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Flipped

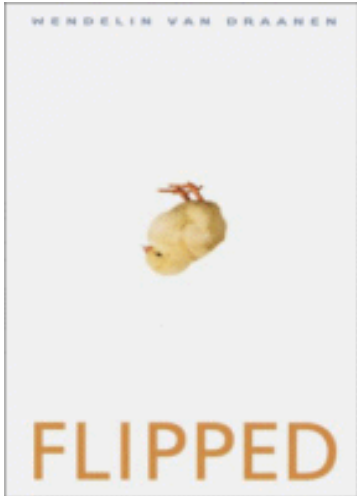
by Wendelin VanDraanen

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Summary



Juli Baker is the new girl across the street. The moment she sees Bruce, she goes over and says hi and then she considers him her best friend. Then from that point on, she tries to make him her boy friend, and she tries to get him to kiss her. She is very happy she moved in. The problem is that Bruce does not want to be her boyfriend or kiss her. He was doing just fine before she moved in. He would be ok if she said hi every once in a while, but she was following him around and it was getting annoying. Then, when he tries to get rid of her, his mom notices he is not playing with her anymore and so she invites Juli's family for dinner. It did not turn out very well. Bruce's family was planning on having a formal dinner, but the Bakers came in tee shirts. Then the Bakers acted very

crudely. It was a disaster, but Juli didn't realize and felt that Bruce's family had accepted her. Now how will he get her to leave him alone?

Source: http://www.allreaders.com/topics/info_34242.asp

In alternating chapters, Bryce and Juli tell the story of their relationship, beginning in second grade when Bryce moves in across the street from Juli. Juli instantly develops a crush on Bryce, who does not reciprocate, and throughout elementary school he tries to avoid her persistent and unwelcome attentions.

In middle school, however, they both begin to notice Bryce's substantial character flaws. Just as Bryce begins to try to change, and to notice Juli's good points, her ardor starts to cool. Meanwhile their families, and their perceptions of their world, also undergo dramatic changes.

This deceptively simple novel about first crushes is a lot like real life -- sometimes too much so. There is hardly a character, major or minor, adult or child, who is really likable, though a few, such as Bryce and his grandfather, drift toward likability by the end. They all mess up, usually repeatedly, and mostly through selfishness and lack of understanding and compassion, just like real people. And most of them change -- and change again.

The alternating narrator device in *Flipped* adds another realistic layer to this multilayered book. Bryce and Juli describe the same events from their points of view, and they do so with surprising honesty. The differences in their versions come not from trying to hide the truth or justify their own behavior, but from genuinely seeing things differently. They both behave badly, Bryce especially, but they're both able to face that and to attempt the always difficult process of conscious change.

Source:

<http://www.commonsemmedia.org/book-reviews/Flipped.html/details#whats-the-story>



About the Author



Books have always been a part of Wendelin Van Draanen's life. Her mother taught her to read at an early age, and she has fond memories of story time with her father, when she and her brothers would cuddle up around him and listen to him read stories.

Growing up, Van Draanen was a tomboy who loved to be outside chasing down adventure. She did not decide that she wanted to be an author until she was an adult. When she tried her hand at writing a screenplay about a family tragedy, she found the process quite cathartic and from that experience, turned to writing novels for adults. She soon stumbled upon the joys of writing for children.

Feedback from her readers is Van Draanen's greatest reward for writing. "One girl came up to me and told me I changed her life. It doesn't get any better than that," she said. Van Draanen hopes to leave her readers with a sense that they have the ability to steer their own destiny—that individuality is a strength, and that where there's a will, there's most certainly a way.

Her books presently appear on eleven State Award Master Lists, including California, where *Sammy Keyes and the Sisters of Mercy* is a contender for the 2002 California Young Reader Medal. Wendelin won the 1999 Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Children's Mystery, and was nominated again this year. Her books are being published in seven foreign languages to date. Wendelin lives in California with her husband and two young sons. Her hobbies include the "Three R's": Reading, Running and Rock 'n' Roll.

Source: <http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/v/wendelin-van-draanen/>



Book Review

Wendelin Van Draanen is the author of the *Sammy Keyes* series, but if you are looking for a funny mystery, *Flipped* is not the book for you. This book is something totally different. *Flipped* does just what the title says; the story is told from two alternating viewpoints: the boy and the girl. It begins when they are 7 years old and ends when they are 13. And boy do they have a lot to learn about relationships and love! Juli learns that to-die-for blue eyes are not the best reason in the world to fall in love. Bryce learns that people who live in houses with dumpy yards might be cool people.

Bryce's first concern with Juli is definitely not her house. It's Juli herself. The girl won't leave him alone! She runs over while his family is still moving in, climbs into the moving van, and absolutely takes over. It's downhill all the way from there. Bryce runs through most of the book, sometimes literally, just to stay away from her.

And of course, Juli sees all this from an entirely different perspective. The guy needs help in life; she's more than happy to give it to him. Besides, his eyes make her feel weak all over. Sometimes, she just sits in her driveway and stares at his house, wondering why he won't come out.

Kids aren't the only ones in this book who have things to learn, either. So do parents. There's an eye-opener! And if you read it, you'll come to see things differently, yourself. Like, should you be honest or should you be polite? And what do appearances have to do with reality?

You'll want to read this book to find out what happens when everything flips and Bryce stops running from Juli and she starts running from him. Is there something more to Juli than a dumpy yard? Is Bryce nothing but a gorgeous pair of blue eyes? Are these two made for each other, or should they avoid each other like the plague?

--- Reviewed by Tamara Penny

Source: <http://www.kidsreads.com/reviews/0375811745.asp>



Discussion Questions

Warning! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. Bryce's grandfather says about Juli, "Some of us get dipped in flat, some in satin, some in gloss.... But every once in a while you find someone who's iridescent, and when you do, nothing will ever compare." What makes Juli iridescent?
2. Why do Bryce and Juli's feelings for each other flip? Has your opinion about someone ever flipped?
3. Would you prefer to live in Bryce's family or Juli's family? Why?
4. When Juli and her dad talk about Bryce, her dad tells her to "start looking at the whole landscape." What do you think he means? Does Juli see the whole landscape?
5. Bryce keeps throwing out Juli's eggs because he doesn't want to tell her the Loskis don't want them. Do you think this was the right thing to do? What would you have done?
6. Juli tries hard to save the old sycamore tree because she loves it so much. Is there anything you would fight to save like Juli does?
7. Why has Juli not visited her Uncle David before?
8. Juli's brothers Matt and Mike say that they don't like "the whole robotron attitude of education. Confine, confute, conform." What do they mean? Is your school like theirs?
9. Did you like it better when Bryce or Juli told the story? How did hearing from both points of view make you understand what was happening?
10. If the book continued, what do you think would happen to Bryce and Juli?

Source : <http://www.multcolib.org/talk/guides-flipped.html>



Author Interview

Award-winning children's author Wendelin Van Draanen has always given her all to everything she does. For years, she was a high school computer science teacher in central California, where she taught computer programming. She also coordinated the yearbook and managed the school newspaper. She is also a wife and a mother of two boys. She recently retired from teaching to write full-time.

Although she loved teaching, she always knew that she wanted to be a writer. Determined to get in some writing time, she would rise every morning at 5 a.m. and write for as much time as she could before she left for school. For ten years, she honed her craft and endured rejections for her work, which were adult novels. But her hard work and discipline paid off. One day she decided to change her viewpoint, and to write with the voice of a 12 year-old. The result was *How I Survived Being a Girl*, which was a critical and commercial success.

Wendelin's latest book is *Flipped*, a funny and touching tale which tells the same story from the points of view of two pre-teens: Juli Baker and Bryce Loski. **Library Journal** says of *Flipped*, "Well-rounded secondary characters keep subplots rolling in this funny, fast-paced, egg-celent winner." *Publisher's Weekly* calls the book "enticing" and says, "With a charismatic leading lady kids will flip over, a compelling dynamic between the two narrators and a resonant ending (including a clever double entendre on the title), this novel is a great deal larger than the sum of its parts."

When she's not writing or spending time with her family, you might find Wendelin going for a jog with her Siberian husky, singing in a rock band, or curling up with a good book. She spoke to us about her road to being a published author, her latest book, and how she created her popular character, Sammy Keyes.

What did you like to read when you were growing up?

I know this will come as a big surprise but...mysteries! I loved the suspense and the adventure, and solving the puzzle. I also liked books that helped me understand something in a funny way. Humor's key!

When you were a pre-teen, did you do any writing? Did you already know that you wanted to be a writer then?

I kept a diary for a little while, but having two brothers, well, that was a dangerous thing to do! I didn't really discover the joys of writing until I was an adult. I loved to read, but I was too outdoorsy to spend much time writing.

What are some of your fondest memories of your childhood?

The mischief my brothers and I got into, just exploring our expanding boundaries. Specifically? Spying. Playing in gutters full of rainwater. Dodgeball. Camping. Backpacking. Getting lost in the middle of nowhere because my parents wanted to drive down some non-existent road. Swimming at the community pool in the summer. Selling Girl Scout cookies. My 12th birthday, where my mom put a necklace inside an empty margarine tub, put it upside down on my birthday cake, and frosted the whole thing.

How did you first get interested in computers and programming?

My parents were both chemists, so math and science were a big part of our educational foundation. And the first time I caught onto what programming was about, I became hooked. It's like writing and solving your own complex puzzle. People find it curious that I have a background in programming and also write novels, but I think programming has actually helped me "compile" the various aspects of story structure. Especially in the execution of a complex mystery.

How has the technological revolution affected the learning experience for children? What effects do you believe this will have on our society in the future?

I think technology enables children to gather information more quickly. There's nothing like the library and books when researching, but the Internet is also a valuable tool. I use both when researching for a novel, and I know kids do the same when doing school assignments. Technology can also be used as a tool for cultural understanding. I'm big on the idea of e-pals, where kids from one country write to kids from another. There are drawbacks to this technological age, of course, but I think it's best to embrace the positive aspects of it.

What did you love most about teaching?

The kids. Teachers don't teach for the pay or the prestige. They do it for the kids.

What led up to the publication of your first book?

A happy accident. I'd been writing novels aimed at the adult market for about ten years, without publishing success. Then I tried writing a story in the voice of a 12 year old. It was so much fun! And although I'd been writing diligently for 10 years, I'd also held down a full time job, gotten married and had two kids. So I didn't have time to network with people in the publishing world or other writers. I just wrote. So I didn't even know there was such a thing as "finding your voice", and I

didn't realize that this "coming of age" story I'd penned (*How I Survived Being a Girl*) was a kid's book. I thought it was a book that adults would read and enjoy, thinking back on their own growing years. The manuscript made it through the slush pile at Harper Collins and was ultimately published by their children's department.

How did the Sammy Keyes series come about?

After discovering the joys of writing for kids, I started thinking about all the books I'd liked when I was a kid. And being a teacher, I realized that kids today were still reading some of those books. But looking them over in a contemporary light, I also realized that the characters didn't hold the relevance for kids today as they had for me. So I started thinking it would be cool if there was a character who was more like the kids in my classroom, who faced some of the same issues kids today face. And once I started *Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief*, I couldn't stop. I became so smitten by Sammy that I wanted to follow her and find out what she was going to get into next. So by the time *Hotel Thief* was done, I already had ideas for *Sammy Keyes and the Skeleton Man*. When *Skeleton Man* was done, I started right away on *Sammy Keyes and the Sisters of Mercy*. No contract, no promise, nothing. I just wrote for the charge I got, following Sammy through her expanding world. And the short story is: I wrote the first four Sammy Keyes books before *How I Survived Being a Girl* was actually a book (it took a long time!). Then, when my editor moved from Harper Collins to Knopf, she bought all four books at once, plus an option for more.

How much of Wendelin Van Draanen is there in Sammy Keyes?

Not as much as people who meet me now might think. I was very shy and uncertain at thirteen. Very awkward. Sammy's more the friend I wish I'd had in junior high.

I'd like to talk about your new release, *Flipped*. What was your inspiration for this story?

I think most people learn how to "look beneath the surface" too late in life. I know I did. And thankfully, I figured things out before I made irreversible mistakes. But still, looking back on it, it took too long. I had tremendous crushes on people for their appearance, which is an all too common occurrence. I wish I'd had a book like *Flipped* around when I was growing up. I think it would have helped me develop an ability to see people for who they are, rather than what they look like.

The story is told with alternating viewpoints between the two lead characters, Juli and Bryce. What went into your decision to tell the story in this style?

The truth is I thought it would be interesting to write a companion volume for *How I Survived Being a Girl*, titled *How I Survived Being a Boy*. HarperCollins wasn't interested, but I kept coming back to the idea. You know, two sides to every story.

And originally I envisioned *Flipped* to be a book that physically had two sides--one for the girl, one for the boy -- where you would flip the book over to read the other side of the story. In the end, though, there was a definite order in which I wanted the chapters read and so (after months of back-and-forthing with my editor) we decided that alternating chapters was the best way to present the story. You would be amazed at how many different renditions of chapter order/book style we discussed!

***Flipped* has such realistic dialogue; you've really captured the style and tone of the preteen set. How did you develop your skills with dialogue over the years? Do you consider yourself a keen observer of details?**

I do like to watch people, and I do like to play around with different voices. I used to subject my students to them, just to make the classroom experience more fun. Now my poor kids have to listen to me. But I think what has helped me most, is my experience in the classroom.

The book works on several levels: it's an entertaining and funny story, but it also touches on some important themes, such as mental disability, character and how we judge others. Do you think in themes when you begin to write, or do they simply evolve as you tell the story?

I definitely think in themes first. I always have something I'm wanting to say to the reader, but I try to present it in a non-lecturing way because I hated "message books" when I was a kid. I'd rather write a story kids can get engrossed in and think about afterwards, than come across like I'm preaching.

Your books display a great sense of humor. How important is humor to you in your life?

It's vital. My family went through some really devastating times, and I've come to know humor as the arm that helps you cross to a better place.

I'd like to talk about the day to day details of writing. How do you approach a new book? Do you use outlines? How much of the plot do you know before you start writing?

I'm not big on outlines. I find outlining too much takes the punch out of the process. I definitely know where I'm going, but I don't always know how I'll get there. The organic writing process is a lot of fun, but I do have to be anchored by theme and outcome before I begin. Usually I'll write the first three chapters, then break to do some serious research, then come back and write to the mid-point. Then I'll talk things over with my husband, who's terrific at brainstorming, rewrite what I've got, then move forward. I rewrite as I go more than I used to, and I find it's saving me a lot of major "surgery" when I've finished the rough draft.

What is your advice to aspiring writers?

Write! Don't sit around talking about it, write!

As a mother, are you concerned about the amount of sexual content and violence that is appearing in video games, television and films? Who should be responsible for regulating what the children watch?

Of course none of us want our children to be exposed to that sort of product, but I don't sit up nights worrying about it because I monitor my children's entertainment. They don't have a television in their room, they must ask permission to watch TV (and I'm fully aware of the programs they tune into), they may not use the computer or Internet without permission, and then, too, I monitor their activity. We watch videos and movies together, and if a PG-13 film has something that I deem inappropriate in it, we'll discuss it. My husband and I feel that it's our responsibility to be on top of these things.

How do you manage to juggle your family life and your writing career? What are your secrets?

Don't watch TV! Well, we do, but we have our favorite show, and try to limit ourselves to that (and the news). When I was teaching full time, raising two babies, and dreaming of being published some day, I'd get up every morning at 5:00 a.m., write for an hour, then go about my day. At the end of a year, I had myself a Sammy Keyes novel. Now that I'm a full time writer/mom, life's not as tightly choreographed, but I still keep myself on a pretty tight leash because there are other things -- like school activities and sports for my kids and writer-related tasks that I didn't have before -- that take up a lot of time.

The one thing I've learned from juggling so many activities is that you can do more than you might think in thirty minutes or an hour. Don't waste it zoned out in front of the TV.

Source: www.writerswrite.com/journal/dec01/vandraanen.htm



Further Reading

If you liked *FLIPPED* by Wendelin Van Draanen you might like to read the following books, too!

- THE PRINCESS DIARIES*** by Meg Cabot
SEEDFOLKS by Paul Fleishman
REGARDING THE FOUNTAIN: A TALE, IN LETTERS, OF LIARS AND LEAKS by Kate Klise
THE WANDERER by Sharon Creech
Sharon Creech
AMONG FRIENDS by Caroline Cooney
STAYING FAT FOR SARAH BYRNES by Chris Crutcher
THE WELL-WISHERS by Edward Eager
THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE by Isabelle Holland
A HOUSE LIKE A LOTUS by Madeleine L'Engle
BETSY IN SPITE OF HERSELF by Maud Hart Lovelace
SOMEWHERE IN THE DARKNESS by Walter Dean Myers
DON'T LOOK IT WON'T HURT by Richard Peck
THE BOY WHO LOST HIS FACE by Louis Sachar