evolved as a culture within a culture, and children today find it necessary to locate their place within the often-rigid social cliques found in modern American high schools. Later, as adults, these same individuals will necessarily repeat their quest to find their identity in the broader world, but prior to graduation, the socially competitive world of high school represents the entire plane of existence for most adolescents. High school is something of a social proving ground, and it allows American youth to evolve their characters amid the pitfalls and triumphs associated with young adult peer bonding.

In such a setting, protagonist Mia Thermopolis has chosen her place. As a freshman, she chooses to project an image of social and environmental responsibility. Mia eschews more frivolous concerns like wearing makeup or being popular. This does not mean Mia is not concerned with her looks. It is critically important to her that she looks the part of a social activist. She spends as much money on her brand-name combat boots as other girls might spend on their hair or nails. However, when Mia learns that she is the hereditary princess of Genovia, she is forced to reevaluate her chosen identity. Mia comes to realize that the image she has chosen for herself is actually the person her best friend Lilly wants her to be. Lilly is the one who frowns on such feminine pursuits as coloring one's hair or trying to look fashionable. As Mia is forced to start looking more like a princess, she finds that she rather enjoys her new fake fingernails and stylish blond hair. Despite having embraced this new feminine vision of herself, Mia still shares many of Lilly's deeper views on social issues such as racism and the environment. Mia must learn to incorporate her desire to look like the popular crowd with her ingrained belief that a person's value is not defined by his or her looks.

Activism

Activism is addressed in the novel primarily through the character of Lilly Moscovitz. Lilly is a creative, intelligent, brave and caring young lady who provides a positive role model for her best friend, protagonist Mia Thermopolis. Lilly is initially introduced as a counterpoint to the shallow characters who comprise the popular clique at school. While Lana Weinberger spends her weekends doing her hair and nails and partying with her popular boyfriend, Lilly spends her weekends creating investigative journalism segments for her public-access TV show, *Lilly Tells It Like It Is*. Lilly desires to contribute something substantive to society, and she is determined to use her mental assets to



achieve this goal. As a young Jewish woman, Lilly is particularly concerned with educating her peers about racism in order to avoid historical tragedies like the Holocaust.

While Lilly's point of view is quite admirable, Lilly's character is also used to illustrate the shadow side of activism. Lilly enjoys the limelight a little too much, and her activism is often a thinly veiled excuse for personal publicity. At no time does Lilly demonstrate any actual passion or belief in any of her various causes. Lilly's passion seems focused on promoting herself as a righteous individual. Lilly is far more concerned with receiving kudos for supporting social causes than she seems to be about the causes themselves. In her role as activist, she can go too far, to the point where she becomes a social bully. Her exposé of Ho's Deli is little more than self-aggrandizing self-promotion, and Lilly hardly notices that she has herself become a racial persecutor by pursuing this aggressive boycott against the Asian establishment.

Youth and Romance

Ironically, one of the lessons which protagonist Mia Thermopolis learns in this romantic tale is that real life is not like a romance novel. Author Meg Cabot attempts to present a responsible story about teenage romance, and she targets the tone of her message to reach her young audience at their level. Cabot presents two potential love interests for Mia. Josh Richter is every girl's fantasy. As the handsomest and most popular boy in school, he seems like the perfect Prince Charming to round out the royal fantasy that Mia suddenly finds herself living. Yet appearances can be deceiving as this blue-eyed charmer proves to be as roguish with women as Mia's father, the prince of Genovia. Mia's father, who had her out of wedlock and who hid his royal status from his illegitimate daughter for fifteen years, recognizes himself in young Josh. He tries to prevent Mia from dating Josh, ostensibly to help her avoid living out the same fate he has inflicted on Mia's mother, who has been forced to raise Mia herself with little help from Mia's fabulously wealthy father.

The true Prince Charming in the story is a boy of average looks and below-average popularity. Michael Moscovitz, Mia's best friend's brother, has known Mia all her life and has come to genuinely care for her. Michael waits in the wings to see if Mia is shallow enough to choose someone like Josh. When Mia realizes that Josh is only using her to increase his own status, she publicly calls him out. Then and only then does Michael move in. Still, Michael is hardly the antithesis of a romantic lead. He is an intelligent, creative, caring, attractive and fairly wealthy boy who is on track to attend an Ivy League school. His deep feelings and intense loyalty for Mia belie the author's intended lesson that life is not like a romance novel.



Themes/Characters

Identity and family are the primary themes of this novel. High school freshman Mia Thermopolis thinks she is a freak because "she stands 5'9, is flat-chested, gangly, and has tufty hair and large feet." A dedicated vegetarian who likes "Baywatch" and "Xena, the Princess Warrior," Mia strives to improve the lives of animals and protect the environment. She worries about achieving self-actualization and improving herself, especially her tendency to lie.

Mia confides her concerns in a journal that her mother gave her. She initially perceives her greatest dilemmas as passing algebra, tolerating her mother dating her algebra teacher, and gaining a boyfriend.

Other than her algebra woes, she is considered intelligent enough to be assigned to the gifted and talented class which in reality is a study hall. Love, both romantic and platonic, is important to her.

Mia is jolted by the announcement that she is actually Her Royal Highness Princess Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo, the sole heir to Genovia. Her diary becomes therapeutic as Mia confides her distress at having her life disrupted by royal demands which she considers repulsive. She unsuccessfully tries to hide her new identity. Although Mia often seems timid and passive, she can assert herself to guard what she most values. She insists on remaining in New York instead of returning to Genovia with her father. Mia often responds to provoking situations by acting sassy or witty. She expounds how incredulous she feels about people's behavior in her journal.

Resisting royal transformation at first, Mia submits to princess lessons to appease her father. The training is more rigorous than her academic lessons. Because both educational experiences are told from Mia's perspective, her biases and preconceived ideas may detract from how other characters might perceive the same events.

Mia's comments indicate that her new identity does not automatically convert her into a cliched invulnerable high school goddess. Instead, her existing problems are compounded by new crises which she dramatically describes. She is easily embarrassed by the attention focused on her. Mia attempts to persevere by continuing pursuit of her interests, but she is often thwarted.

Although she becomes more assertive and changes in some way, Mia does not experience a radical metamorphosis in several weeks. The theme of humanity is emphasized by Mia's efforts to be a good, respectful daughter, friend, and princess even when she fails, often because of impulsive actions.

In contrast, Mia's best friend Lilly Moscovitz is bold and outspoken. She is much more assertive than Mia and is not self-conscious.



Mia describes Lilly as a genius who could have skipped a grade but wanted to stay with Mia. Lilly often campaigns against perceived injustices such as racism. She hosts "Lilly Tells It Like It Is," a public access cable program broadcast in Manhattan. Lilly is not afraid of people who verbally denounce her because of the show or who prove to be physically menacing, such as her stalker Norman.

Although Lilly occasionally seems antagonistic to Mia, especially after Mia is exposed as a princess, and they sometimes fight, she acts mostly nurturing and protective of her friend. Lilly does opportunistically recognize the professional potential of interviewing Mia soon after she learns she is a princess, and stations rebroadcast the segment nationally. Because she can be controlling, Lilly sometimes seems like a younger version of Grandmere. Lilly's brother, Michael is Mia's most consistent love interest.

Although he does not acknowledge Mia's attraction, Michael is kind to her and encourages a friendship but not romance.

Helen Thermopolis, Mia's mother, is an acclaimed artist originally from a Versailles, Indiana, farm. She was romantically involved with Phillippe Renaldo but refused to marry him when she became pregnant because she considered marriage too patriarchal and confining. Thermopolis is depicted as being irresponsible and easily distracted but staunchly supportive of her daughter, whom she unconditionally loves. She has capably supported Mia since her birth and encourages her daughter's self-expression by giving her a diary.

The theme of narcissism is apparent in the self-serving characterizations of Mia's paternal family. Mia's father, Phillippe Renaldo, the prince of Genovia and descendant of its mythical first ruler Princess Rosagunde, seems ambivalent towards his daughter.

Although he has sent her financial support and occasionally visits with Mia in New York and Europe, the playboy Renaldo is not involved in her life. They are strangers to each other. Renaldo has merely hinted at what his true identity is and has not been emotionally accountable to Mia by preparing her for his disclosure. Only when he learns that chemotherapy for testicular cancer has rendered him sterile does Renaldo actively seek Mia's participation in his life.

He had believed that he would eventually have children with one of the many women he dated.

Clarisse Marie Grimaldi Renaldo, Mia's Grandmere, is the dowager (dignified elderly woman) princess of Genovia. A self-absorbed woman, she is vain and egotistical and distances herself from anyone and anything she considers inferior to her. Accustomed to having servants, she pushes people around and insists that they obey and cater to her orders. A vain woman, Grandmere had eyeliner surgically applied to save her time from applying makeup. She shaves off her eyebrows to draw curves across her brow, which satisfy her image in a way her natural hair cannot. Her princess lessons are rigid sessions in which Mia often feels trapped and unappreciated. Grandmere does not respect Mia's desire for privacy and notifies the press to carry news stories about Mia.



Even before Mia learned that she was a princess, she expressed unsentimental thoughts that Grandmere had died when she learned that her father had called with an urgent message. She later admires her grandmother for exposing the blind man as a sighted con man.

Ironically, Mia's twenty-five pound cat, Fat Louie, is a better friend to her than most people she knows. She also finds support in unlikely places. Mr. Gianini, Mia's algebra teacher, helps her acquire mathematical skills and attempts to comfort and reassure her about his relationship with her mother.

Mia hints that Lars, the bodyguard, has a violent paramilitary background, but he is gentle and protects her emotions as well as her physical safety. Because of his duties, Lars spends more time with Mia than anybody else. Lilly's parents are psychiatrists who encourage their children to be autonomous and treat Mia like a daughter. They are concerned for her mental well-being and offer advice on how she can cope with overwhelming situations such as being hounded by reporters.

At school, people tend to be supportive or antagonistic. Although Mia had considered Tina Hakim Baba to be odd because she has a bodyguard, she later recognizes she is a kindred spirit. Mia supplies romance novels to Tina which her wealthy Arab father forbids as wasteful.

Shameeka Taylor is also a reliable friend.

Lana Weinberger, however, strives to make Mia miserable. Physically attractive, even in her required school uniform, and dating senior Josh Richter, the school's most popular boy whom Mia has a crush on, Lana does not hesitate to remind Mia of her insecurities. When Mia uncharacteristically explodes and destroys Lana's cellular phone, she is punished while Lana exploits her momentary role as victim. Josh represents the theme of betrayal when he misrepresents his intentions regarding Mia and manipulates her emotions to achieve his agenda.

The school's faculty, especially Principal Gupta, do not comprehend realities the students face. As a result, Mia's privacy and stability is often sacrificed because of other's ignorance or naivete. Most characters make Mia's life more confusing as she tries to understand who she is and her role both in New York and around the world.



Style

Point of View

The Princess Diaries is told exclusively through Mia Thermopolis' first-person point of view. The author seeks to convince the reader that Mia, the fictional narrator and protagonist, is recording the events of the novel in diary form. As such, the text is written in a stream-of-consciousness style in an effort to mimic the diary format. Mia's character is a freshman in high school, and so the tone is often overly dramatic, as befitting a typical teenage girl. Perhaps the biggest flaw with the author's choice to use Mia's point of view is that an actual teenage girl does not write the novel. It is written by an adult woman attempting to realistically mimic the point of view of a high school freshman. In many places the author does succeed in creating a credible high school viewpoint. However, just as often the written text seems to be subtly mocking Mia by making her seem ridiculously overdramatic.

In addition, Mia's character and point of view are fundamentally unsound. The author's premise that Mia is an average girl turned princess fails because Mia's character is hardly ordinary. Mia summers at a mansion in France, and she tells the reader that her father is a politician who runs Genovia. When it is revealed that she is a princess, it does not seem to be a big change. She already knows that her father runs the country and is extremely wealthy. Making him a crown prince instead of a powerful politician is too similar to entail the level of dramatic conflict the author hopes to achieve. Mia's reaction to becoming a princess is similarly unrealistic. She cries and tries to hide this fact from her peers. Given that the story is a remake of the timeless girlhood fantasy of discovering that one comes from royalty, Mia's rejection of her new status undermines the aspect of fantasy wish-fulfillment which the story is supposedly all about.

Setting

The Princess Diaries is set in modern-day New York City, in New York's famous Greenwich Village. The Village is a popular tourist attraction and a hip center for alternative culture. This is not the place to find the conservative social mores of heartland, middle-class American culture. Greenwich Village is home to a more liberal social ideology than can be found in most parts of the country. It contains all the best and worst that New York has to offer, from alternative arts and theater groups to restaurants of every imaginable nationality. The Village is a creative hotbed from which many new ideas and works of art continually flow. Yet in its own way, the Village is as staunchly conservative as middle America. Its free and open society has rules equally as strict as those found in America's Bible Belt.

In the Bible Belt, homosexuals might be persecuted, whereas in the Village their rights are strongly defended. Yet if anyone were foolish enough to wear a fur coat within the confines of the Village, they would face strong social hostility. Although Mia is raised in



this very open environment, she is also subject to its alternative social rules. Mia's insistence on wearing Greenpeace and anti-fur buttons hardly comprise social rebellion or activism. She is merely toeing the social line. Mia's image as a socially responsible activist is one of the safest choices she can make in this environment, and it is similar to the choices someone like Lana Weinberger makes in order to be popular.

Language and Meaning

The use of language in *The Princess Diaries* is relentlessly modern. Protagonist Mia Thermopolis is an ultra-hip American girl raised in one of the coolest, most cosmopolitan areas of New York. Thus her language is peppered with hip multi-cultural references and expresses a strong foundation in the arts and social sciences. Mia is also comfortable with a range of psychological terms that she has picked up from her best friend Lilly, whose parents are both psychiatrists. However, Mia is not a cultured young lady in the classical sense. Her vocabulary reflects a middle school reading level at best, and indeed the simplicity of the language makes Mia's character sound much younger than she is supposed to be.

The fact that Mia is in the Gifted and Talented program at school is not a good advertisement for the state of education in America today. She expresses little knowledge of literature, theatre or art history. Her artistic and cultural grounding is based on what's considered cool, and her knowledge of art is restricted to edgy modern art and its monetary value. Mia's verbiage reflects the money-hungry culture of modern New York, and like many teenagers, she places great emphasis on brand names. All of the brand names listed in the book are current and trendy, but they will ultimately date the novel as these current brands become displaced by newer, trendier labels. Similarly, Mia's encyclopedic command of television shows and movie star names places the book squarely in the opening decade of the twenty-first century. The timeless fairytale premise on which the story is based will certainly outlast this trendy attempt to bring that story into the modern age.

Structure

The author employs a literary conceit that seeks to convince the reader that the novel is actually the diary of protagonist Mia Thermopolis. As such, the novel is structured not in chapter form, but in the form of diary entries. The entries span a total of twenty-seven days, during which time Mia faithfully records all her feelings and her daily activities. Oftentimes there are multiple entries for a given day, usually with specific subheadings indicating when and where Mia was when she wrote the entry.

This conceit works well overall, but in terms of narrative pacing it does contain some flaws. For example, six and a half pages of text are supposedly written by Mia during a visit to the ladies' room in the Plaza Hotel. The handwritten equivalent of these six and a half pages would take far longer to write than the brief time she spends in the restroom while her father waits for her to return to the table where they are having lunch. Such



spacing issues interfere with the reader's suspension of disbelief. Another problem that interferes with the dramatic flow and narrative pacing is inherent to the diary format. All of Mia's accounts are necessarily written after the fact. Although it is a first-hand account of her life, the reader is not submerged in the moment. In order to stay true to the diary format, the author is forced to relay even the most important moments in the past tense.



Quotes

"I mean, he never married my mom. My mom says that's because at the time she rejected the bourgeois mores of a society that didn't even accept women as equals to men and refused to recognize her rights as an individual.

"I kind of always thought that maybe my dad just never asked her." *Tuesday, September 30*, pg. 31

"But I couldn't help thinking if it *really* were the end of the world, it might be better to be with Michael, even if he isn't so hot, because at least he makes me laugh. I think at the end of the world a sense of humor would be important.

"Plus, of course, Michael looks really good without a shirt." *Saturday, October 4*, pg. 70

"I totally wanted to back down. But I didn't, because I knew she was right: I *do* have problems being assertive.

"So instead I said, 'I'm tired of you putting me down all the time. All day long, my mom and dad and grandmother and teachers are telling me what to do. I don't need my *friends* getting on my case, too.'" *Saturday, October 11*, pg. 120

"But he's still a boy, a *cute* boy, even if he *is* Lilly's brother. It was really hard to pay attention to subtraction when I could smell this really nice clean boy smell coming from him. Plus every once in a while he would put his hand over mine and take my pencil away and go, 'No, like *this* Mia.'" *Monday, October 13*, pg. 141

"Who did she think I was, anyway? Lana *Whineberger*? Like I was really going to sit there and tell her my problems. Yeah, Principal Gupta. On top of all that other stuff, my grandmother is in town, and my dad is paying \$100 a day for me to get lessons from her in how to be a princess. Oh, and this weekend, I ran into Mr. Gianini in my kitchen, and all he was wearing was a pair of boxer shorts." *Monday, October 13*, pg. 144

"*Lilly* has a date to the Cultural Diversity Dance this weekend.

"*Lilly* has a date. Even *Lilly* has a date. I thought all the boys in our school were terrified of *Lilly*." *Tuesday, October 14*, pg. 150

"One hundred lousy bucks a day to be publicly ridiculed and humiliated.

"Those baby seals better be grateful, that's all I have to say." *Wednesday, October 15*, pg. 162

"And my dad said, in this tired voice, 'You can't quit, Mia. The article today closed the deal. Tomorrow your face will be in every newspaper in America - maybe even the world. Everyone will know that you are the princess Amelia of Genovia. And you cannot quit being who you are.'" *Wednesday, October 15*, pg. 175



"And Grandmire said, all prissy, 'Well if you don't try to accommodate the media, they're just going to try to get the story any way they can, which means they'll keep showing up at your school.'" *Wednesday, October 15*, pg. 179

"Josh broke up with her last night after crew practice. They were having dinner together at the Hard Rock Cafy, and he asked for his class ring back!!! Lana was completely humiliated under the pointy cone bra Gaultier made for Madonna!" *Friday, October 17*, pg. 197

"This tiny part of my brain - the only part that wasn't completely stunned by his asking me out - went: He's only asking you out because you're the princess of Genovia.

"Seriously. That's what I thought, for just a second.

"Then this other part of my brain, a much bigger part, went: SO WHAT???" *Friday, October 17*, pg. 198

"Maybe that's how you wanted it to look, like it was just a kiss. But you and I both know what it really was: A media event. And one that you've been planning since you saw me in the *Post*. Well, thank you, Josh, but I can get my own publicity. I don't need *you*." *Saturday, October 18*, pg. 209

Adaptations

As of 2002, Cabot has written two sequels to *The Princess Diaries*, *Princess in the Spotlight* and *Princess in Love*, with plans to publish additional volumes annually. *The Princess Diaries* also was distributed as an electronic book. Actress Anne Hathaway, who played Mia in the novel's film adaptation, narrated the Listening Library audiotope of *The Princess Diaries*. Premiering in 2001, the Walt Disney movie *The Princess Diaries* also starred Julie Andrews as Mia's grandmother. The film deviates from the book in several ways, switching the setting to San Francisco, explaining that Mia's father is deceased, and concluding with a romantic resolution.

Diaries are a frequently used literary framework. Readers interested in this format might want to read significant diaries written by real people such as Anne Frank in addition to fictionalized diaries such as Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy* (1994), and Joan W. Blos's *A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl's Journal, 1830-32* (1979). Louise Rennison's hilarious English teenage diarist in *Angus, Thongs and FullFrontal Snogging: Confessions of Georgia Nicolson* (2000) and *On the Bright Side, I'm Now the Girlfriend of a Sex God: Further Confessions of Georgia Nicolson* has been compared to Mia.

Popular journal series include the *Royal Diaries* based on the lives of historical princesses and queens, *Dear America* novels, *My Name Is America* books, and Kathleen Duey's *American Diaries*.

The princess archetype is present in folklore, mythology, and literature. Cabot provides quotes from Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1905). Authors who create princess characters include Patricia McKillip, Diana Wynne Jones, Jane Yolen, and Patricia C. Wrede. Robin McKinley's *Spindle's End* (2000) features Briar Rose as a princess hidden from an evil fairy. This princess, like Mia, is unaware of her royal status.

Walter Dean Myers's *At Her Majesty's Request: An African Princess in Victorian England* (1999) describes how Nigerian Princess Sarah Forbes Bonetta adjusted to public scrutiny.

The Princess Diaries 305 Francesca Lia Block's *Weetzie Bat* (1989) gives voice to teen popular culture.

Christine Levite and Julie Moline's *Princesses* (1989), Hugh Brewster's and Laurie Coulter's *To Be a Princess: The Fascinating Lives of Real Princesses* (2001), and Anne Edwards's *The Grimaldis of Monaco* (1992) provide supplementary reading.



Topics for Discussion

1. In what ways does this novel convince readers that Mia does not know her father's family is royal and that she is a princess? How is the novel unbelievable that Mia was unaware of her royal status?
2. How does this novel compare to other young adult fictional depictions of princesses? How is Cabot's approach more realistic than other works? Are elements of romance essential to telling stories about princesses? Why or why not? How can this novel be considered a fairy tale?
3. How does the diary format help or impede characterization and plot development in this novel? Contrast how this technique succeeds or fails with other fictional journals, particularly those about princesses.
4. How was Mia normal and abnormal before news about her princess status became public? How does the extraordinary information that she is a princess make her seem more normal?
5. How do Mia's perceptions seem accurate or skewed? Because Mia admits she often lies, why should readers believe her story? How might it be possible that her story is actually a vivid fantasy?
6. Why are friendships important to the characters? Discuss why certain characters become friends while others are enemies.
7. How do Mia's comments about popularity and ostracism seem like fair depictions of high school culture? What might bias her observations? How do her remarks seem limited to her situation? How do they apply to teenagers in other locations?
8. Discuss the parent-teenager relationships presented in this novel. Which parent seems most nurturing and why? Which nonparent adults spend time with the teenagers and why are they essential to the plot?
9. How might popular culture references date this book? Why would future generations of readers relate to this story even if they did not recognize celebrity and brand names?
10. Should Mia have reacted to her new identity differently? What ties her to New York even though she finds aspects of the city disagreeable? Why does she not embrace a life of luxury and leisure?



Essay Topics

Does Lilly make a good case for boycotting Ho's Deli? Why or why not?

If you were Mia, would you have chosen to go to the dance with Josh or with Michael? Why?

Given what you know about Mia's background, do you think being a princess will be a big change for her? Explain your answer.

What qualities does Lilly have which make her a good friend? What is her best quality, in your opinion?

Discuss your feelings on the chadrahs which Saudi Arabian girls are forced to wear. Do you believe this convention can or should be changed?

If you suddenly learned you were a prince or princess, how would you feel about it? Do you think Mia's reaction makes sense? Why or why not?

In what ways might Lilly and Tina's new friendship change each girl's personality? Will the changes enhance or detract from their current personalities?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Write a paper comparing the elements of fantasy and realism in this novel. How is humor important to achieve both fantastic and realistic aspects?
2. Prepare a report about the various types of vegetarianism that people practice. Explain how and why some religions expect followers to conform to dietary restrictions. Why does Mia eat certain foods that other vegetarians avoid? What dietary restrictions might you follow and why?
3. Research what things you must do in order to air a public access cable show. Prepare a script for your show to present as a reader's theater.
4. Analyze the use of popular culture references in this novel. Compare this book with other young adult works in which popular culture and journaling are essential to characterization and plot development.
5. Learn about the history of Greenpeace and prepare a report about the effectiveness of that group to protect wildlife and the environment. What qualifications would someone, such as Mia, need in order to work with Greenpeace?

How is Iceland related to Greenpeace's mission?

6. Gather information about Monaco and how Americans have been significant to its royal family. Compare the fictional Genovia with Monaco. How is it important for Cabot's imaginary principality to have a factual basis?
7. Research the role of modern royalty in various regions of the world. How do people react to living in countries ruled by royalty?
8. Why do royals send their children to the United States to be educated? Locate data about where princes and princesses attend schools in America and report on how they influence those communities.
9. Pretend that you have just discovered that you are a princess or a prince and write several journal entries describing your feelings about your new status.

Next, imagine that your best friend has been the one to learn she or he is royal, and write several entries expressing your reaction.

10. Create an imaginary country that you would like to rule. Make decisions such as where it would be located, its history, major imports and exports, and other details such as those Mia learned about Genovia.

Further Study

Denny, Dann. "Bloomington Native's The Princess Diaries Becomes Disney Film."

Herald-Times (July 28, 2001). Hometown newspaper article discusses Cabot's reaction to the film adaptation of her novel and her literary success.

Masla, Diane. Review of The Princess Diaries. Voice of Youth Advocates, vol. 24 (April 2001): 35-36. Masla recommends this novel because it realistically portrays teenage emotions and shows Mia's character development.

Sherman, Chris. Review of The Princess Diaries. Booklist, vol. 97 (September 1, 2000): 233. Sherman compares the novel to "reading a note from your best friend" and admires Cabot's use of teenage jargon, characterization, and humor.

Stewart, Debbie. Review of The Princess Diaries. School Library Journal, vol. 46 (October 2000): 155. Stewart says the story is unrealistic but has a voice and sense of humor which will appeal to readers.

Related Websites

<http://www.MegCabot.com>. Accessed August 25, 2002. This author's Web site provides biographical information about the author. Novel excerpts, public appearance schedules, publication news about her series, and contact information supplement Cabot's insights about her writing career.

Teenreads. <http://www.teenreads.com/authors/au-cabot-meg.asp>. Accessed August 25, 2002. Both text and video versions are posted on this site devoted to young adult literature and designed for teenage readers to discuss favorite books and authors. Cabot offers advice for aspiring writers.



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