

Reconstructing Amelia: A Novel Study Guide

Reconstructing Amelia: A Novel by Kimberly McCreight

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Plot Summary

Reconstructing Amelia is a novel by new author Kimberly McCreight. In this novel, Kate gets a call at work that her daughter was caught cheating and is being expelled from her private Brooklyn high school. When Kate arrives at the school, she learns her daughter has committed suicide by jumping from the roof of the school. Weeks later, Kate gets a text message telling her that Amelia did not jump. This message enrages Kate, but it also gives her hope that spurs her to investigate her daughter's death more closely. In the end, Kate learns all of Amelia's secrets, some good, some not. Reconstructing Amelia is a compelling first novel that will leave every parent desperate to hug their kid and every young reader more aware of in whom they place their trust.

Kate is a lawyer who is in the middle of a meeting when her daughter's school calls, telling her that her fifteen year old daughter has been caught cheating and has been suspended. Kate rushes to her daughter's school only to arrive and find emergency vehicles all around the building. Kate is told that Amelia, in despair over being caught cheating, has committed suicide by jumping from the school's roof.

Kate spends four weeks grieving her child, remembering every moment of the final days of her daughter's life, wondering what she might have missed. Finally Kate cannot remain home any longer and decides to go back to work. At the office, Kate finds that the case that had once seemed so important to her has been given to her law school nemesis, Daniel. Kate could care less.

As Kate settles behind her desk and prepares to tackle the day, she receives a text message from a blocked number that says Amelia did not jump. A follow up message emphasizes the first message. Kate is shocked and deeply confused. Jeremy, her boss, comes to her office. When he learns about the messages, he sends Kate's phone to the IT department and asks her questions about the investigation. As they talk, Kate begins to realize she never took much notice of the investigation. She simply assumed that the cops were right in their determination of suicide.

Kate goes home and begins searching through Amelia's bedroom, looking for anything that might prove Amelia did not commit suicide. Kate's friend, Seth, helps her. Seth finds more than twenty handwritten notes that declare Amelia was hated. This seems to support suicide, but Kate also finds a different essay on Amelia's computer, suggesting the paper that Amelia was accused of cheating with was not her paper.

Kate begins pushing for a new investigation and is soon visited by the new detective on the case. The detective shares Kate's new conviction that something was missed in the first investigation. Together, Kate and the detective visit witnesses and review Amelia's texts and social site activity. Through these things, Kate and the detective discover that Amelia was a part of a club at her school that required her to do several activities that were less than appropriate, including posting near naked pictures of herself on an Internet based blog. Kate also discovers that her daughter was involved in her first romantic relationship with a girl at her school.



As the investigation goes on, Kate tries to track down a boy named Ben who had been sending texts to Amelia in the months before her death. Kate is shocked to discover this young man is actually her boss. Kate and Jeremy had a brief affair early in her career and, due to Amelia's unusual eye color, Jeremy had guessed that Amelia was his daughter. He was simply trying to communicate with his child. This news is a surprise to Kate who had always assumed Daniel was Amelia's father.

In the end, Kate and the detective are able to rule out all their suspects in Amelia's death. Then the detective traces the source of the first two texts Kate got alerting her that Amelia did not commit suicide. These texts were from Amelia's best friend, Sylvia. Sylvia was with Amelia when she fell from the roof. It was Sylvia's anger at Amelia for allowing Sylvia's boyfriend to take the near nude pictures of Amelia that led to the fall and Amelia's death.



Chapters 1-13

Summary

Chapters 1-13

gRaceFULLY: September 5th. gRaceFULLY is a newsletter produced anonymously at Grace Hall that includes gossip from the school. It is assumed it is written by a student at the school. In this issue of the newsletter, the author discusses romantic relationships among the hottest kids at the school as well as the hottest teachers and administrators.

Amelia: September 14. These are text messages found on Amelia's phone. These are texts between Amelia and a boy named Ben. Amelia asks him how he knew he was gay. They are very supportive and encouraging.

Kate: October 24. Kate is at work where she is leading one of the most important meetings of her career as a lawyer with law firm Slone, Thayer. As Kate proceeds through the meeting, attempting to keep the client happy, she receives a phone call from her daughter's private school, Grace Hall, in Brooklyn. Kate is told Amelia has been caught cheating and has been suspended. Kate is told to pick her up immediately. Kate asks her boss, Jeremy, to take over the meeting. Kate makes the decision to take the subway to Brooklyn only to be delayed by an unplanned stop on the train. As she travels, Kate thinks about how she made the decision fifteen years ago to have her baby out of wedlock while still in law school. Kate worries that she is a bad mother and when she is late believes that this underscores her ineptitude as a mother. When Kate arrives at the school, she discovers it is surrounded by emergency vehicles. Kate sneaks a look into the courtyard that seems to be the center of attention and sees a pair of boots under a sheet. A moment later, a detective approaches Kate and tells her that her daughter has committed suicide by jumping off the school's roof.

gRaceFULLY: September 12th. The secret clubs within the school that are beginning the year by tapping new members. This issue also mentions several girls in the school who are eager to date, and sleep with, the new British student, Ian Greene.

Facebook: September 14. This is Amelia's Facebook page. Her status discusses the clothes her best friend, Sylvia, has convinced her to wear to school. It has several likes.

Amelia: September 14. Amelia walks to school with her best friend since kindergarten, Sylvia Golde. Amelia and Sylvia are very different, Amelia into books and Sylvia more into fashion. Sylvia is also more into boys while Amelia has never had a boyfriend and has only had a single kiss. Sylvia currently is obsessed with new student, Ian Greene. Ian walked Sylvia home the day before and they kissed, a story Sylvia insists on sharing with Amelia even though Amelia is concerned with getting to school on time. When Amelia gets a text from Ben, Sylvia makes fun of her because Sylvia believes there is something odd about Ben. Amelia, however, takes a tardy in favor of returning Ben's



text. Then, as Amelia goes to enter the building, she gets a text from a blocked text instructing her to be in Prospect Park that afternoon.

Kate: September 5, 1997. This is an excerpt from Kate's personal journals. Kate has recently learned she is pregnant and has decided to have the child despite the lack of support from her parents.

Kate: November 26. It has been just over a month since Amelia's death. Kate has been given three months off from work, but can no longer face being alone at home. For this reason, Kate has decided to return to work. However, Kate cares very little for all the things that drove her so hard in her career before, but needs the distraction. Kate runs into her law school nemesis, who is also her competition for partner, Daniel, and learns he has taken over the big case she had been running prior to Amelia's death. Kate finds she does not care.

Kate goes to her desk and turns on her computer to go through her email. As she waits for the computer, the phone rings. Kate's mother is on the other end and tells her that it is good she is back to work. Kate's mother even goes so far as to suggest with Amelia gone, Kate might have more time for a social life. Kate tells her mother off. Moments later, Kate gets a text message on her phone that says: Amelia did not jump. Amelia's secretary comes into the room and finds Kate in a state of shock. Right on the secretary's heels is Jeremy, Kate's boss. Jeremy tries to tell Kate to go home when she gets another text. Jeremy sees the text and immediately sends Kate's phone to the IT department in an attempt to find out who sent the text. Jeremy then asks Kate questions about the investigation that Kate cannot answer.

Amelia: September 14. Amelia asks Ben's advice about the text asking her to go to Prospect Park. Ben advises her not to go.

Facebook: September 14. Amelia lists her status as flirting with danger. This spurs a conversation between two of her friends.

Amelia: September 14. Amelia decides to go to Prospect Park and realizes that the text is from one of the school's clubs, the Magpies. Amelia and Sylvia have made a pact that they will not join a club unless they both get tapped, but Amelia is drawn to one of the members of the group, Dylan Crosby, so she decides to stay and hear them out even though Zadie, Dylan's best friend and the apparent leader of the group, gives her the chance to leave.

Amelia: September 14. Amelia tells Ben in text messages about the meeting. Ben again urges her to be careful. Amelia then texts with Sylvia, apologizing for not meeting her after school. Then Amelia gets a text message from a blocked number instructing her not to wear underwear the following day. Another text asks Amelia who her father is.

Facebook: September 15. Amelia lists her status as cautiously optimistic.



Analysis

The first few chapters of this novel introduce the main characters of this novel. Kate is a lawyer who discovered she was pregnant while still in law school. Kate has raised her daughter alone while trying to build a strong and successful legal career. This has caused Kate to have to spend large portions of time away from her child and leaves her feeling like she is not a good mother. Therefore, when she learns her daughter committed suicide, she feels responsible, as though she missed the warning signs and, by doing so, allowed for it to happen.

At the same time, the reader meets Amelia, Kate's daughter. Amelia, while lonely, does not feel that her mother ignores her or is not a good mother. However, being on her own most of the time, Amelia has the freedom to do anything she wants outside of school. Amelia is an athlete and a bookworm who has a bright future.

Amelia is invited to join a secret club at her school that is something like a sorority in college. Amelia is not really interested in the group because she has little interest in becoming one of the popular kids. However, Amelia is fascinated with a young girl who is a member of the group and decides to go along with the group for a while in order to get closer to this one girl.

These chapters also introduce the gossip at the private school where Amelia goes. It is gossip that focuses mostly on the students' sex lives, including who is sleeping with whom and the clubs that run the school. It is gossip that is cruel and dark, but it is of a culture that is common in modern high schools.

These chapters also introduce Amelia's friends and her relationships with them. Ben is a boy who started sending texts to Amelia out of the blue, claiming to also be attending a program at Princeton Amelia applied for during the summer. This boy is very supportive toward Amelia, more like an older brother than a potential boyfriend. This boy is also gay, a fact that is not an issue for Amelia since her mother's best friend is also gay. The other friend is Sylvia, a high strung, promiscuous girl Amelia has known since kindergarten. Sylvia can often be cruel toward Amelia, but Amelia puts up with it because of their history and her affection for Sylvia. Sylvia is obsessed with a new boy at school and seems less than concerned about what is going on in Amelia's life, leaving the reader wondering if this friendship has a future.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Kate late picking up Amelia at school? What does she learn has happened to Amelia when she does arrive?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Kate blame herself for Amelia's death? Why did Kate not pay closer attention to the investigation into Amelia's death?

Discussion Question 3

Who sends Kate a text claiming Amelia did not jump from the roof? How does Kate respond to this text? For what reason?

Vocabulary

Optimistic, cautiously, worried, heavily, direction, inhaled, popular, obsessed, support, sisterhood, considering, pact, surprises, delightful, satisfied, fluttered, anonymous, mainstream, nervous, surprised, psyched, emaciated, couture, wondered, purpose, personal, endorsement, except, opposite, gracefully.



Chapters 14-26

Summary

Chapters 14-26

Kate: November 26. Kate intends to go straight to Amelia's bedroom when she gets home, but she is sidelined by an angry phone call from Detective Molina, the detective who investigated Amelia's death. Molina is angry because, unbeknown to Kate, Jeremy called the police commissioner and complained about the investigation. Kate tells Molina about the text messages.

Kate finally goes to Amelia's room with the intention of finding something that will tell her if Amelia committed suicide or not. However, Kate is overwhelmed with grief when she goes into the room for the first time. Kate's friend, Seth, finds her in the bedroom. When Kate explains what has happened, Seth agrees to search Amelia's room while Kate goes through Amelia's backpack downstairs. Kate finds Amelia's phone and wonders for the first time how the detective had found anything on the phone when it has a password. Kate also goes through Amelia's computer. Kate also finds a copy of gRaceFULLY and is shocked by the cruel things written there, including the implication that Sylvia is promiscuous. It also implies that Amelia had sex for the first time, something Kate did not know.

Seth comes into the room and shows Kate a folded piece of paper that says, "I hate you," on it. Seth then tells Kate that there are twenty-two of them. Seth clearly thinks that Amelia was being bullied and it could be proof of suicide. Seth also tells Kate that Amelia has Kate's personal journals hidden under her bed. Kate wonders if Amelia was reading them in hopes of learning the name of her father, something Amelia had asked about just a few days before she died.

After Seth leaves, Kate is interrupted in her investigation when a strange woman comes to her door. The woman, Adele Goodwin, is head of the Grace Hall PTA and she has come to ask Kate's permission for the school to have a memorial for Amelia and a suicide hotline fundraiser. Kate refuses to give permission for the suicide hotline fundraiser, telling Adele that she no longer thinks that Amelia committed suicide, citing new information. Adele also comments on Amelia's eyes, which were two different colors. Kate tells her Amelia had a genetic condition that did not run in the family.

gRaceFULLY: September 26. Rumors and gossip about the new members of the Magpies, as well as dating jokes about the English teacher.

Facebook: September 30. Amelia's status says that she hopes she does not get caught.

Amelia: September 30. Text from Dylan about a prank Amelia had to do for the Magpies. Texts from Ben about Dylan. Ben is worried Dylan and the Magpies will get Amelia in trouble. An anonymous text about Amelia's father.



Amelia: October 1. Amelia is sent to the headmaster, Mr. Woodhouse, for zip-tying a teacher's bag to his desk. Mr. Woodhouse guesses that Amelia did this as part of her initiation into the Magpies and warns her that the club might not be her best option. Woodhouse is clearly concerned that Amelia is beginning to go down a bad path, but Amelia finds the whole thing amusing. Amelia really is not that involved in the Magpies, but she is getting closer to Dylan and wants to continue with the Magpies because of Dylan. Later, while having pizza with Sylvia, Amelia gets a message calling her to a party at Dylan's house. Amelia is excited enough that she quickly makes her excuses to Sylvia and leaves. At Dylan's house, Amelia tries to get a few moments alone with Dylan, but Zadie acts possessive and tries to separate them. Dylan takes Amelia upstairs to show her the book collection of her father. On the way, Amelia sees Ian Greene with Zadie.

At home, Amelia tells Ben about her conversation with Dylan, but Ben has no advice for her. Kate comes home late and finds Amelia reading *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, a book Amelia has read many times before and is preparing to do an English paper on. Kate and Amelia talk briefly. Amelia wants to tell Kate about the Magpies and Dylan, but Kate gets an important call from work.

Kate: April 30, 1998. Amelia is only three weeks old and Kate is struggling. Kate wonders if she made a mistake deciding to keep her baby.

Kate: June 30, 1997. Kate is determined to be the best summer associate Slone, Thayer has ever had.

Kate: November 27. Kate is making coffee when her neighbor, Kelsey, knocks on the door. When Kate tells Kelsey that she thinks now that Amelia did not commit suicide, Kelsey tells her that she saw Amelia going into the house in the middle of the day with a strange boy. Kate is shocked, especially when Kelsey suggests there was something sinister about the boy.

Kate takes Amelia's phone and computer to the IT department at the law firm and asks the tech, Duncan, to print out all of Amelia's documents, texts, and emails. Kate then gets a call from Lieutenant Lewis Thompson, a detective who has just taken over Amelia's case. Apparently Molina took a security job and quit the force. Lieutenant Thompson tells Kate that he has had an expert compare Amelia's handwriting with the word sorry that was etched into the wall where she jumped. The two do not match. Not only this, but there are scratches on Amelia's arms that Molina never mentioned to Kate. These things together suggest that Amelia did not kill herself.

Kate stops by Jeremy's office on her way to meet Lieutenant Thompson at a nearby diner. Jeremy tells Kate that he has taken Daniel off her case and returned it to her. Kate knows that what Jeremy has done will make or break her career, but she is too focused on Amelia to care.

Kate meets Lieutenant Thompson, Lew, and they discuss what they each know about Amelia's case. Then they go to Sylvia's to talk with her. Sylvia is a mess, clearly



depressed after Amelia's death. Just as she has told other detectives, Sylvia tells them that she helped Amelia get out of the headmaster's office the day she was suspended. Then, when she went to find her, she was gone. Sylvia also thinks that there is no way Amelia cheated on an English paper and tells them that she always believed there was something wrong with Ben, the boy from Albany Amelia had been texting the last few months of her life. Sylvia also denies knowing who writes gRaceFULLY.

gRaceFULLY: October 3rd. Comments on the Magpies convincing a group of underclassmen to take pictures of their privates and text them. Comments on a girl who has been arrested for selling illegal pills and one girl whose stepfather is using his money to get his stepdaughter into an Ivy League school.

Amelia: October 5. Text with Ben about Dylan's weird moods. Ben again warns Amelia to be careful. Text from Sylvia about clothes. Texts from Dylan suggesting Dylan cares for Amelia. Text from Carter asking for homework information. Anonymous text suggesting Amelia's mother is lying to her about who her father is.

Facebook: October 6. Amelia's status, ready to be amazed. Two comments.

Amelia: October 6. Amelia and Sylvia are doing homework in a coffee shop. Sylvia has been distracted by her new romance with Ian Greene, but not so distracted she does not notice Amelia has been ducking out on her more than normal. Amelia admits to Sylvia that she is in love, but before Sylvia can ask too many questions, Ian shows up. Amelia uses this as an excuse to duck out.

Amelia is walking to Zadie's house when she is stopped by Mr. Woodhouse. Amelia lies about where she is going, but Mr. Woodhouse clearly knows the truth. Amelia knocks at Zadie's and is let in by an angry Zadie. Zadie leads her into the basement where they run into Dylan. Zadie goes into the basement entertainment room, leaving Dylan and Amelia alone briefly. Dylan kisses Amelia. In the Magpie meeting, Amelia is trying to figure out what is happening between her and Dylan as Zadie announces that the Magpies have a blog on which each of the new girls are expected to post specific pictures. The pictures that get the most likes wins the game. Zadie confronts Amelia and tries to get her to admit she does not wish to participate in this game, but Amelia is afraid that if she leaves the Magpies she will never see Dylan again, so she stands her ground.

After the meeting, the girls are walking through the house when they encounter Zadie's stepfather. The stepfather tells Zadie that she has to get into an Ivy League school because he has made a bet with a friend she will get into two Ivy League schools.

Kate: November 27. Duncan has sent over the printed emails, documents, and texts he got from Amelia's phone and computer, as well as log in information for her twitter, Facebook, and other social networking sites. Lew agrees to search the web based sites while Kate goes through the documents and emails. Kate finds an English essay that is different from the one Amelia was accused of cheating with. Kate also finds a number of emails from Mr. Woodhouse, the Grace Hall headmaster, she finds questionable. Lew



comes down and tells Kate he has found something disturbing that he thinks she should come look at. It is a blog that has pictures of Amelia that are of a sexual nature. Kate is deeply disturbed by them. Lew is called home, but he takes the greet book from Grace Hall so that he can match names to the pictures of other girls on the blog.

Seth comes to the house, angry with Kate for not answering her phone. However, when she tells Seth what she and Lew have discovered thus far, he forgives her and offers comfort. While Seth is there, Kate gets a voicemail from Daniel. Daniel is very gracious, telling Kate he is not angry that Jeremy gave her back what was her case to begin with. Daniel tells Kate he has taken a partnership at another law firm and is on his way to a fishing trip. Kate then gets a text from an anonymous number calling her an unfortunate name.

Analysis

A text telling her that Amelia did not jump has Kate suddenly convinced there is more to her daughter's death than the police have already uncovered. For this reason, Kate jumps headlong into an investigation, hoping to prove that her daughter did not commit suicide. The reader, at this point in the novel, has to wonder if Kate is simply reaching for straws in her guilt that she did not see Amelia's depression and impending suicide.

Kate speaks with several people the first night she begins her investigation, including the detective who initially declared Amelia's death a suicide, her friend Seth, and the head of the Grace Hall PTA, Adele Goodwin. To each of these people, Kate tells of her conviction that Amelia did not kill herself. Each of these people seems surprised, but also seem to believe that Kate is deluding herself. However, the mood of the novel changes when Kate is contacted by another police detective who tells her that the word written on the roof of Grace Hall, sorry, was not written by Amelia as it was previously believed. The detective also tells Kate that the original investigation was not as complete as it probably should have been. All this indicates to Kate that it is possible that Amelia did not commit suicide. However, it also opens the question of who might have had reason to kill Amelia. As Kate investigates further, she learns things about Amelia that she never knew before, such as the fact that Amelia was no longer a virgin and that she had posted near naked pictures of herself on the Internet. Kate begins to wonder who Amelia was and how her activities might have led to her death.

At the same time the reader learns more about Kate's investigation, the reader also learns more about Amelia from Amelia herself. Amelia has been recruited to join a secret club at Grace Hall called the Magpies. Amelia is hesitant to join any club, but when she finds herself inexplicably drawn to Dylan Crosby, she continues with the hazing that could lead to trouble for her. In fact, Amelia is caught pulling a prank on one of her teachers as part of the hazing ritual. The headmaster knows about the secret clubs despite a policy at the school for administrators to ignore the clubs. The headmaster, Mr. Woodhouse, reaches out to Amelia and tries to convince her to stay on the straight and narrow, but his speech is no match for the draw of Dylan. When Dylan kisses Amelia, it both confuses and excites her, leaving her confused about Dylan's intentions.



However, Amelia is not confused about her feelings for Dylan and readily accepts that she is more than likely gay.

As Amelia continues to build her relationship with Dylan, she gets texts from an anonymous source. At one point, she thinks it might be her best friend Sylvia, about her father. A few months later, Kate is also getting these odd texts about Amelia's father. At this point, the reader is unclear about the father of Amelia's name.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Kate go through Amelia's backpack? What does Kate hope to find there? What does she find?

Discussion Question 2

What evidence might Amelia have left in her bedroom that indicates her intention to commit suicide? What does Seth find in Amelia's room? Is this important?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Zadie confront Amelia and try to make her quit the Magpies? Why does Zadie dislike Amelia? Why does Amelia refuse to leave the Magpies?

Vocabulary

Communication, modes, documents, accounts, hysterics, useful, feminism, notebook, cheat, endless, practice, included, outgoing, mystery, involved, apologize, drifted, expression, interested, vamping, monitor, inappropriate, specifically, reasonable, explanation, comments, embarrassed, possibility, cross-reference, discover, awfulness.



Chapters 27-40

Summary

Chapters 27-40

gRaceFULLY: October 10th. Rumors about the chess club, rumors about the Magpies, and rumors that Ian Greene might be about to break up with Sylvia.

Amelia: October 13. Text from Dylan asking Amelia out on a date. Text from Ben encouraging Amelia to tell her mother she is gay. Text from Sylvia worrying about rumors posted on gRaceFULLY.

Facebook: October 14. Amelia's status is a quote from *To the Lighthouse*. Several comments.

Amelia: October 14. Amelia tries to downplay how many books she has read when Dylan asks her. They are in Amelia's room after school. Amelia has a million questions she wants to ask Dylan about their relationship and Dylan's previous experience with girls, but she is afraid of scaring Dylan away. Amelia also wants Dylan to stay, but Dylan leaves quickly as she has each time she has come to Amelia's.

After Dylan leaves, Amelia is frightened by a noise downstairs only to discover her mother has come home early. They make plans to go out to dinner when Kelsey comes over, reminding Amelia she was supposed to babysit. Amelia is upset because once again she had planned to tell her mother everything.

The next day, Amelia walks to school with Sylvia. Sylvia complains nearly the whole way about Ian and her conviction that Ian is cheating. Amelia feels bad that she cannot tell Sylvia that all of Ian's lies are because he is also part of a secret club. Amelia has seen him at many parties and knows he is not cheating on Sylvia there, but, of course, she cannot say anything. Sylvia and Amelia are interrupted by the school counselor who reminds Sylvia they had an appointment. Amelia knows it has to do with the fact that Sylvia was cutting herself last year and she encourages Sylvia to keep the appointment.

Later in the day, Amelia tries to sneak out of the school to meet someone at her house who is supposed to take pictures for the Magpie blog. Amelia runs into Liv, her English teacher. Liv lets her go since Liv is also sneaking around, avoiding a department meeting. Outside, Amelia runs into Ian and learns he is the one who is to take her pictures. Amelia is embarrassed, but takes him to her house anyway. Ian opens a sealed envelope that tells him to look on the blog to see the type of pictures he is to take. When he and Amelia see that the pictures are of a sexual nature, they balk. However, Amelia, still afraid of losing Dylan, insists on taking the pictures anyway.

Amelia: October 18. Text from Ben annoyed that Amelia has communicated less lately. Ben encourages Amelia to tell Sylvia about Dylan.



Kate: July 19, 1997. Kate is ashamed of something she has done. She calls in sick to work. Daniel emails about a missed event at Slone, Thayer.

Kate: November 28. Kate has stayed up all night going through the boxes Duncan sent over. Kate reviews a number of Amelia's texts, focusing on those from boys and from unknown sources. When Lew arrives, Kate shows him the texts she has gotten from a blocked number in regards to Amelia's father. Lew asks who Amelia's father is and Kate tells him that Daniel Moore is Amelia's father, but that she never told him and he never asked. Kate suggests that she never told Amelia the truth because Daniel is a cruel, unkind man she was trying to protect her from. Lew suggests, however, that Amelia somehow figured it out and was speaking to him.

Lew and Kate go to Grace Hall to speak to the headmaster. They discover the headmaster is away at a conference, but they do talk to Liv, the English teacher. Liv tells them about the paper she believes Amelia cheated on. The paper was emailed to Liv, opened by her student assistant, and run through software that checks for plagiarizing. It was then that Liv realized large parts of the paper had been taken from outside sources. Liv tried to convince Amelia to tell her the truth of what has happened, but she refused, so Liv had no choice but to turn her in. Liv refuses to tell them the name of her student assistant, except for a first name. Lew theorizes that this girl might have been one of the Magpies, the girls on the blog. Liv also informs Kate that Dylan, a boy Kate noticed Amelia had an affectionate relationship with, is a girl.

Amelia: October 19. Text from Dylan, arranging to do something the following day. Text from Sylvia telling Amelia she believes Ian is cheating with a Magpie. Text to Ben, Amelia pushing him to come to Brooklyn. Text from Dylan, suggesting she wants to run away.

Facebook: October 20. Amelia uses another quote from Virginia Woolf for her status, again causing less than pleasant comments.

Amelia: October 20. Amelia and Sylvia are studying in the library. Amelia is trying to tell Sylvia she is gay when Ian comes in with another girl, clearly romantically linked to the other girl. Sylvia is livid and Amelia is regretful, now fully convinced Ian is cheating. Mr. Woodhouse comes into the library and asks Amelia to stop by his office at the end of the day.

During her free period, Amelia sneaks out of the school and meets Dylan at her house. In the aftermath of their lovemaking, Zadie breaks into the house with her phone and films the two girls on the couch. Amelia is heartbroken when Dylan does not defend her to Zadie. Amelia spends the rest of the day in a depressed funk. In Mr. Woodhouse's office, Amelia learns she has won a fellowship Liv entered her into without her permission. Amelia is happy until Mr. Woodhouse tells her that he refuses to write her a recommendation unless she gives up all the girls in the Magpies. Amelia refuses.



gRAceFULLY: October 17. Rumors that Dylan is in love. Rumors that a group of boys were arrested for a drunken prank. Gossip that Zadie Goodwin might have gotten into an Ivy League school.

Kate: July 23, 1997. Kate writes about a man, Rowan, she met in a bar and exchange emails with. This man was on his way to teach underprivileged children in Africa.

Kate; Slone,Thayer: July 24, 1997. Texts from Jeremy encouraging Kate to get well and come back to work. Texts from Daniel encouraging Kate to go out with a group from work. Kate agrees.

Kate: August 15, 1997. Email to Kate from Rowan telling her he really enjoyed meeting her and hopes that she will keep in touch.

Analysis

Amelia and Dylan have taken their relationship to the next level. Amelia is content with the understanding that she is homosexual. Amelia's biggest concern is Dylan and her propensity to be distant and act oddly. Amelia believes she is in love with Dylan, but finds Dylan difficult to read. Despite this, Amelia remains determined to stay in the Magpies so that she can remain close to Dylan. This includes allowing Ian Greene to take near naked pictures of her even though Ian is in a relationship with Amelia's best friend, Sylvia, and Sylvia is convinced that Ian is cheating on her with a girl in the Magpie club.

Amelia repeatedly attempts to tell her mother about the Magpies, her relationship with Dylan, and everything else that is happening in her life. However, life continuously interferes, from Kate's job to Amelia's commitments to her babysitting job. It is important to note that Amelia believes her mother is a good mother and that she wants to share the truth with her. Amelia just simply cannot find the right time.

Mr. Woodhouse, the headmaster at Grace Hall, knows about the clubs that exist in his school and is clearly unhappy with them. Mr. Woodhouse reaches out to Amelia on many occasions and attempts to encourage her not only to leave the group, but to tell him who the girls are who are in the club, but Amelia refuses. Despite being a good kid and a kid who would under ordinary conditions share this information, or simply not be in a position to know it, but her feelings for Dylan have changed everything. Not only this, but Amelia is also grappling with the reality of what could happen when she tells her best friend the truth about herself.

As the reader learns about Amelia's situation, Kate continues to track Amelia's final days in hopes of learning the truth about her death. Kate discovers Mr. Woodhouse's interest in Amelia, but worries that it was less than professional. At the same time, Kate is being harassed by someone who seems to think they know more about Amelia's father than Amelia. Kate reveals to Lew, and the reader, that her nemesis, Daniel Moore, is the father of Amelia. This is surprising news to the reader who finds Daniel unpleasant and unlikely to have been interested in fatherhood. It turns out Daniel never asked and was



never told that Amelia was his. This could explain a few of the texts that both Kate and Amelia were getting, but the reader is still puzzled by the anger and jealousy suggested by the vicious texts Kate has been receiving.

At the end of this collection of chapters, Amelia is surprised by Dylan's sudden betrayal when Zadie breaks into Amelia's house and videos the girls together. Dylan leaves with Zadie, suggesting the whole episode was planned by the two girls to humiliate Amelia. Amelia is heartbroken and the reader is left wondering what this might mean for Amelia in the immediate future and how it might have contributed to her death.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Amelia lie to Dylan about how many books she has read? Why does she think Dylan would like her better if she does not seem to be a bookworm?

Discussion Question 2

How many times does Amelia try to tell her mother about the Magpies and Dylan? Why does she never succeed?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Zadie break into Amelia's house? What does she do there? How does Dylan respond?

Vocabulary

Guide, meant, connection, monitored, excuse, exchanged, convinced, straight, completely, public, gradually, admission, confident, statistic, disappointed, promises, contingent, recommendation, unauthorized, accompanying, fellowship, direction, except, lumbering, lifeless, heartbroken, remember, honor.



Chapters 41-48

Summary

Chapters 41-48

Kate: November 28. Kate feels again that she is a bad mother because Amelia never told her, and therefore felt like she could not tell her, she was gay. Seth tells her, however, that maybe Amelia was waiting until she had accepted herself before telling her mother. Mr. Woodhouse calls Kate, but refuses to answer her questions in fear of losing his job. Kate becomes angry and hangs up on him. Then Jeremy calls, asking Kate to meet him later in the day.

Kate and Lew go to visit Dylan Crosby. Dylan acts oddly and her mother answers most of Lew and Kate's questions. Finally Dylan's mother tells them that Dylan has a social disorder that they have gone to great pains to hide, explaining not only her behavior at their meeting, but for the reader some of Dylan's behavior with Amelia. Dylan does say, however, that she cared for Amelia.

Back at home, Kate gets a call from her father. Kate assures her father that she is okay. Kate then goes to meet Jeremy. Jeremy shows Kate an article that recently came out on a legal website. The article suggests that Jeremy is something of a womanizer and that he once had an affair with Kate. Kate is angry that Jeremy is showing her this because she considers their one night stand to be in the past. Kate walks out. As she walks home, Kate gets another cruel message from the anonymous number.

Amelia: October 21. Text from Ben asking about the break with Dylan. Text from Sylvia concerned for Amelia's behavior at school. A series of texts from blocked numbers calling Amelia cruel names.

Facebook: October 22. Another Virginia Woolf quote for Amelia's status. Many comments suggest she is depressed.

Amelia: October 22. Amelia is warned that if she tells anyone about the Magpies, Sylvia will pay for it. Amelia does not think Sylvia could handle being harassed and bullied by Zadie and the Magpies, so she vows to keep her mouth shut even as the Magpies continue to harass her with text messages in the middle of the night, putting cruel notes in her locker, and pouring out a feminine hygiene wastebasket on her field hockey equipment.

Frustrated and unhappy, Amelia asks her mother to allow her to spend a semester in Paris. Her mother, however, refuses on the grounds that it is too far away and she knows nothing about the program. Kate does, however, promise to discuss it in more detail the following morning. At school, Amelia goes to the school counselor and talks about her break up with Dylan. The counselor suggests that she write an email listing all



the questions she needs answers to. However, the counselor advises her not to send it. The counselor also tells Amelia to talk to her mother.

The next day, Amelia asks Sylvia to help her write an email to Dylan. However, rather than follow the counselor's advice, Amelia is determined to send the email to Amelia. Amelia also tells Sylvia about her relationship with Dylan and her association with the Magpies. Sylvia is upset that Amelia lied to her and Amelia feels bad for doing it. However, Sylvia quickly forgives her.

gRaceFULLY: October 24th. Gossip that says Dylan has a lover. Questioning the bullying of an unnamed girl. Rumors about Bethany's promiscuity.

Kate; Slone, Thayer: August 22, 1997. Texts from Daniel teasing Kate about the last of the summer associates program. Email to Rowan hoping she has not missed her chance to speak to him before he left an area with modern technology.

Amelia: October 23. Text to Ben asking if he is coming to New York City the following day. He says he is, but might be too busy with his dad to come to Brooklyn. Ben tries to talk Amelia out of writing an email to Dylan. Text to Sylvia about email they are to write to Dylan.

Kate: November 29. Duncan has traced the author of gRaceFULLY and reveals it is the English teacher, Liv. Kate is shocked. This is compounded by the news that Kelsey has identified the boy whom she saw enter the house with Amelia. It is Ian Greene. Against Lew's advice, Kate goes to Grace Hall and confronts Ian. Ian, however, assures her that the pictures were taken with Amelia's full cooperation against his better judgment. As they talk, Kate grows so angry at Ian's comments that she hits him. This causes Lew to have to come to Kate defense and convince the school not to pursue charges. Kate then insists on seeing Mr. Woodhouse, but he is not at the school and she has been ordered off the premises. Lew warns her that she could still be arrested if she does not do what she is told. Lew then gives Kate an address, telling her that Ben, who supposedly lived in Albany, in fact lives in Manhattan.

Kate returns home to find a package waiting for her. In the package are minutes from several Grace Hall school board meetings dealing with the secret clubs that have begun to develop on campus. Despite Woodhouse's protests, the school board, along with their attorney Adele Goodwin, have decided it is in the best interest of the school to pretend they do not know about the clubs. Lew then calls Kate and tells her that Liv admitted to gRaceFULLY, but has done nothing she can be prosecuted for.

Analysis

The reader, who previously learned that Kate once had an affair with Daniel Moore that she believes led to the birth of her daughter, learns that Kate also had a one night fling with Jeremy at the same time. Jeremy's secret has somehow come out. It appears that this revelation is connected to the text messages Kate has been getting from someone who seems to know who Amelia's father is. It could also be connected to the texts that



Amelia was also getting about her father's identity. It could also have played a part in Amelia's death, but Kate has yet to make this connection.

Kate and Lew visit Dylan and learn that she has a social disorder that causes her to act in odd ways when confronted with uncomfortable or stressful situations. This could explain many of the behaviors that caused Amelia to feel confused about Dylan's feelings toward her. It also seems to explain Zadie's behavior around Dylan, since she is one of a few who knows about this disorder and who helps to hide it. However, it does not explain why Dylan became involved with Amelia and then allowed Zadie to humiliate Amelia.

Amelia finds herself in the middle of a big mess that is growing out of control. Amelia confronts her mother, begging for help in a way that only a teenager could do, but Kate misses the message. At the same time, Amelia finds herself forced to make a choice between her own safety and happiness and protecting Sylvia. For this reason, Amelia comes clean to Sylvia and asks for her help. It is clear at this point that Amelia cares little about what the Magpies are doing to her in their attempts to bully her. All Amelia cares about are Sylvia and understanding what happened with Dylan. This is not a girl who is suicidal.

Kate learns the author of gRaceFULLY is the English teacher. As outrageous as this is, it really has little bearing on the investigation because, despite knowing what the Magpies were doing, Liv clearly was not aware that Amelia was in physical danger in the days leading up to her death.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Amelia want to write an email to Dylan? What will this email involve? Who has Amelia asked to help her with this email?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jeremy ask to meet Kate in the middle of her investigation into Amelia's death? What does this reveal about Kate and Jeremy? What does it suggest about Jeremy's character?

Discussion Question 3

Where has Ben told Amelia he lives? Where does Lew discover Ben really lives? What does this suggest about Ben and his relationship with Amelia?

Vocabulary

Responsible, inconsistent, contract, confirm, security, effective, reasoned, committed, liability, implicit, reluctantly, earlier, referred, alternative, activities, pondered, confidential, anonymous, aggravation, assault, property, unexpectedly, outrageous, halfway, campus, damage, scandal, percent, reporters, apologize, enlighten, deserved.



Chapters 49-60 and Epilogue

Summary

Chapters 49-60 and Epilogue

Facebook: October 23. Amelia's status is another Virginia Woolf quote, but there are not comments.

Amelia: October 24. Amelia is in a better mood because she is optimistic about the email she and Sylvia wrote to Dylan the afternoon before. Not only this, but the middle of the night text messages appear to have stopped. As she walks to school with Sylvia, Amelia looks for a reply from Dylan. Instead, as she enters the school building, Amelia becomes aware of all the students staring at her and calling her names. Sylvia takes Amelia to the nurse's office while she goes to find out what the deal is. When Sylvia returns, she tells Amelia that someone has mass texted her email to Dylan to the whole school. Amelia is humiliated, but decides to go to class. Amelia texts Ben, hoping that he will be able to visit her that day and boost her spirits. Instead, Amelia is confronted by Liv about her paper. Someone has switched the paper Amelia emailed to the teacher and now it appears she has cheated. Liv begs Amelia to tell her the truth about what happened. Amelia, in an attempt to protect Sylvia from the Magpies, refuses.

Amelia: October 24. Text from Ben, telling Amelia he is unsure if he can make it to Brooklyn. Amelia tells him about the paper and he gives her encouragement.

Facebook: October 24. Another quote from Virginia Woolf prompts one student to suggest Amelia is depressed.

Kate: October 19, 1997. Email to Kate from Rowan wondering why he has not heard from her. Email back to Rowan from Kate, telling him something has happened in her life and she needs time to deal with it.

Kate: November 29. Despite warnings from Lew, Kate decides to go to the address Lew found for Ben. However, when Kate arrives she is shocked to discover the address belongs to her boss, Jeremy. Kate confronts Jeremy and he admits that he was the one emailing Amelia. Jeremy tells Kate that when Amelia's eye color changed when she was a baby he knew that she was his because he has the same genetic disorder. Kate is shocked because she really believed Daniel was Amelia's father. Jeremy then tells Kate that the story on the legal website came from Daniel and Daniel knows about them.

Amelia: October 24. Text from Ben saying he cannot come. Text from Sylvia telling Amelia she is coming to rescue her.

Amelia: October 24. Woodhouse confronts Amelia in his office and begs her to tell him the truth. At first Amelia refuses, but then begins to realize that Woodhouse might be



able to protect Sylvia. Amelia starts to tell Woodhouse the truth, but they are interrupted by a problem in the cafeteria. Sylvia texts Amelia to make a run for it.

Kate: November 30. Kate and Lew go to speak with Zadie. They are confronted with Zadie's stepfather who turns out to be the owner of the security firm Molina went to work for. As they ask Zadie questions about her bullying of Amelia, Adele Goodwin, Zadie's mother, arrives. Adele and Zadie openly argue about how much information they should reveal to Lew and Kate with Zadie becoming aware that her mother thought Zadie pushed Amelia from the roof. However, Zadie was home with Ian at the time. They also learn that Zadie brought Amelia into the Magpies at her mother's request. When Kate sees the white streak in Zadie's hair and a photo of Adele with Jeremy, she puts it together and realizes that Zadie's father is also Jeremy. When Kate confronts Adele with this, she learns that Adele blames Kate for the end of her affair with Jeremy all those years ago, which Adele told Daniel, leading him to send the sinister texts to Kate. Adele also sent the texts to Amelia about her father. However, neither Zadie nor Adele had anything to do with Amelia's death.

Lew and Kate then go to confront Sylvia. Lew has discovered that the two texts stating that Amelia did not jump from the roof came from Sylvia. Sylvia reiterates her earlier statements. Then she adds that she knows Amelia did not jump.

Facebook: October 24. Another Virginia Woolf quote. More rude comments.

Amelia: October 24. Amelia slips out of Mr. Woodhouse's office while Sylvia distracts Mrs. Pearl. Sylvia meets Amelia in the bathroom and Sylvia takes Amelia on a tour of the highlights of their friendship at the school. The tour ends on the roof. Sylvia tells Amelia that she and Ian once had sex on the roof and that he chose that place, just that morning, to break up with her. Amelia is consoling Sylvia and has her nearly optimistic again when Sylvia gets an anonymous text. The text is a picture of Amelia from the blog with a message to check the mirror. When Sylvia zooms in on the mirror behind Amelia, she can see that Ian is the photographer. Sylvia is furious. Sylvia hits Amelia with her phone, causing Amelia to fall back against the small wall on the edge of the roof. Amelia loses her footing. Sylvia tries to help, but is unsuccessful.

Facebook: October 24. A final quote from Virginia Woolf.

Epilogue. March 7. Kate visits Amelia at her grave. Kate tells Amelia that the police have still not decided what to do about Sylvia. Kate also tells Amelia she has begun to see Mr. Woodhouse. Kate feels that Mr. Woodhouse reminds her of Rowan.

Analysis

Despite dark quotes on her Facebook page, Amelia faces the final day of her life with optimism. Amelia hopes that an email to Dylan will help her understand what happened between them and maybe get them back together. However, the email is texted to everyone at school, leaving Amelia humiliated and heartbroken. Added to this the fact that the Magpies have switched her emailed term paper to her English teacher and



placed her future in jeopardy, it seems that Amelia might have had reason to commit suicide. However, the Amelia portrayed in each of her own narrated chapters makes it appear that Amelia is facing the future head on and not ready to quit just yet.

As Kate continues to investigate her daughter's death, she is confronted with a truth that she never really allowed herself to consider. Jeremy, her boss, has a genetic condition that caused his hair to turn white while he was in college. This condition can manifest in many ways, including causing two different eye colors or causing a white streak in normal colored hair. When Jeremy points this out to Kate, Kate realizes that her one night stand with Jeremy is what led to her pregnancy with Amelia, not her subsequent relationship with Daniel Moore. Not only that, but Jeremy was something of a womanizer fifteen years before and had multiple affairs, including with Adele Goodwin. Adele, who thought Jeremy was going to leave his wife for her and her daughter, Zadie, blames Kate for Jeremy deciding not to be with Adele. For this reason, Adele texted Amelia the rude texts about the identity of her father and told Daniel Moore the truth. It was Daniel, in an apparent fit of jealousy, who sent dark texts to Kate and leaked the story to the legal website that revealed Jeremy's infidelities. However, none of this had anything to do with Amelia's death.

Kate learns in the end that Sylvia, in a fit of jealous rage, accidentally pushed Amelia from the roof. This explains the word sorry found at the sight of the jump and Sylvia's depression in the aftermath of Amelia's death. It also proves that Amelia did not commit suicide, freeing Kate from her guilt. In the end, the truth comes out. However, it does little to change what Kate's life has become. She does find a way to move on and maybe find love with Mr. Woodhouse.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Kate think Daniel Moore was Amelia's father? Why did Kate tell Amelia that her father was a man named Rowan? Why did Kate not know that Jeremy was really Amelia's father?

Discussion Question 2

Why was Jeremy texting Amelia? What did he want from Amelia? Did he have the same relationship with Zadie?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Sylvia not tell anyone how Amelia died? Why would Sylvia allow everyone to believe Amelia committed suicide? What was Sylvia's responsibility in the aftermath of Amelia's death?

Vocabulary

Secrets, hope, passionate, approve, greatest, accident, mattered, jealousy, mistakes, comfort, conversation, remembered, infrequent, detail, humiliating, reflection, eventually, definitely, frantically, gawked, attracted, lifeless, psycho, definitely, assuming, manuscript, compliment, unison, construction, bittersweet.



Characters

Kate Baron

Kate Baron is an ambitious lawyer who works in Manhattan and lives in Brooklyn. In law school, Kate became pregnant and chose to keep the child. Kate's life has been difficult in her attempts to raise a child and have a successful career, but she has managed to make it work. That is, until the day she gets a call informing her that her child has been caught cheating on an English paper and will be suspended from school. Kate rushes to the school to pick up her daughter only to arrive and learn her daughter is dead.

Kate is devastated by the death of her child and consumed with guilt that she did not know her child was depressed enough to want to commit suicide. Therefore, when she gets a text insisting that her daughter did not commit suicide, Kate begins to investigate her daughter's death. Kate learns many things about her daughter that she had not previously known, but all these things do not change who her daughter was or what their relationship was. In the end, Kate discovers the truth, but it changes little in her life.

Amelia Baron

Amelia Baron is a fifteen year old high school student. Amelia lives with her single mother. Amelia has been told all her life that her father was an idealistic young man her mother met in a bar one night as he was preparing to leave to teach children in Africa. Amelia has never questioned this, content with her family as it is. However, when Amelia begins getting text messages about her father's identity, she begins to question her mother.

Amelia goes to a private school with its own unique social structure. This school has secret clubs within it that Amelia has promised her best friend she will not join unless they are tapped together. However, when Amelia is tapped into the Magpies and finds herself drawn to one of its members, she decides to go with it. Amelia falls quickly in love with Dylan, one of the members of the Magpies and best friend of the leader. This relationship not only helps Amelia identify herself as a homosexual, but it also leads to her first sexual experiences. In the end, Amelia is happy with who she is, but she is confused by Dylan's odd behavior.

Amelia's secret is revealed to the whole school after Zadie, leader of the Magpies, sends an email that Amelia sent to Dylan to the whole school. Amelia is humiliated, but Sylvia, her best friend, helps her deal with the situation. In the end, Amelia is optimistic about the future and makes the choice to turn in all the Magpies. However, she dies before she can do any of this. Amelia's death is initially ruled a suicide, but is later to discovered to have been an accident that occurred in a fight with her friend, Sylvia.



Sylvia Golde

Sylvia Golde has been Amelia's best friend since kindergarten. Sylvia is drastically different from Amelia. Sylvia is more into fashion than academics. Also, she is more obsessed with boys. Sylvia seems to have a fragile self-esteem that has led her in the past to cut herself. For this reason, Amelia worries about Sylvia's ability to withstand adversity and she goes out of her way to protect her.

Sylvia begins the new school year obsessing over Ian Greene, a new boy at Grace Hall. However, when Ian is tapped for one of the secret clubs, something he cannot tell Sylvia about, she begins to question his constant excuses for not spending time with her. In the end, Sylvia accuses Ian of cheating and he eventually breaks up with her.

Sylvia believes rumors in the school gossip rag that Ian is cheating on her with a Magpie. This narrow focus sticks with Sylvia even after Ian breaks up with her. Therefore, when Sylvia is sent an anonymous text, most likely from Zadie, and discovers that Ian took near naked pictures of Amelia, she flies into a jealous rage. Sylvia is convinced that Amelia has slept with Ian. Sylvia hits Amelia, causing her to fall backward off of the roof of Grace Hall. Sylvia hides this fact, but cannot live with Kate's grief. For this reason, Sylvia sends Kate texts insisting that Amelia did not jump.

Ian Greene

Ian Greene is a good looking boy who has recently moved to Brooklyn from England. Sylvia focuses on Ian before she even meets him, determined to become his girlfriend. When they do get together, Sylvia becomes jealous, convinced even before Ian cheats that he is cheating on her. In the end, Ian breaks up with Sylvia to be with another girl. On that same day, Sylvia learns that Ian was the one to take near naked pictures of Amelia for the Magpie blog and this causes her to fly into a jealous rage, convinced that Amelia was sleeping with him despite the fact that Amelia has told her she is gay. It is this rage that leads to Amelia falling off the roof of Grace Hall.

Dylan Crosby

Dylan Crosby is an odd, but beautiful girl who attends Grace Hall. Amelia is drawn to Dylan because she is quiet and appears to be something of a math wiz, something Amelia feels they have in common because Amelia is a bookworm. Amelia decides to join the Magpies and stick with their crazy hazing rituals so that she can get to know Dylan better. Eventually, Amelia and Dylan become lovers; but, Amelia cannot figure out how Dylan feels about her because Dylan acts oddly when stressed. In the end, Dylan humiliates Amelia by first leaving with Zadie when Zadie breaks into Amelia's house to film the two lovers together and later when an email Amelia has sent to Dylan ends up in a text to the entire school.



After Amelia's death, Kate and Lew interview Dylan to get more information about her relationship with Amelia. Dylan's mother admits that Dylan has a social disorder that they have gone to great lengths to hide from the school and her classmates. Dylan then admits that Zadie hated Amelia because Dylan liked her.

Zadie Goodwin

Zadie is the leader of the secret club, Magpies. Zadie taps Amelia to be in the club, but then does little to hide her open dislike of Amelia. When Amelia becomes involved with Zadie's best friend, Dylan, Zadie's wrath only increases, culminating in Zadie breaking into Amelia's house to film Amelia and Dylan naked together. Zadie then bullies Amelia by filling her locker with hate letters, covering her field hockey with used feminine products, and switching her English paper with one stolen from published analysis of the same work. However, Zadie has an alibi for the day Amelia died. She was at home with Sylvia's ex-boyfriend, Ian Greene.

Adele Goodwin

Adele Goodwin is Zadie's mother. Adele had an affair with Jeremy more than seventeen years ago. In fact, Jeremy is the father of Adele's daughter. Adele is an ambitious woman who wants her daughter to go to a good college. For this reason, Adele encourages her daughter to begin anew a group of secret clubs that were banished from Grace Hall due to the dangerous hazing rituals. Adele then sees Amelia at one of the fundraisers for Grace Hall and recognizes, due to her unusual eyes, that she is also Jeremy's daughter. Adele has Zadie include Amelia in the club, Magpies, in hopes of learning more about Amelia. In the end, Adele harasses Amelia with anonymous texts about the identity of her father. Adele also believes that Zadie, whom she knows was bullying Amelia because of her relationship with Dylan, pushed Amelia off the roof of Grace Hall. For this reason, Adele encouraged her lover, Molina, to cover up the death and make it appear to have been a suicide. Adele is also the one who told Daniel Moore about Kate's relationship with Jeremy.

Jeremy

Jeremy is Kate's boss at Slone, Thayer. Jeremy is a highly respected lawyer who has a soft spot for Kate. Jeremy has helped Amelia get into a program at Princeton, showing surprising interest in her. After Amelia's death, Jeremy encourages Kate to investigate the death after a text comes to her phone telling her Amelia did not jump from the roof of her private school. In the end, Kate discovers that Jeremy was sending texts to Amelia for months using the persona of a teenage boy also enrolled in the Princeton program. Jeremy tells Kate he did this because he knew from the time Amelia was an infant and one of her eyes changed color from the other that he was her father. Kate is shocked by this news, but she later realizes it must be true.



Daniel Moore

Daniel Moore is a highly ambitious lawyer who attended law school with Kate and works at the same law firm. Sixteen years ago, Kate had a brief affair with Daniel during a summer internship at Slone, Thayer law firm. For this reason, Kate has always assumed Daniel is the father of her daughter, Amelia. However, Daniel learns that Kate also had an affair with their boss, Jeremy, at about the same time. This causes Daniel to take a better job elsewhere and then torture Kate with texts about the identity of Amelia's father. At the same time, Daniel leaks information about Jeremy's many infidelities to a legal website. In the end, Kate learns that Daniel was not Amelia's father.

Lieutenant Lewis 'Lew' Thompson

Lieutenant Lewis Thompson, or Lew, is the detective who takes over Amelia's case after the previous detective, Molina, takes a job with private security. Lew finds evidence that Amelia might not have committed suicide and uses this evidence to reopen the investigation. Lew takes Kate along on the investigation. In the end, they are able to establish that Amelia's death was an accident caused by her friend's jealous rage.

Philip Woodhouse

Philip Woodhouse is the headmaster of Grace Hall, the school Amelia attends in Brooklyn. Woodhouse is also idealistic and he tries to do his best by all his students, but finds his hands tied at Grace Hall when a dangerous collection of secret clubs begin at the school that involves dangerous hazing of new members. Woodhouse tries on multiple occasions to get Amelia out of one of these clubs, but fails. In the end, Woodhouse tries to help Kate learn the truth about the school and the clubs in her investigation into Amelia's death. In the epilogue, the reader learns that Kate has begun dating Woodhouse.

Rowan

Rowan is an idealistic young man that Kate meets in a bar about the time she becomes pregnant with Amelia. Kate is in a difficult period in her life where she finds herself ashamed for having a one night stand with her boss in a summer internship during law school that leads to an affair with a cruel, backstabbing fellow student she does not like very much. For this reason, Kate finds idealistic Rowan refreshing and wishes that their relationship could have lasted longer before he went to Africa to teach underprivileged children. For this reason, she tells Amelia all her life that Rowan was her father when in truth Kate believes Daniel is actually Amelia's father.



Symbols and Symbolism

Texts

Amelia communicates a great deal through text messages on her cellphone. Most important about these texts is a relationship that Amelia has developed with a boy named Ben, whom she has never met. This boy turns out to be Amelia's biological father, Jeremy.

Facebook

Like most teenagers, Amelia has a strong social site presence. Among these is her Facebook page on which she often posts her status through simple comments and quotes from her favorite author, Virginia Woolf. Comments on this page seem to indicate Amelia's popularity, or lack thereof, among her classmates.

Magpie Blog

As part of her hazing to be a member of the Magpies, Amelia is required to post pictures of herself to a blog run by the club. These pictures are of a sexual nature in which Amelia is required to pose in her underwear. Amelia's mother finds these pictures a month after her death while investigating Amelia's death.

To the Lighthouse Paper

Amelia has an English assignment to write a term paper on the novel, *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf. Amelia is a very good student and is given permission to write the paper about any topic she wants. Amelia writes about friendship in her paper. However, when the teacher confronts Amelia with her paper it is not the one she wrote but one that was copied directly from several other sources. Amelia is accused of cheating.

Kate's Texts

A month after Amelia's death, Kate receives two texts telling her that Amelia did not jump to her death. Kate also begins getting texts about an affair that led to Amelia's conception sixteen years prior.

Legal Website Article

Jeremy discovers an article on a legal website outing his many infidelities sixteen years ago. Jeremy tries to warn Kate about this article, but she is busy with her investigation

into Amelia's death. Jeremy eventually learns that Daniel Moore was the source for the article.

Picture Text

Sylvia receives a picture text that reveals to her that her boyfriend, Ian Greene, was the photographer who took near naked pictures of Amelia, leading Sylvia to believe that Amelia had an affair with Ian.

Suicide Note

Police find the single word "sorry" on the wall where Amelia fell to her death. Police believe this is a suicide note, but Kate later learns that the handwriting does not match, implying someone else wrote the word. In the end, it is implied Sylvia wrote the word after accidentally pushing Amelia to her death.

Autopsy Photos

After being contacted by Lew Thompson, Kate learns that pictures taken at Amelia's autopsy reveal scratches on her arms that are not consistent with suicide.

Meet and Greet Book

Grace Hall puts out a meet and greet book at the beginning of each year so that students can learn about their classmates. Kate and Lew use this book to identify the members of the Magpies. Kate also has her neighbor use the book to identify a boy the neighbor saw enter Kate's house in the middle of a school day with Amelia.



Settings

Grace Hall

Grace Hall is the private school Amelia attends in Brooklyn. Grace Hall is a good school that offers a great many of academic advantages to its students. However, Grace Hall also harbors four secret clubs at the school that engage in dangerous hazing rituals. The headmaster of the school, Mr. Woodhouse, has tried to fight these clubs but has been threatened to keep quiet about them by the school board and one of the parents, a lawyer named Adele Goodwin. It is here that Amelia is wrongly accused of cheating and where she fell to her death in a possible suicide.

Zadie Goodwin's House

Zadie's parents own a large home that is a remodeled warehouse. The home is the site of several of the Magpie meetings Amelia attends. It is also in Zadie's house where Amelia and Dylan share their first kiss. Later, it is in Zadie's house that Kate learns Adele had an affair with Jeremy of which Zadie is a result and that it was Adele's jealousy toward Kate that led to Zadie tapping Amelia for the Magpies.

Baron Home

Kate and Amelia live in a brownstone in Brooklyn. It is here that Amelia spends long hours alone after school while her mother is at work. Amelia is a good kid who rarely gets into trouble, but when her relationship with Dylan begins, she and Dylan spend many afternoons alone there. It is also in this home where Ian takes near naked pictures of Amelia for the Magpie blog. After Amelia's death, Kate begins her investigation into Amelia's death by searching her bedroom and going through her computer and phone.

Jeremy's Apartment

Jeremy moves into a new apartment at the beginning of the novel. For this reason, Kate is not aware of his new address until the day she goes to his home in search of a boy who had been sending texts to Amelia in the months before her death. It is then that Kate learns that Jeremy is Amelia's father. He has been sending texts to her in an attempt to be a part of her life.



Themes and Motifs

Ambition

Ambition is a theme of this novel on several levels. First, it is ambition that causes Kate to spend a great deal of time at work rather than taking a job with fewer hours so she can be with her daughter. Ambition is also the motivating factor that causes Daniel Moore, a colleague of Kate's, to try to ruin both Kate and Jeremy after learning of their long forgotten one night stand. Finally, ambition plays a small part in Amelia's decision to tell Woodhouse everything about the Magpies on the final day of her life.

Kate is a law school student when she finds herself pregnant with her first child. Alone and without any romantic prospects, Kate makes the radical decision to have her child. Kate struggles, but makes the conscious choice not to allow her child to stop her from having the stellar legal career she has always wanted. For this reason, Kate spends long hours at work, often not seeing her daughter but for a few moments each day. Despite this, Kate manages to keep a weekly date with her daughter on the weekends. In the aftermath of Amelia's death, Kate worries that her ambition caused her not to see her daughter's struggles and led to Amelia committing suicide.

Daniel Moore was a fellow student at law school and now is a competitor for a partnership at Slone, Thayer for Kate. Daniel is more ambitious than Kate, but he is also more ruthless, causing the partners to hesitate when it comes to promoting him. Kate finds Daniel cruel. It is for this reason that Kate never tells Amelia that she believes Daniel is her father. However, someone else tells Daniel that he is not Amelia's father, but that Kate also had an affair with Jeremy. For reasons not really explored in the novel, Daniel takes this information and tries to ruin Jeremy with it by leaking it to a legal website. Daniel also tortures Kate with text messages, taunting her with the knowledge of who Amelia's father is. Perhaps it is professional jealousy that led to these actions as Daniel was removed from an important case in favor of Kate, prompting him to seek employment elsewhere.

Amelia, too, is motivated in a small way by ambition. Amelia finds herself about to lose everything she has worked so hard for academically when she is accused of cheating on an English paper. For this reason, Amelia decides to reveal the truth, exposing the Magpies, even though it could mean the end of any hope she and her girlfriend, Dylan, will ever reunite. In this way, Amelia is like her mother, giving up a little for a possibly brighter future.

Secrets

There are a great number of secrets in this novel that impact many of the main characters. The first is obviously the idea that someone knows Amelia did not kill herself, but has chosen not to come forward until a month after Amelia's death. Another



secret are the secrets Amelia keeps herself from not only her best friend, but from her mother. Finally, the basic knowledge of who fathered Amelia is not only a secret her mother keeps from Amelia, but one even Kate is not fully aware of that leads to a great deal of trouble for both Kate and Amelia.

A month after Amelia's death, her mother gets a text message that tells her Amelia did not commit suicide. Kate is shocked by this and it spurs her into investigating deeper the death of her child. In the end, Kate discovers the text came from an unlikely source. Amelia's best friend from kindergarten not only admits to sending the text messages, but to pushing Amelia from the roof of their school. Sylvia then hid this from the world, most like afraid of the consequences, until she could no longer live with Kate's overwhelming guilt.

As Kate investigates Amelia's death, she goes through her social networking sites and her text messages and discovers secrets that Amelia kept from her. Kate did not know that Amelia had joined a secret club at school. Nor did she know that Amelia had discovered she was homosexual or that she had had her first girlfriend and first sexual experiences. Kate also did not know that Amelia had posed for near naked pictures to be posted on a blog. All these secrets imply to Kate that she knew little about her daughter, but in the end she comes to realize that Amelia would have told her eventually. Life simply got in the way.

All Amelia's life, Kate was vague about the identity of Amelia's father. Kate thought she was protecting her daughter from a man who could often be cruel or indifferent. However, as Kate investigates Amelia's death, she comes to realize that someone else knows the identity of Amelia's father and has been taunting her with the fact that Kate has been lying. Someone is also taunting Kate, but with more anger, more hatred. In the end, Kate is shocked to find that the man she thought was her daughter's father was in fact, not him. In discovering the truth of Amelia's parentage, she also discovers the identity of Amelia's anonymous texter, but not the identity of her killer.

Romantic Connection

Romantic connection is an important theme to this novel. This theme begins with the men in Kate's life in the month she conceived her daughter, Amelia. This theme then goes on to be explored first with Sylvia's obsession with boys to Amelia's connection with Dylan.

Kate came from a home that was lacking in love and affection. Therefore, when she was on her own at law school and found herself in a situation where affection was offered, she broke. Kate is ashamed of what she has done and tries to put it behind her, but by doing this she finds herself in another romantic connection that is neither healthy nor lasting. Therefore, when Kate finds that she is pregnant, she is alone and without the support of either loving parents or a romantic partner. For this reason, Kate goes forward as though nothing matters beyond herself and her daughter, lying to her daughter about her father's identity to protect her from what Kate believes is a father



who is cruel and indifferent. When the truth finally comes out, it surprises Kate as much as anyone else.

Sylvia is a teenager who is obsessed with boys. However, Sylvia's obsession is often unhealthy, causing her to have sexual relations with boys who often do not care about her or her emotions. This causes Sylvia to be quite unstable when it comes to her emotional health. In fact, Sylvia is under the care of several therapists for self-destructive behaviors. At the same time, Sylvia teases Amelia for her apparent lack of interest in boys and romance. It never occurs to Sylvia that Amelia might not be interested in boys, even when Amelia tells Sylvia that she is gay and in love with another girl. That is partially why, in the end, it is so easy for Sylvia to believe that Amelia would deceive her in order to sleep with Sylvia's boyfriend, Ian. It is this belief and a fit of rage that cause Sylvia to accidentally push Amelia to her death.



Styles

Point of View

There are multiple points of view in this novel. In chapters narrated by Kate Baron, the point of view is third person. These chapters are often followed by those narrated by Kate's daughter, Amelia. These chapters are written in the first person point of view. There are also a number of chapters that are snippets of text messages, a gossip blog, and Amelia's Facebook page. All of these are also written in the first person point of view.

The varying points of view in this novel work well with one another. The first person points of view are expected in the web based pages. The chapters in which Amelia narrates in the first person point of view gives the reader a more intimate look into Amelia's life, developing her character in a way that is quick and familiar, allowing the reader to have an emotional connection to this young girl the reader already knows is doomed. The third person point of view in Kate's chapters gives the reader a little distance from her overwhelming grief so that the reader can focus on Kate's investigation into Amelia's death. This allows for Amelia to be the main character of the novel even though she has died and shares the spot light with her mother.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in basic English with an emphases on modern teen slang. The author has taken a teenage character and immersed the reader in her world not only by telling her story in a first person point of view, but by giving the reader excerpts from the character's social media sites and her personal text messages.

The language of this novel works well with the plot because it presents the novel not only in an intelligent way, but also with a format that most young readers will recognize and appreciate. The author uses simple language in her full chapters, but uses accepted texting format in her excerpts from Amelia's phone and social media sites. This is a tactic that will connect with most young readers and help them connect to the main character.

Structure

The novel is divided into sixty chapters, each given a title that pertains to the narrator and the day in which the action in the chapter will take place. These chapters also include excerpts from text messages, a Facebook page, and a gossip blog. By structuring her novel in the way she has, the author has made her novel easy to read and gives it an element that helps young readers connect quickly with the main character.



The novel contains two main plots and several subplots. One main plot is the story of Amelia and the events that take place in the final weeks of her life. The other main plot follows Amelia's mother as she attempts to put together the details of Amelia's final moments. One subplot follows the mystery of who Amelia's father is. Another subplot follows Amelia's relationship with her best friend. All these plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

Amelia had never been in trouble in her entire life. Her teachers called her a delight-bright, creative, thoughtful, focused.

-- Kate (Kate: October 24 paragraph 21)

Importance: This quote not only begins to introduce Amelia's character to the reader, but it also underscores her mother's surprise at being told her daughter was caught cheating at school.

She was a terrible, terrible mother. It was too much, juggling her job and parenting by herself. She had no margin for error.

-- Kate (Kate; October 24 paragraph 59)

Importance: This quote illustrates Kate's doubts in her own parenting ability. Kate made the conscious choice to have a child out of wedlock and to not let it interfere with her pursuit of a successful legal career, but these choices fill her with guilt especially in light of the fact that her daughter was caught cheating at school.

I love my mom, but she gets most of her ideas about how to be a mom from other moms. Pretty much whatever Sylvia was allowed to do, I was allowed to do, too.

-- Amelia (Amelia: September 14 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote emphasizes Kate's lack of experience in parenting and Amelia's awareness of this lack. Amelia does not seem angry about it, but she also seems oblivious that some of this comes from the way in which Kate herself was raised by her own parents.

That was Sylvia. She had no filter. She said really maen stuff: about my MIA dad, my mom not being home. Little Orphan Amelia, she'd called me once. She did it when she felt like you'd hurt her feelings first.

-- Amelia (Amelia: September 14 paragraph 44)

Importance: This quote goes a long way to explaining the cruel behavior Sylvia often exhibits with Amelia and why Amelia allows it to roll off her back. Amelia understands Sylvia on a deep level for such a young girl and it will lead Amelia to attempting to protect Sylvia later in the novel despite Sylvia's often cruel behavior.

The OB confirmed 'the pregnancy' with an ultrasound. They don't say 'baby' when they think you might not want to be pregnant. Might decide not to stay that way.

-- Kate (Kate: September 5, 1997 paragraph 4)

Importance: This is an excerpt from a journal kept when she was in law school. This excerpt describes how Kate came to realize and confirm her pregnancy with Amelia. It also shows her confusion and indecision at the time. This journal was likely read by Amelia, possibly contributing to her suicide.



Sorry your daughter is dead. Sorry your daughter jumped off the roof of her school when you were on your way to pick her up. Sorry you were late. Too bad you'll be reliving that failure for the rest of your miserable life.

-- Kate (Kate: November 26 paragraph 7)

Importance: This quote is from an imaginary conversation Kate has with a coworker on her first day back to work after Amelia's death. This imaginary conversation reveals the deep sense of guilt Kate carries in the aftermath of Amelia's death and how she is struggling with the reality of what is now her life.

Amelia didn't jump.

-- Anonymous (Kate: November 26 paragraph 61)

Importance: This is a text message Kate receives a little more than a month after her daughter, Amelia, jumped to her death from the roof of her school building. It is this text message that spurs Kate into investigating her daughter's death and learning the truth.

Teachers, the administration, everyone gave Zadie a wide berth, overlooked little lapses, and not because they thought she couldn't possibly do anything wrong. They were afraid of her. No one was ever afraid of me.

-- Amelia (Amelia: October 1 paragraph 15)

Importance: This quote shows that Amelia has grown tired of being a good girl and would not mind being treated differently. It also gives motivation to Amelia's decision to remain in the Magpies despite her promise to Sylvia that she would never join a club without her.

He called me up to his office today to tell me that my memo of collateral estoppel was the best he'd ever read by a summer associate. That's like having the president come out of the Oval Office to give you a pat on the back. It never happens.

-- Kate (Kate: June 30, 1997 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote refers to Kate's summer internship at Slone, Thayer that took place the summer she became pregnant with Amelia. It implies a deeper relationship between she and Jeremy than has previously been revealed.

It was smart. Because even if I decided I could live with the Maggies humiliating me, I knew that Sylvia would never survive it.

-- Amelia (Amelia: October 22 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote refers to a text message Amelia receives two days before her death telling her to keep quiet about the Magpies or they would bully Sylvia. It also shows that Amelia cares enough for Sylvia that she would rather take the abuse than allow Sylvia to suffer.

As soon as I heard you were pregnant, I wondered, obviously,' he said. 'But after I Amelia's eyes changed colors as a baby, then I knew for sure.



-- Jeremy (Kate: November 29 paragraph 88)

Importance: This quote is the moment Jeremy reveals to Kate that he has known all of Amelia's life that he was the father. Kate had assumed Amelia's father was Daniel Moore. When Jeremy goes on to explain about his genetic disorder, a disorder that was passed to Amelia, she knows he is telling the truth.

And I tried. I tried to grab her back. I tried so hard to hold on.

-- Amelia (Amelia: October 24 paragraph 141)

Importance: This quote is the last thing that goes through Amelia's head as she falls from the roof of Grace Hall. In this chapter, Amelia reveals to the reader that Sylvia pushed her accidentally in a jealous rage after learning Ian was the one who took the near naked pictures of Amelia for the Magpie's blog.