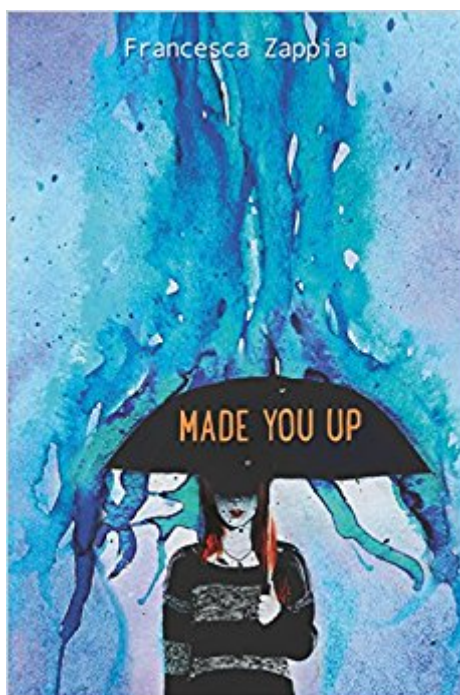


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Made You Up



Synopsis

Reality, it turns out, is often not what you perceive it to be. Sometimes, there really is someone out to get you. For fans of *Silver Linings Playbook* and *Liar*, this thought-provoking debut tells the story of Alex, a high school senior and the ultimate unreliable narrator unable to tell the difference between real life and delusion. Alex fights a daily battle to figure out what is real and what is not. Armed with a take-no-prisoners attitude, her camera, a Magic 8 Ball, and her only ally (her little sister), Alex wages a war against her schizophrenia, determined to stay sane long enough to get into college. She's pretty optimistic about her chances until she runs into Miles. Didn't she imagine him? Before she knows it, Alex is making friends, going to parties, falling in love, and experiencing all the usual rites of passage for teenagers. But Alex is used to being crazy. She's not prepared for normal. Can she trust herself? Can we trust her?

Book Information

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> Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Emotions & Feelings

Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up Alex is starting her senior year at a new high school, making a clean start after an incident at her previous school. She just wants to keep her grades up and perform her mandatory community service so she can get into college. But Alex knows she'll have a hard time achieving these goals, since she has paranoid schizophrenia. She keeps her illness to herself, hoping that between her doctor, her medication, and her own homegrown coping strategies, no one else need ever know. But on her first day at her new school, she meets a boy who looks exactly like someone

she hallucinated on the day her illness first manifested 10 years earlier. And although Miles is not entirely friendly, he may be the only person who understands her. This is a wonderfully complicated book. Adolescence can be absurd, breathless, and frantic on its own. Combine it with mental illness, and things get out of control very quickly. Zappia sets a fast pace that she maintains throughout. Readers will be kept on their toes with quick-witted dialogue, pop culture references, and some odd but accurate word choices, as well as plot twists and big reveals (which may inspire some to reread and see where hints were dropped). While Alex may be unreliable, she is sympathetic from the start. Miles, however, is somehow more complicated than Alex and will almost certainly make readers question their responses to him. VERDICT Zappia tackles some big issues in her debut, creating a messy, hopeful, even joyful book. —Geri Diorio, Ridgefield Library, CT --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

“Debut novelist Zappia presents readers with a wholly unreliable narrator, [but] the characters all seem authentic, thanks to Zappia’s careful attention to detail.” (Booklist) “Alex is a funny, touching, determined, and smart character, and her story is complex and interesting. Fans of E. Lockhart’s *We Were Liars* and Matthew Quick’s *Silver Linings Playbook* will immerse themselves in this nuanced look at trying to live a “normal” life while coping with mental illness.” (Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)) “The storytelling texture here recalls Andrew Smith and Sean Beaudoin | There are moments of genuine tragedy redeemed by the acceptance Miles and Alex find in each other amidst all of their imperfections; if love doesn’t conquer all, it certainly makes the battles easier to bear. Readers will enjoy this quirky trip.” (Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books) “Alex’s sardonic voice and the rapid, *Heathers*-like dialogue will hold readers’ interest.” (Publishers Weekly)

This book is so incredible and beautifully written. Zappia seriously impressed me with her ability to create these lovely and realistic characters. The main character Alex suffers from paranoia and schizophrenia so she never knows what’s real and what isn’t. She takes pictures of the things around her so she can figure out whether or not she’s hallucinating or not. The writing couldn’t have been any better, the way the story slowly but surely progressed was unique and well done. If you haven’t read this book yet, you should definitely have it on your list. Alex is an unreliable narrator and I absolutely loved that. Yes, it took a little bit to get used to the fact that you’re never 100% sure if what Alex sees is really there, but I thought that made it all the more exciting to discover. This book

is far from predictable, though I did see a few things coming. However, I was still surprised by some of the things and it was much more suspenseful than I was expecting. Both Alex and Miles aren't lovable in the beginning. Miles will surely rub you the wrong way in the beginning, you don't know why he's being so cold towards everyone, including Alex. Midway through though, we learn more about his story and at that point, you'll fall in love with him. I liked that there was no case of insta-love here, this was a very very slow building romance and that's exactly how I like it!! I'm a sucker for flawed characters and this is exactly what we find in "Made You Up." I felt like the dialogue between Miles and Alex was so hilarious and relatable. They are both witty teens, but it never felt like TOO much to me. This was a highly gorgeous book that's bound to stay with me for a long time. I highly recommend it to anyone who loves reading unique YA contemporary books.

WOW! I just this moment finished Made You Up and I am a big, overly stuffed, box of beautifully tangential emotions. I really enjoyed this book. The writing was beautiful, the characters are so rich and so complex that you can't help but love/detest/cheer for/insanely wish for the demise of the respective ones as prescribed by the author. The heroine Alex is beautifully broken yet whole in ways that matter most. Yes, she has trouble discerning if what she is experiencing at any given moment is real or if people she is interacting with on such intimate levels are even truly there but her ability to trust/keep trying/sympathize with/befriend is remarkably innocent and pure...she is definitely someone that you would feel lucky to have in your corner, to call your friend. Miles and Tucker are both incredibly easy to fall in love with. They both display a rarely given, beautiful loyalty as well as an amazing capability to accept what could easily be seen as an insurmountable personal flaw....and The Club?? I wanted in!! Alex's parents are loving yet humanly flawed in their own life weary ways. The tempo of the book is quick enough to not force you to skim yet slow enough to explain (as best they could for a book with a MC not firmly rooted in Reality) so that each charming detail may be savored. I truly enjoyed getting lost in its pages all the way up until the end. The ending?!? What an unsatisfying, copout of a closing to a really lovely book. How pray tell should it have ended? I am not fully sure...I only know that it felt disjointed, as if it did not really mesh with the book as a whole. This might have been the idea since schizophrenia is undoubtedly a disjointed experience. It does sound a bit convoluted but all I know for sure is that this was a great distraction from my Reality and that's what I look for in a good book!

I start 2017 with a review of a book that's been on my Kindle for a few months. Because I have a Goodreads account, I get periodic notifications when there are special deals on

the books on my to-read list. When I got that notification, I immediately snagged myself a digital copy. I've wanted to check this book out ever since I learned of it. A YA contemporary about a girl trying to navigate senior year at a new high school and dealing with schizophrenia? What's not to be intrigued about there? I could use a story with a good unreliable narrator, so here we go. Narrator Alex starts the story ten years earlier, with an adorable anecdote about wanting to set lobsters free from a supermarket tank. I smirked, thinking about many times my daughters said hello to the lobsters at such tanks. While there, she encounters a little boy with big blue eyes, but he disappears. Since the way Alex tells the story versus how her mother recalls it is very different, we're left to question what is real. And that's the way Alex lives her life. She had to leave a school after her junior year for without giving away too much detail defacing school property to express her paranoia. The present-day part of the story takes place at the start of her senior year at another school. Due to her outsider status and her naturally ketchup red hair, she's already an outcast as soon as she arrives. Or maybe that's her own paranoia; she does "perimeter checks" to make sure there aren't any shady characters out to get her, and she takes photos of people to verify later whether they were really there or not. Because of the incident at her previous school, she's required to perform community service, which takes the form of an after-school athletic support club, who is responsible for setting up the gym and/or fields for school sports practices and games. This group is led by valedictorian-to-be Miles Richter, who has quite the imposing reputation in school somewhat for his intelligence but more so for the mafia-like "jobs" he gets paid to do by students on other students. The plot of the book occurs over the full span of senior year, and it contains with the usual things you'd expect to find in a high school. There's a big, buff, bully guy. He's dating the attractive popular girl that other boys lust for. There's also a bitchy cheerleader not living up to her mother's standards. There's a battle academically, socially, and romantically (as two corners in a well-drawn love triangle kind of thing) between the top two kids in the class. Some of it's predictable, but most of it isn't. It was definitely enjoyable, but nothing really wowed me. And then there's the school principal's bizarre obsession with the gymnasium scoreboard, but I'll save that for you to experience. I don't know if this book correctly portrays people with schizophrenia.

I'm not a mental health specialist, and I only know what I know on the topic based on my own research and/or learning from other sources. Someone more versed on the subject or experiencing the affliction will have a better handle on the accuracy, kind of the same way I read books and watch TV shows and movies set in high schools that don't portray teachers correctly. Or the way my father used to gripe at shows set in Boston about not being able to get from one location to another that quickly. I'm digressing. I can only judge Alex's schizophrenia within the confines of the story. At times it felt like a real facet of a real character, but at other times, it felt more like a plot device. The titular thing/person that Alex made up didn't come as much of a surprise to me as I think the author intended. Some of the others that were revealed were better hidden. But in those cases, it was more exciting to watch Alex discovering what was/wasn't real than it was. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed Alex as a narrator - she's smart, sarcastic, sensitive, stubborn, and seriously wanting to do the right thing. The supporting cast is quirky and charming, and what I took most from this book isn't a lesson about schizophrenia, but a lesson in human nature. We're all battling with something (most of the characters in this book are), and we need to understand that about people when interacting with them. And if we truly care about those people, we need to support them. Made You Up is an enjoyable read with a protagonist that's worth supporting because she deals with her affliction with caution and bravery. I'm not making it up when I say it deserves FOUR STARS.

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