



## Are We All Lemmings and Snowflakes?

*Holly Bourne*

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## **Are We All Lemmings and Snowflakes?** Holly Bourne

Welcome to Camp Reset, a summer camp with a difference. A place offering a shot at “normality” for Olive, a girl on the edge, and for the new friends she never expected to make – who each have their own reasons for being there. Luckily Olive has a plan to solve all their problems. But how do you fix the world when you can’t fix yourself?

## **Are We All Lemmings and Snowflakes? Details**

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# From Reader Review Are We All Lemmings and Snowflakes? for online ebook

## Maddie says

Because I knew the ethos of this story before going in, it was less powerful than if I'd just discovered it. The way Olive came to epiphanies about kindness felt too...overtly moralising for my taste. I really admired the deep dive into mental health discussion that this book does more than any other of Holly Bourne's titles. I'm sure this will really resonate with anyone that's been diagnosed with a mental illness, and help them to recover in some way. If you liked 'Clean' by Juno Dawson and want something a little...tamer then this is the book for you!

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## Sara says

Holly Bourne's books crackle with electricity. They feel \*alive\*. And this one crackles and sparks right off the page. Olive's voice is so brilliant and the supporting cast of characters is so real.

If anyone asks what it is that makes UK YA special, show them this book.

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## Joanne says

Originally published on Once Upon a Bookcase.

**Trigger Warning:** *This book features suicide ideation, and discussion of sexual child abuse and selfharm.*

Having loved The Spinster Club Trilogy, and how well she dealt with Evie's OCD in Am I Normal Yet?, when I heard Holly Bourne was writing another novel dealing with mental illness, Are We All Lemmings & Snowflakes?, I was dying to read it. And oh my god, this book is absolutely incredible.

Olive isn't ok. After a depressive episode leads her to standing on the edge of a cliff, hanging onto a tree, trying to convince herself not to jump, on the advice of her GP, Olive is attending Camp Reset, a camp for those with mental illness, to help get them back on track. With the things she learns and the conversations she has, she comes up with a brain wave. The world would be a much better place if only people were kinder. With the help of her new friends, she plans on making a difference to the world on an epic scale and spreading kindness. Olive is now bursting with energy and enthusiasm, convinced she's onto a winner that will save the world and make her better. After all, isn't she feeling just incredible right now? What Olive doesn't realise is she's starting to spiral out of control. How long can she keep things going when she's not looking after herself?

The book opens up with Olive having a really hard time. Again. For the third time. She is in her room, with pillows and duvets, cocooning herself away under her desk, trying to escape all noise, which makes her anxious, to the point of panic. But, as her mum points out, it's her dad's birthday, and they're having a barbecue, and people are coming round. Can't Olive just *try*? Can't she just pull herself together this once and try? But a barbecue, with all the people and all the noise, is Olive's worst nightmare. And she has to escape.

Not just the noise, but herself, because she's realised she's not ok.

*"Anyway, then I was there [in the greenhouse] and the storm was there and I realized just how not normal it was that I'd run out into the garden. And my head felt like it was burning and screaming and full of insects that were exploding one by one behind my eyes..." Another tear bubbles up and jumps down my cheek. "And I realized that I'm not very well again," I gasp, needing more air. "And I'm not sure I can go through that again." (p17)\**

So when she sees her GP to get some help, and she suggests Olive takes part in the pilot scheme of a programme called Camp Reset, where a group of teenagers with mental illness go for intense therapy, to get better, and to give them the tools to deal with the world, Olive is all for it. A chance to get better. To be normal again. To not have a mental illness. Because Olive has got the wrong end of the stick, and thinks that Camp Reset is going to cure her of her mental illness, and she'll be normal again.

*'The thing is, it sounds good. It sounds like it could work. I mean, a month. A whole month. Of intensive treatment. I could improve. I could learn how to not feel like this again. This could be it. This could be the silver bullet. The magic pill. The miracle cure. The thing that actually does it. And just that thought - the thought this could all go away. The thought that I'd finally be able to feel normally, as opposed to EVERYTHING or NOTHING... The thought is more than enough to make me smile.' (p27-28)\**

So she goes to Camp Reset, and that's where the story really starts. I was really intrigued by *Are We All Lemmings & Snowflakes?* when I first heard about it, because very little is given away. I was told that Olive doesn't want to know her diagnosis, that she doesn't want a label, and that's a huge part of the book and probably one of the reasons why there's nothing mentioned about it. This all intrigued me even more, because it just seemed so alien to me. I was baffled. I couldn't understand why Olive wouldn't want to know what mental illness she had. Looking back on my own experience, although it was scary, I couldn't imagine *not* knowing that I had anxiety. I wanted to know what was "wrong" with me, what that meant, and how I could get better. So I went into *Lemmings & Snowflakes* really interested in reading about Olive's views. And while Olive is all for getting better, she doesn't want that label, a label that may end up defining her.

*'Hannah give me a strange look. "Is it true? You haven't been diagnosed?" I feel my face blush.  
"Umm, I assume I have," I bluster. "But I don't know what it is."  
Jamie grins and talks with his mouth full of egg. "You've got something weird and new that they haven't figured out yet?"  
I shake my head. "I doubt it. But I wouldn't know. I don't want to know."  
Lewis - the wispy boy - talks to me properly for the first time. "Why not?" he asks. [...] I look back at him and shrug. Then shrug towards the whole table. "I just don't."  
Jamie nudges me in the side with his elbow. "Ooo, mystery girl." I roll my eyes again. "Hardly. It's just my choice. I mean, obviously I have issues. Because I'm here and all. But I don't want a label on me in case I use it as an excuse for not trying to get better, or for just being a dick or..." Everyone really is staring. Oh God, have I offended them? "I mean...it's just not for me."  
I try to smile. "But, whatever works for everyone else is great." (p88-89)\**

Because of this, I feel it's kind of more respectful to Olive not to discuss what she is dealing with. Saying that, knowing a bit more about mental illnesses through the reading I've done, I did have a theory about what

she might have, which was partly confirmed. More on that later. Even though she doesn't want to know exactly what it is she has, she definitely has some thoughts about it. During a Core Beliefs class, the teens are given a sheet of paper listed with negative core beliefs, and they are asked to circle two they feel applies to them. The idea is that they then reword it to say "I would prefer it if I was not..." and rework it into something more positive. This was actually really interesting, and something I think everybody could do with thinking about - whether you have a mental illness or not, we all, at times, suffer from self-doubt, low self-esteem, or negative thoughts about ourselves, and I found it really interesting. Anyway, Olive is looking through the list, after circling one, trying to decide on another, because there are several that she thinks.

*'Then, without really thinking, I circle a second one.'*

I am out of balance.

*'Because even though I won't let them tell me the official label for it, I know this is the truth. I know it is not \*normal\* to swing from euphoria to suicidal in one earthly rotation. The enormity of that presses down on my skull, travels down my spine, sends tingles of dread firing out through my frail, human body. I shake my head violently, trying to dislodge it. Because I am here to fix this. I am here to balance myself out. Here to heal. Here to get rid of this. It's ruined me three times, but not any more. Not again. I will get rid of this poison inside me.'*  
(p111)\*

Again, showing how she thinks Camp Reset will get rid of her mental illness altogether.

Olive is aware that she has anxiety, but that's more a symptom rather than the overall mental illness. And she does have some absolutely wonderful things to say about how you can't apply logic to anxiety - or any mental illness.

*'I hardly slept. My body just knew it wasn't where it normally sleeps (in a homemade bunker under my desk). I sweated and twisted in my sheets and kept thinking I heard noise and taking out my earplugs just to check.'*

*"Why do you need to check?" the CBT therapist once asked me. "If you can't hear the noise with your earplugs in, then why does it matter that it's there?"*

*"Because it matters," was all I could say. Because trying to use logic to explain anxiety is like using a banana to open a locked safe.'* (p86)\*

And when Sophie - one of the friends Olive makes at Camp Reset - has a panic attack because everyone turned to look at her when she was speaking, and feels ridiculous for it, every other person tells her about their own "crazy" things their mental illnesses make them do, and how they get it, understand, and do not judge her at all. And then this:

*'Sophie sniffs. "I thought I would be okay because I've been doing so much better, but, like you all turned and looked at me at exactly the same time and it... I sound crazy." She lets out a crack of laughter but none of us laugh back. Because it doesn't sound crazy. Or illogical. Or weird. Or any other words she's worried we're feeling. Because all of us here, in this little stable, holding pitchforks and mucking out alpacas, we all know it doesn't have to be logical, know that logic has nothing to do with it.'* (p260-261)\*

And during a conversation with Lewis - a maths genius who is helping out with her idea to save the world - she uses a maths metaphor to explain how people with mental illness are seen and treated:

*"Maybe people like you and me are just prime numbers," I tell him. "We don't neatly divide into a world that demands order. And they keep trying to find out why, and what makes us the way we are, but they can't."*

*"They keep trying to divide us into two," he adds, his voice heavy with sleep.*

*"Yep, and call us crazy when we don't. And give us therapy and meds and freaking alpacas until we can be moulded into something at can at least pretend it divides nicely into the world." (p223-224)\**

But there comes a point when things really don't go very well. Her psychologist, Dr. Jones is worried about her and thinks there needs to be a change in her meds, she has Dr. Bowers, a psychiatrist, to sit in on their one-on-one therapy session, to discuss alternative medication, and he completely puts his foot in it.

*"I obviously have not been the person to diagnose you and I know your diagnosis is still uncertain..." And before I can stop him, before I can shout out "NO" before I can wave my arms in the air and scream "DON'T DO THIS" he says, "but in my professional opinion, you may have [redacted] and..."*

*And I zone out because I'm screaming inside and my fists are clenched and tears are in my eyes and I can't I can't I can't undo this. I can't unhear what I've just heard. It's like hearing a spoiler for your favourite TV show but so so so so much worse. Dr Jones has noticed me screaming, even though I'm very quiet, and she's clocked on.*

*"Albert!" she interrupts quickly. "Olive doesn't want to know her diagnosis."*

*His face falls. "Oh no, Olive, I'm sorry."*

*"IT'S IN MY NOTES!" I scream. I actually do scream. "YOU'RE MONITORING MY FUCKING HEART RATE AND YET YOU DON'T READ MY NOTES." And I'm up and the chair has been kicked across the room and I'm quite sure that I did it because they're calmly telling me to calm down and I totally zone out for a moment or two. I only remember blackness and crying and the words.*

*[Redacted]. [Redacted]. [Redacted].*

*A label. A diagnosis. Who I am boiled down to a catchy title that will probably be called something else in fifty years time because eventually, with time, all titles get politically incorrect. They pick up the chair and sit me on it and keep saying, "Sorry, sorry" but it's not like saying sorry undoes anything.' (p210-211)\**

She is in pieces, and really struggles to deal with discovering this possible diagnosis... but she's also really annoyed that it's only a *possible* diagnosis, and not a definite one, that they're still uncertain what she's dealing with.

*"The thing that really gets me," I half interrupt. [...] "Is that they're NOT SURE. I always kind of trusted that they knew what was going on, you know?" My arms flail around so much around the bed I almost knock him off. "Do you not find that strange? That there's no, like, test for these things? It's not like diabetes where they can count the insulin in your blood, or a tumour where they can shove you in an MRI scan and bulgy bits all light up. How do they even decide on this stuff? I mean the whole idea of [redacted] was decided by what? A bunch of men in a room wearing white coats, VOTING on what symptoms make it a condition?" (p220-221)\**

I find that last part really interesting, especially after reading the quote in Challenger Deep, where Caden says, *'There is no such thing as a "correct" diagnosis. There are only symptoms and catchphrases for various collections of symptoms. [...]*

*The labels mean nothing, because no two cases are ever exactly alike. Everyone presents differently, and responds to meds differently, and no prognosis can truly be predicted.'* (p299) And if you think about it like that, then it almost kind of makes sense that 1) They've not yet worked out exactly what Olive has, although they are thinking it's more one particular mental illness over others, and that 2) Olive doesn't want to know her diagnosis, because it doesn't necessarily mean anything anyway.

As I said earlier on, while at Camp Reset, Olive comes up with this huge plan to spread kindness. This is the moment it starts to come together for Olive, but it's slowly been brewing away in her mind for a while. It's something she's focusing all her time and energy on, meaning Olive stops taking part in other areas of Camp Reset, like group therapy. It's also an example where we can see how her mental illness is affecting her; even though she thinks she's fine, we can see her starting to unspool.

*'And maybe, just maybe, none of us would be here if life had been easier or fairer or righter or happier or less scary. And maybe it's not about how to mend us now we've all gone mad, but figure out why we've gone fucking mad in the first place. And then MAYBE society should ensure that sort of thing doesn't happen again. Because it's all very fair training psychologists to sit us down and get us to talk about our awful upbringings, but why aren't we trying to stop awful upbringings? I mean, I guess society TRIES to stop bad things happen, but they're doing SUCH A BAD JOB AT IT, JUST LISTEN TO WHAT'S HAPPENED TO GABRIELLA. And...and...*

*Oh God, I can feel this thought blooming. Like on those nature programmes when they shove a camera onto a flower seed and show footage of it growing really really fast. I feel the roots go into the earth and I feel the stem start to grow and I feel the leaves unfurling and the petals turning pink one by one.'* (p240-241)\*

With this new brain wave, she goes to Lewis, who she's already been working with, and explains her idea of spreading kindness. If it's going to work on a big scale like they want, they need more people involved than just them. When trying to get the group on board on spreading kindness, and explaining that if the world was a better place, they might not be mentally ill, Jamie - a guy with cannabis psychosis blows up.

*"I didn't need your research anyway. I know what got me here already. SUBSTANCE ABUSE." Gabriella, unbothered by his anger, steps closer to him. "But WHY did you start abusing substances, Jamie?"*  
*That's when the top blows off his volcano. "BECAUSE I'M IN A BAND!" he shouts and Sophie squeals. "I'm not traumatised or poor or abused, okay? I just smoked a shit ton of weed because I'm in a band and that's what people in bands do. I'm just a selfish idiot addict. How are you going to save the world from selfish idiots? Because I'll tell you what..." his voice lowers to almost a growl. "I don't think absolving myself of all responsibility for the bad decisions I've made in my life is going to make the world a better place. In fact I think it's going to make it a worse one. Yeah shit happens, yadda yadda. But I'm the reason I'm here. I'm the reason I'm like this. And I'm the reason the moment I'm out of here I'll probably go straight to my dealer and buy an ounce, smoke it and probably start tripping out again. Letting people off is not the answer."* (p254-255)\*

This is something that Olive really needs to hear. Although she is convinced that spreading kindness is the

way to go - will make the world better, and therefore her better - she has trouble with taking responsibility for what she does. She has, in the past, and on occasion in this book, not been the nicest of people. She's done some awful things. She thinks she's a horrible person because of what's happened which, as you read, you discover is kind of down to her mental illness, but not completely. She thinks so, too, in a way, and it's almost like "I can't help being horrible, this is who I am," and she keeps screwing up, and she feels bad, but also that there is no way for her to stop this. There is a great conversation between her and Lewis at the end of the book, where he really lays into her, where he tells her she says she's not into labels, but she's given herself the label of horrible person, and so she's unkind to herself, and not great to other people, because that's who she is, rather than grasping that she keeps screwing up because of the decisions she makes.

But going back to her idea to spread kindness... it sounds kind of ridiculous and a bit soppy saying it like that, but when you hear her explain what she means, and how she really thinks they can make a difference, it's actually really interesting and inspiring. Even if she is starting to spiral out of control and lose it a bit. In her "madness", she makes some sense - and then she gets it into her head that she needs to be like this in order for her plan to work, because if she's "sane", then she's not going to be able to give the plan all she can. But even with all that, it's so fascinating! And it's actually grounded in science and maths, what with Lewis working out formula for it all. That may make it sound like it would be difficult to understand, but as Lewis has to explain things to Olive, we as readers understand everything, too. But it's so clever! Bourne must have had to do a ton of research into all this maths~mental illness and maths~kindness stuff, because it's complicated (but understandable)! It's just really awesome, and I loved it!

With *Are We All Lemmings & Snowflakes?*, Bourne has shown us again just what a fantastic author she is, and what wonderful stories she has to tell. It's an incredible novel, another powerful and important one, and one that's really thought provoking. I highly recommend you all get pre-ordering, because book is amazing.

*\*I have not yet been able to check these quotes against a finished copy, so they may not be accurate.*

Thank you to Usborne for the proof.

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**April (Aprilius Maximus) says**

BE KIND TO YOURSELF <3

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**Alessandra Crivelli says**

***“I think real kindness, real compassion, is having the strength to stop and try and see where another person is coming from. To try and work out why they're being the way they're being. It takes time and patience. It's not easy, but that's real kindness.”***

Holly Bourne never ceases to be **an outstanding writer about MENTAL HEALTH.**

I am going to endorse for every single book of hers until I have breath.

? Realistic struggles with mental health



- ? Different characters with different kind of MH and ways to deal with it
- ? New and old friendships
- ? Using math for fighting the cruelty of the world
- ? KINDNESS is contagious

"Are we all Lemmings and Snowflakes?" has been placed like my favorite 2nd book of Holly since "Am I normal yet?". This book has a place in my heart. I mean this time she actually wrote an entire book about **KINDNESS**. Not only be kind with others but also with yourself.

Do yourself a favour and go preorder this book, RIGHT NOW!

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### Emma says

*"I think real kindness, real compassion, is having the strength to stop and try and see where another person is coming from. To try and work out why they're being the way they're being. It takes time and patience. It's not as easy, but that's real kindness."*

4.25 stars ?

I'm a big fan of Holly Bourne and everything she writes. This book was no exception. It's an uplifting story about the power of kindness and compassion.

One of the most important themes of this book is of course mental health. (view spoiler)

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### Warda says

An author whose books I've never been disappointed in! I can't WAIT for this to be released. ?

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### Lily ?? says

⇒ 3 1/2 stars

**"The world needs more kindness."**

## Ellesha says

Holly Bourne is one of my favourite authors, I waited forever for this book and again, she has not failed to please. This book is just amazing. Holly is famous for writing about issues such as feminism and mental health and this book is such a perfect portrayal of a young girl suffering with bipolar disorder.

As a mental health nurse in training, I have to say that I am so impressed with the way Holly has managed to portray Olive's illness in this book. I managed to recognise her illness only a few chapters in as the book doesn't actually specify Olive's illness until quite far into the book as she doesn't actually want to know what her diagnosis is. I thought this was such a great little addition to the book as there are people living with a mental illness who don't necessarily want to put a label on their behaviour and it actually really interested me that Holly chose to take this approach.

I actually cannot describe how well Holly manages to portray bipolar disorder. When reading this book and with the way it's written such as one words on a line, the thought processes that happen that are just fleeting from one thought to another in a second; it was just such a great representation of the manic episode of bipolar. The same with the depressive episodes, she just shuts down and you can actually feel her emotion change in the way the book is written. (That is a talented writer).

If you are a reader who is unfamiliar about mental illness, you'd probably read this book and react like 'this is intense and all over the place, what is this?' and my honest answer to that is, it's reality. This is such a realistic and honest representation of bipolar, I'm actually struggling to express how brilliantly realistic this book is.

In terms of characters, where do I even start? Olive is such a likeable but also dislikable character and I really guess it depends how you see her. I liked her a lot whereas some people who may not be very familiar with her illness probably think she's a bit of a bitch due to her actions. I like her a lot because I get that a lot of her actions come from her being in a manic state or are defence mechanisms in an attempt to protect herself or other people. She's also quite vulnerable and struggles to comprehend a lot of her emotions, hating on herself a lot and blaming herself for everything that goes wrong, and this is quite sad to read because you're there like 'it's not your fault!' and eventually she does realise this. Olive's journey is one of strong emotion, struggles and self acceptance, and the entire thing is just beautifully written.

I'm not going to go through every character but two who stood out, and I think were meant to stand out, are Jamie and Lewis. Jamie is the typical guy you're supposed to like, all charming and boyish, whereas Lewis is the typical awkward, never-been-kissed type of guy and I have to admit, I didn't like him to begin with. He did eventually grow on me, and Olive's and his friendship was sweet, but personally I will always prefer Jamie.

In terms of the storyline and development of this, the beginning had me hooked straight away, it was engaging and fast paced from the offset, and may be slightly shocking/triggering for some readers as it covers a very sensitive subject only a few chapters in. Although the story focused mainly on the development of Olive and her story, it does involve the secondary characters as well and you get to know them and their illnesses and I felt it was awesome that this was explored. I did feel that towards the middle-end of the book, it slowed its pace a little and felt a little longed out, however this didn't affect the pace at which I read the

book and didn't last long until it picked up pace again. The ending of the book was really sweet and the message it conveys is just amazing.

Overall, this book is an honest and realistic portrayal of someone living with bipolar disorder, it's packed full of emotion, doesn't hold back on talking about sensitive subjects such as suicide and abuse and it is just beautifully written. If I could make every single person who is ignorant about mental illness read this book, I would.

#kindnessiscontagious

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### **Travel.with.a.book says**

Holly never fails me to fall in love with her new novels, this is a remarkable and phenomenal book!

I devoured this extraordinary in maximum and in the end it left me speechless!

She really has amazed me with her brilliant writings, I always knew that she can write but this one is her masterpiece!

...Are We All Lemmings And Snowflakes? is a very well deserved 5/5 book, and I'm so honoured to be a book ambassador for this novel, I want to thank @usbourneya with all my heart for providing me with this outrageous book!

This novel is a mind-blowing portrayal of a young girl suffering with bipolar disorder!

The way that Bourne manages to explore the illness is a perfection, the novel is a page turning of a description how bad this disorder is and not every book is as more informative as this one! Reading this book made me realize how realistic Holly has represented the struggles of the girl, the illness and I must say this is not a simple book, but it is very unique and professional!

Olive is a smart character but every act you see from her, you must keep it in your head that she has bipolar disorder and you'll see that every action is not affiliated by her very best choices! Olive's journey is one of strong emotion, struggles and self acceptance, and the entire thing is just breathtaking written!

The book is packed with full of different emotions, and the best message you can take from this is that YOU MUST BE KIND TO YOURSELF FIRST! Which is very true and you must believe it, the ending was not the best, but I can devour every line that the Author decided to end the novel!

I highly recommend this to every perso as Kindness is Contagious and this book needs to be spread all over the world to each of us! I can say that this book is my favourite of this genre and it will haunt me forever In my life! Whatever you read, put this book in your to be read list!!!

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### **Gehaenna says**

It was a nice read, I like Bourne's writing style very much. But something didn't click with me and the book. If your mental illness is linked to an excessive amount of empathy or if you're easily triggered by description of depression or mania, think twice if you're in the right mindset to read the book.

I enjoyed reading it though, and I think this is a good book if you don't know much about mental illnesses

and what it's like to have them.

Spoilers from here on :)

I didn't like some of the characters; I mean, the cool guy who plays in a band, smokes too much weed and sleeps with all of the girls and then the shy virgin maths boy? A little bit stereotypical. And Sophie didn't have any character traits aside from her mental illness.

I reeeally hated Jamie. First because he is such a stereotype, and because I don't like the band-cool-guy-type anyway. Also because of the scene where he jokes that he is a sex addict and makes a lot of comments about it to Hannah; the entire scene comes off as a pretty bad crossing of boundaries and harassment, and it's just taken as a joke, which I think is not okay.

I did love how well Olive's thoughts were described. In fact I got pretty fucked up and a little manic myself when I read the parts where she's in hypomania, thx brain.

The part with the kindness virus was pretty ridiculous to me, to be honest. I thought the idea itself was not well thought out by itself, plus I doubt people in that situation are so easily convinced to take time from their free therapy that normally is incredibly expensive and that a bunch of teens wouldn't use social media for that kind of project, which would have a far wider reach.

Still, I enjoyed reading it, and I think this is a good book if you don't know much about mental illnesses and what it's like to have them.

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### **Abbie (boneseasonofglass) says**

Absolutely brilliant

Holly is amazing at writing young people / teens and also portrays mental health in young people in such a real and honest way and it's just so important

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### **Emer says**

Minor thematic spoilers...

It took me practically two weeks to read this book and once I got to the end I felt utterly underwhelmed and entirely unsatisfied by what I had read. The ending was abrupt AF and yes, obviously I get the whole mental health issues are a journey and can't be cured by one camp or a moment of self-realisation. But woaah did that ending feel hollow to me.

I didn't feel that all the other patients of Camp Reset (aka supporting characters) were written in a detailed enough manner and therefore I felt their mental health issues were really poorly described. This was probably because I really really REALLY hated the narrative structure of this book. It was told from Olive's PoV and honestly, it felt incredibly basic by the end with a constant stream of sentences starting with "I did this, I did that. I feel this, I feel that" etc etc. Such lackadaisical writing IMO.

So yeah... I feel short-changed by this book. To me it lacked humour and Olive felt too distant from me as a

reader. I found it incredibly hard to empathise with her which I think is a big issue with a book such as this. Because surely being able to relate to or empathise with the MC is important in a book about spreading kindness and learning to accept ourselves warts and all???

And yup. The message of spreading kindness is a nice one but I just found the execution of that storyline to be far too saccharine for my tastes. So much so that it ultimately felt entirely far fetched to me!!! And surely kindness to yourself and others shouldn't be a far fetched notion!!!!

I just don't know about this book. Well intentioned yes... But poorly executed. I am not a fan.

A few hours later.....

So I've even been wondering over night why I went with a two star rating because the more and more I reflect on the book the more annoyed I get! Like yes, early on in the read I somewhat enjoyed it but then I abandoned the book for like 9 days or something after I got to the set up of the prime numbers group. It just felt utterly stupid to me. And that's down to Holly Bourne's rubbish writing in this. I really feel that this is not plotted as well as any of her other books I've read (spinster series and happens in the movies) and that she focused so much on developing this manic side to Olive's character that she forgot to develop some other aspects to her personality. Like for a book that was all about challenging the concept of labels and being defined by a diagnosis it's ridiculous because ultimately that's the only thing that we know about Olive in this book. And typically in Holly Bourne fashion she ignored the development of the side characters.

ONE STAR IT IS!!! ???

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### **Abantika(hiltonjenkin) says**

“Do you think I’m crazy?” I ask him, with only my face poking out.

He winces and grabs his white dressing gown off the floor, shrugging himself into it. “In order to think you’re crazy, I’d have to understand what sanity actually meant.”

*Are We All Lemmings and Snowflakes?* by Holly Bourne is a gripping contemporary YA novel dealing with the issue of mental health. It revolves around Olive and more people of her age who suffers from mental illness and their shot at ‘normality’ at Camp Reset.

The writing is hilarious and witty and Bourne, totally aces the incredibly touchy topic of mental health. The content is incredibly honest and never even for a moment gets pretentious or preachy. She seem to totally GET IT!

EACH character with their flawed actions, reactions and outbursts seemed absolutely real. Holly Bourne does not sugar coat the recovery process or makes it magical. She keeps it frank and that is what makes this book stand out to me. The character growth of not only Olive’s but of the supporting characters like Lewis, Sophie, Hanna and Jamie was commendable.

Bourne, challenges the default concept of normality. And thinks out loud, how maybe it’s not us but the world that needs to change. That maybe mental illness is an obvious reaction or an outcome to this insane

maddening world! Maybe now, for once it needs to be kind and understanding stop putting labels on people. I specifically loved the message that you need to practice KINDNESS not only on other people but sometimes, the person you need to be most kind to is YOURSELF.

Despite of the heaviness this topic it was an easy read throughout.

Why not a 5 star?

It seemed to drag out a bit near to the end.

P.S. : Atticus is definitely over rated. LOL ?

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## **Farhina ?? The Wanderer Of Inked Adventures says**

**"#KindnessIsContagious"**

As Holly Bourne books go, that i have read, this was as always fun, realistic and sassy to read. This book is mainly about mental illness and it shines a bright shiny light on that topic and doesn't shy away from discussing all the bads.

This book is about Olive, a teenager who has a hard time coping in this world..... "Being normal". Her doctor suggest a solution in terms of Camp Reset, a place where she might have a chance of finding normality.

Olive was kinda an unreliable main character because of her illness she has pretty erratic behavior through out the story. But i managed to related to her struggle so many times; her self hate and bad thoughts....

I'm sketching all over the pages now. Elizabeth's fading to background as I let self hatred truly engulf me.

I ruin everything.

Because i'm a bad person.

While struggling with the world and herself, Olive still had such a sassy personality it made me laugh and say oh yeah i can relate to this and that.

"Maybe its a good sigh? Ill condemn my madness to Room 101 for ever."

Mum looks sad for a moment. "Oh, Olive, you're not mad. You're just....."

"Happiness challenged"

"no..."

"Coming down with a touch of insanity?"

"No..."

"Mentally high maintenance"

She laughs at that one. "Just open the door already"

Lol this alpaca moment is one of my favorite throughout the story.

There is this huge theme of kindness running throughout the story. Like its the main big thing/message of the whole book and to be honest i am obsessed with that!

While at camp Olive notices her surroundings a lot and her fellow "campers". The conclusion she reaches is that maybe its the world that needs fixing and not them. That its the world that something is wrong with. They reach this conclusion:

"Kindness," Sophie says. "The world needs more kindness"

And they go on to full out testing this hypothesis around them. But they also reach another conclusion that in order for it to work they would also have to test out "self kindness" first.

"And what about kindness towards yourself?" she says to him. "How much quicker would we recover if we were compassionate towards ourselves? If we forgave ourselves? If we gave ourselves a bit of slack?"

This book is just so full of beautiful thoughts and words and things, And the message that kindness is so

important is so so beautiful and so wonderfully portrayed through out.

" And i was thinking that true compassion is more than just 'trying to be nice to people'. I reckon most people try to be nice anyway' or at at least think they're nice but something is still obviously going wrong." She steps forward and the sun hits her pale face, making her shine almost translucently. "I think real kindness, real compassion, is having the strength to stop and see where another person is coming from. To try and work out why they're being the way they're being. It takes time and patience. It not as easy, but that's real kindness"

It just so much more than a book, it kinda gives out to you a much better, healthier and a positive way of living with people around you and even yourself.

I think this book is such a powerful and a must read because it portrays such a powerful and heartfelt message that could really change the world some day.

" Together snowflakes can form avalanches"

I love how this book doesn't end on a happily ever after note but it so much more realistic and humanistic. Because yeah life doesn't get easier or gets solved in a swoop of a wand to be honest.

"Please be kinder to yourself. Life is hard enough, and recovery is hard enough, without you beating yourself up for being you"

Overall, this was a wonderful, relate able read. I would urge you to pick it up for just the message alone please!

*Thankyou so much usborne ya for this arc*

**All quotes are from an arc they might be subjected to change in the finished copy :)**

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