



# Orangeboy

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Sixteen-year-old Marlon has promised his widowed mum that he'll be good, and nothing like his gang-leader brother Andre. It's easy when you keep yourself to yourself, listening to your dead dad's Earth, Wind and Fire albums and watching sci-fi. But everything changes when Marlon's first date with the beautiful Sonya ends in tragedy; he becomes a hunted man and he has no idea why. With his dad dead and his brother helpless, Marlon has little choice but to enter Andre's old world of guns, knives and drug runs in order to uncover the truth and protect those close to him. It's time to fight to be the last man standing.

## Orangeboy Details

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Author : Patrice Lawrence

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# From Reader Review Orangeboy for online ebook

## Cora Tea Party Princess says

**5 Words: Family, death, friendship, gangs, drugs.**

At the start of this book, I thought that Marlon was great. He really had his head screwed on right, he was a smart kid, a kid I could believe in... But by the end? Not so much. (This is a good thing).

Marlon's attitude, and my attitude towards him, really changed as the story progressed. And it was great. I loved slowly falling out of love with the character, I loved how he transformed from one person into another without losing what made him HIM. I might not have liked him very much by the end, but I absolutely loved the story.

This book is incredibly fast paced. It's edge-of-your-seat thrilling, with a smattering of frustration and a fist-fight of violence. The author is not afraid of brutality and it did make for some toe-curling moments, but not so many that I was put off.

*I received a copy of this for free via NetGalley for review purposes.*

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## Jayne Bauling says

*Orangeboy* opens with sixteen-year-old Marlon Sunday from Hackney having just taken his first ever quarter tab of Ecstasy. He doesn't know it, but he's already in trouble, about to be plunged into a nightmare of persecution and violence.

This is an all-action, fast-paced YA urban thriller, but it's also an intensely emotional story. It offers a look at how living with fear is the lot of those who willingly or inadvertently tangle with the bad guys, or 'badmen' as Marlon calls them. Additionally, it's a novel about family.

Marlon is real and engaging, his growth brilliantly depicted. We see him making difficult decisions, growing harder, getting smarter, without losing his essential self. He is able to understand the thoughts and feelings of his adversary D-Ice, and why he and his gang are out to get him and those he loves; he understands the damaged lives, and the need behind the posturing.

A tense, scary, and moving read. Superb.

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## Jen says

Marlon Sunday is one of the most infuriating young men I have ever encountered, but so superbly written that I fully understand why he decides to follow the course of action that he eventually takes.

I read *Orangeboy* through screams at the book of "WHY....NO....DON'T DO THAT MARLON...THERE IS ANOTHER WAY", and the last few chapters I read almost without breathing, trying to simultaneously hide behind my hands and read to the end as fast as I could to find out what happens to Marlon and his family.

Marlon is a completely ordinary young man who reacts to the circumstances around him in a believable and natural way. His desire to protect his family and friends is what makes this story, at heart, one about how far a person will go to protect the people he loves.

Orangeboy is one of those books I wish had been written when I was a teenager. This is an important book for anyone living through the circumstances depicted in the story to read, but also vital for everyone else who pretends that these things don't happen. Sometimes people do make the wrong decision out of good intentions, and that shouldn't be ignored.

A gripping rollercoaster ride through a young man's brave attempts to save those he loves, as the past chases after them and threatens to destroy everything. This book is simply brilliant and if you're looking for a story full of drama and real life experiences, that will grip you until the last page, then you've found the right novel.

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### **YupIReadIt says**

Why was this book so unnecessarily long?! 2.5

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### **Luna says**

Orangeboy has become a book that I've found complex to review. Foremost I want to say this: 'Orangeboy is gripping, intriguing and emotional. It's an excellent mystery, with drama and a wonderful set of relationships for the reader to explore, both friendships and the family dynamics. Just go and read it now!'

Honestly I'd be quite happy to go and push this book at so many people with the above (and I'm still mad at myself for taking so long to read Orangeboy). Especially because I adore the two main female characters in this book so much, Tish and Marlon's mother. At times I could have just shaken Marlon for not realising what these women were doing but that leads to spoilers and I most certainly don't want to spoil anything about this book for anyone.

As I've said, Marlon's story was a captivating read. It was also incredibly frustrating and eye-opening. It's easy to say that I didn't understand why Marlon made the choices he did. While reading I frequently thought; "why don't you tell..." or "what about door 2" but the truth of the matter is that at Marlon's age I would have been treated completely differently to him. It's a sucky fact but it's a fact. Marlon's world is very different to mine and reading Orangeboy gave me a much deeper understanding of this. While Marlon's character at times frustrated me, the more I became involved in his life the more I appreciated why he chose the path he did.

Orangeboy pulled me through an emotional rollercoaster but for all the best reasons. This book and its characters will stay with me for a long time.

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### **Louise says**

Fantastic. Genuinely edge of the seat stuff, I absolutely sped through this.

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## **Beth Bonini says**

2.5 stars. I don't know how to evaluate this book fairly. It had its strong points, and it covers subject matter which is probably of interest to many teens, but I didn't enjoy reading it at all. I had to drag myself through it, and even the suspenseful elements didn't drive me through the plot. Also, it felt overlong - and the narrative jumped and 'jived' (lots of street lingo) in a way that meant I couldn't just skim it. Having said all that: it was the YA Book Prize winner for 2017, and I respect that I was probably just not the right reader for this book.

Told from the first person point-of-view of Marlon, a 16 year old boy who lives in Hackney, the book kicks off immediately with drama. Marlon has been pursued by Sonya, a beautiful girl who he knows is way out of his league. As his feisty best friend Tish says, he should have been suspicious from the start, but he wasn't really thinking with his head. Their first rendezvous - at a local fair - goes horribly wrong. Drugs, gangs, a mysterious death - and suddenly Marlon, a good kid, is drawn into some mysterious vendetta.

This book kicked off my mom alert to a crazy degree. I wanted to shake Marlon, constantly, for thinking he could sort out things he had no business dealing with. Talk to your mother! Talk to the police! Good grief. The book is set in contemporary London, and I felt confidence that the author has a pretty good insight into the world she is describing. The Evening Standard reports regularly on why so many young boys in London are carrying knives these days, and this is both the mentality and the setting of this book.

Strong points include characterisation - the primary characters are fleshed out with plenty of detail - and realistic dialogue. Young adult literature needs these kinds of stories, too - urban, 'street', with young male protagonists - but it just wasn't a storyline which appealed to me as a reader.

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## **Kate (Reading Through Infinity) says**

This book is so important. Not only is it full of diverse characters, but it explores a life of gang violence that many young people in London fall into and find it incredibly hard to escape. and I've never read anything like it.

The story follows, Marlon, a young man whose brother was involved in street gangs until an accident several years ago changed everything. Marlon promised his mum he'd stay in school and avoid his brother's old life, but when old feuds reemerge and his family and friends are threatened, it's not quite so easy to keep his promise.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book because it gave me insight into a life that I've never lived; as a white woman living outside of London I've never experienced unfair treatment and suspicion directed at me by the police in the same way that Marlon, a black young man, does. I know this comes from the inherent privileges of being white and a woman, and this book was therefore vital for me to better understand how people in Marlon's position feel.

I immediately identified with Marlon's character because despite the trouble desperately seeking him out, fundamentally he's a good person. Even when he makes the wrong decisions or tries to be 'street' and

'gangsta', his good nature and conscience try to return him to the right track, and everything he does stems from a desire to protect his family and friends.

For a lot of the book Marlon is misunderstood by his peers, family, and the police, and this made him very easy to empathise with because the reader is privy to his inner thoughts and thus knows his true intentions. Other characters, however, don't have access to these thoughts and that's how misunderstandings arise.

The writing of this book was relatively simple, but I enjoyed the inclusion of London dialects. (I studied accents and dialects so I'm a sucker for books that make use of them.) The plot and pacing were very much in tune, with major events happening every few chapters but not running together in one long dramatic sequence. As a result, the book had a rhythmic style of storytelling that worked well with its subject matter.

Aside from some scenes at the beginning of the novel, romance is mostly absent from the story and I enjoyed this hugely. It was refreshing to see another YA book (*This Savage Song*, I'm looking at you) with little romantic interaction and I'm a fan of novels that don't feel the need to include it at all. If a book foregoes romance to focus instead on strong friendships - which was exactly what *Orangeboy* did - and explores these friendships in detail, chances are I'm going to be 100% on board. One of the main friendships in *Orangeboy* could have easily become a romantic relationship, but I'm so glad it didn't because that could have undermined the friendship itself.

I would urge *everyone* to read this book. It shows us the hardships and reality of life in a big city for young black teens and echoes the ideals of the BLM movement. *Orangeboy* was shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book Award in 2016 and I honestly wish it had won because I think it would have been given more of the recognition it deserves.

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## **Harriet says**

Wow. A really different book, but there was great action and emotion throughout. Hmm.

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## **Graine Milner says**

A pacy read, all the way to the end. You can't help but like Marlon, a good boy in a bad situation. I hadn't read the blurb when I started reading this, and didn't know much about it other than it was getting a lot of attention, so the events of the first chapter came as a bit of a shock.

Readers who enjoyed William Sutcliffe's *Concentr8* will probably like this too.

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## **Tara Russell says**

Wow. This is a long, dense and really very intense book, where 16-year-old Marlon is pulled between the world of his older brother, Andre, and gang life, and the promises he's made to his mother, Jenny, to avoid the gang world. As is often the case in life, though, it's not easy to follow one path, and when beautiful Sonya enters Marlon's orbit by knocking on his door, all hell breaks loose, pretty much.

I love a book that avoids the simplistic resolution, a book that portrays characters and their actions as flawed

and as difficult as in real life; where black and white blur into shades of grey. This fits that bill. I did a lot of talking to Marlon when I was reading it, talking as if I were him, as if I were his mother, as if I were his friend Tish, and I could see all the time where his actions were originating, but I still wanted to intervene!

Brilliant characterisation all the way through, to get the reader to react so intensely.

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### **Leah says**

I do not know where to start with my love for this book. I can't really write a coherent review, as this book is so far out of my wheelhouse - but it was incredible. Everyone raves about this book, and it really was truly amazing. This book moves at such an incredible pace that the 450 pages fly by, the plot never lags and the things Marlon did to help his family was both admirable, and pretty stupid. The thing is - until you're confronted with something, it's hard to know how you'd react and I can see why Marlon did everything he did - he felt there was no other options, and he had to protect his mum.

I can see why everyone says this book is incredible, that it should be read in schools because it truly was amazing. I whizzed through it, and it was pretty interesting to see Marlon go from being this kid, who knows nothing, really, to having to grow up really fast and deal with past things coming back to haunt him (things that weren't even him, really).

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### **Jim From YAYeahYeah says**

Stunning contemporary telling the story of Marlon, caught up in danger when a date ends tragically. He's an incredible main character and my heart went out to him and his mother, already heartbroken by an accident his brother was involved in several years previously. The way Marlon gets drawn into the world Andre had occupied is brilliantly paced - although it's a tough read as it's so clearly leading to bad things. A really outstanding debut!

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### **Kathryn Evans says**

A powerful, chunky, honest read - a fantastic first book from Patrice Lawrence. Also- look at that cover! It's awesome!

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### **Hannah says**

#### **DNF at 65%**

*Edit 9.9.17* Can't believe I forgot to point out some shitty off hand comments made in this book. Early on, Tish tells Marlon not to listen to any 'wrist slitty' music which is just a stupid way to define anything and irritated me. Not long after that, Marlon's journey to school is delayed because somebody killed themselves by jumping in front of a tube train.. the explanation given is that they must not have liked Mondays. I find this very offensive- it just ignores (at best) mental illness and trying to make suicide funny is plain wrong.

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I suffered through 291 pages of pure boredom before giving up. Fortunately my lovely friend Aali (we buddy read this) told me everything else that happened and I'm so glad I didn't suffer through it!

Marlon is an irritating idiot, literally every decision he makes is fucking ridiculous. I didn't like any of the characters at all other than his mum, who is an actual saint and deserved so much better.

I don't even understand how this is so boring because in principle it's a really interesting idea and should be exciting but it falls flat at every possible moment.

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