

Lovereadng Reader reviews of The Amber Fury by Natalie Haynes

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereadng members.

Clair Chaytors

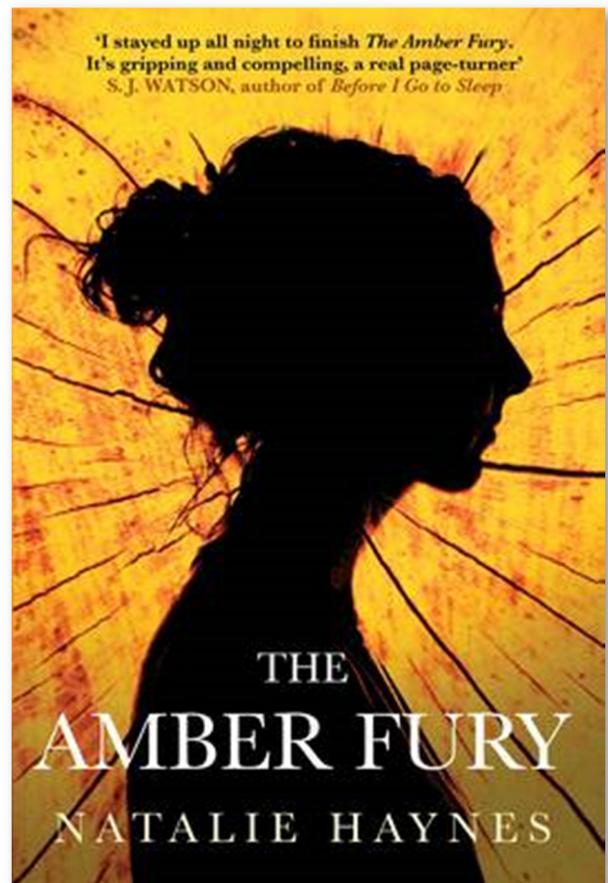
An absolutely amazing story with an ending you will not foresee...

I picked up this book and once I got started I simply had to finish it in one day! Wow, what an amazing read. We meet Alex at quite a surreal time of her life. She has lost her fiancé Luke in tragic circumstances and is now being questioned regarding another tragic incident which only begins to unravel as we progress through the story.

Alex is trying her best to approach a small group of pupils who haven't had the best start in life. Trouble is it's hard to tell who is struggling the most, the adults or the teenagers... I was surprised to find myself bonding with Alex's group. Natalie has shown the other side to the typically labelled 'naughty child' and her sensitive way of handling the subject really opened my eyes and made me question just how easily it is for any child to end up in this predicament through no fault of their own, and just how quick many of us are to judge the younger generations behaviour.

I warmed instantly towards Alex as she was a likeable but worthy character who gave the teenagers back a bit of self-respect and I loved Robert for his complete refusal to give up on the kids whom society no longer had time for.

Natalie's writing style is simple but effective and the story drags you in and refuses to let you go. I sincerely hope she has plans for more novels...



Sarah White

I wanted to cancel everything just to keep reading this book.

Alex's fiancée has died in awful circumstances and she goes to work in Edinburgh to try to cope. She works in a pupil referral unit in Edinburgh, teaching the pupils drama therapy. Using Greek tragedies she starts to find sparks of interest and potential in the teenagers.

However, we know from the first page, that something has gone terribly wrong in Edinburgh. Gradually, as the book develops, we find out more about what happened to Alex's fiancée, as well as the daily lessons in the classroom and what happens subsequently in Edinburgh.

I loved this from the outset. Some of the descriptions of grief and loss in particular are so well done. I really did want to cancel everything so that I could just keep reading this book and find out what happens to everyone.

Anita Wallas

Greek Tragedy with a 21st century twist in a compelling tale of obsession, loss and retribution.

A powerful tale which explores timeless themes and a stunning debut for Natalie Hayes. I loved it! I was intrigued and engaged with the plot, characters and location right from the start. It's an inventive and compelling story, a fresh and modern take on the paradigm of fate versus free will.

A complex mix of characters provide a framework. A group of troubled teens and their interaction with a teacher trying to escape from and come to terms with loss and grief. Revenge features strongly with disastrous consequence. Ms. Hayes strength is her ability to use emotional intelligence to lead and control the plot without the underlying themes becoming overwhelming.

The narrative structure of 'The Amber Fury' mainly follows the conventions of Greek Tragedy and Ms Hayes has executed this to perfection. There's a prologue to introduce the background, the story then unfolds over a number of 'Acts'. Diary entries provide a commentary on events and there's a real sense of climax and shift in pace as the tale moves towards conclusion and is rounded off with an epilogue.

This is a cracking book which works extremely well at a number of different levels. It's a compelling psychological page turner; disaster is looming, but the reader is kept guessing as to the what, where and when. It's a thought

provoking read which explores human nature; the base human condition and conflict. It's a fascinating exploration of the way in which the main themes of Classic Tragedy remain relevant more than 2000 years later in a modern setting. And for me, at least, it's whetted my appetite to read some of the classic plays brought vividly to life and woven so well into the fabric of the story.

Lynda De Freitas

A great debut novel.

This novel had me fascinated from the start. The story unfolds gradually and like a jigsaw the reader has to put the pieces in place until the whole picture emerges.

I liked the way the Greek Tragedies were used to first engage with the troubled teenagers and secondly how the storyline followed the ethos embedded in those tragedies to its bitter end.

This book was full of mystery, obsession, loss, anger and guilt and kept me enthralled from start to finish.

I am looking forward to reading more novels from Natalie Haynes.

Nikki Whitmore

A very modern tragedy.

In trying to cut herself off from her old life and the suffering she has been through, Alex Morris finds herself instead wrapped up in the problems and tensions of a group of troubled teenagers. Using Greek plays, Alex tries to build up a relationship with them but it soon becomes clear that they may have begun to identify a little too closely with the tragedies of old.

*This is an incredibly tense story. You know something terrible has happened and you know something terrible is going to happen and all you can do is keep following the trail of breadcrumbs expertly dropped by Haynes until the story reaches its climax. ***I found myself hurrying to get through the pages - I was desperate to know what was going on. At the end, I was thwarted, I thought I'd worked out the twist - I was wrong!****

You can follow Nikki's blog at: <http://whitterswitters.wordpress.com/>

or on twitter at: @njwhitters

Rebecca Whymark

A suspense filled page turner from start to end.

'The Amber Fury' was not a book I would have chosen to read normally. The greek tragedies were interwoven very well into the story. The way the story unfolded and everything was revealed was very clever. You can really see the thinking behind each characters feelings and actions and I feel you can identify with each of them in some way.

Liz Lyons

Cancel all meetings and engagements. Natalie Haynes creates a brilliant read drawing the reader into the lives of five troubled teenagers, their first insight into Greek tragedies and the gripping entanglement into Alex's own troubled past.

Natalie Haynes very quickly draws the reader into the lives of five troubled teenagers as Alex Morris is hired to teach them at a Pupil Referral Unit in Edinburgh. Battling with her own recent traumatic events Alex seeks to teach the teenagers Greek Tragedies and very soon starts to break down the barriers. Their first insight into Greek Tragedies, however, starts to overlap into Alex's own life - and where the classroom ends the real story begins!

As the story unfolds, told both through Alex and a series of diary entries of one pupil, the reader is led gradually into a feeling of unease as the Greek Tragedies of the past merge into the present day, culminating in a terrifying climax.

A truly compelling read and a must for fans of Donna Tartt's Secret History.

Cyllene Griffiths

This is such a promising first novel for this young writer. The overall subject is interesting and involving, the underlying theme of Greek tragedies intelligent and absorbing. I only feel it is a shame that we know that the twist at the end is coming and it becomes increasingly obvious what form it will take, from the hints in the text. A little more subterfuge may have made this an absolute best seller.

However, I would thoroughly recommend this novel. I was unsure the subject matter would be to my taste but ***it is beautifully written and well-paced, resulting in a page turner delivering pathos and anticipation***

– a really good psychological thriller.

Alex has had a difficult time with the death of her fiancée. A new job offer and a move to Edinburgh to escape the continuous depression takes her away from the theatre direction role that she loves. Even the challenges of the Pupil Referral Unit cannot completely distract from her dark mood and her choice of teaching material reflects this with her oldest and most troubled group of pupils. As she gains confidence in her dramatherapy lessons she believes she is making a difference to these uneasy young people but it transpires that she may be educating them in life lessons that they may not be ready to learn.

The settings are well described and the atmospheres of London and Edinburgh well formed. The characters are rounded and interesting, a lengthier novel might have delved a little more deeply into their motivations and backgrounds but I think this would have spoilt the pace of the story. Nevertheless it is never bad to be left wanting more!

Sara McLaughlin

An enjoyable book dealing with tragedy, healing and how just when you think things are starting to go well for you – there can still be unforeseen troubles up ahead. A dark tale, very well told.

‘The Amber Fury’ is a story about Alex, someone who is trying to put her life back together after a terrible tragedy – only to find herself at the centre of another. Despite the darkness of the tale, I found this a very enjoyable book.

I liked the way that the book has been written in a contemporary setting but with a nod to the style of the Greek tragedies that Alex uses to teach her unruly class of troubled youngsters. I actually felt as though I was learning something too during these scenes.

The characters are well represented and I immediately felt drawn to Alex (in the lead role) in particular. Even the minor characters in the book are used to create scenes of great sadness or humour - little snippets of realism that gives the story an authentic feel.

There are some parts of the story which pull together a little too conveniently, but this doesn’t detract from the overall novel being a really good read and I’d look forward to reading a second novel from Natalie Haynes.

Margaret Madden

Alex is making a break from her past and takes a job teaching troubled teens. Reading the Greek Tragedies seems to hold their interest, but when her past is discovered, things take a nasty turn.

Alex Morris has escaped to Edinburgh in order to forget her past. She finds herself helping a group of troubled teens who, for varied reasons, have been kicked out of mainstream schools. Through her teaching of Greek Tragedies and her interest in these forgotten children, she inspires them to look at life from a different perspective. When her past seeps into her present, things get out of control and Alex is oblivious to it all. Has the madness of the Greek Plays, with all their murder, mayhem and bizarre twists, inspired the class to change for the better or worse? And why does she now need a lawyer?

This debut novel is a high grade, stunningly written drama that will have you turning pages at great speed. Natalie has managed to link the infamous Greek Tragedies into everyday life, often without the reader being aware of it. The characters are strong and the descriptions of Edinburgh are fantastic. I could almost feel the dampness of the ground and feel the atmosphere as Alex walked familiar routes through the town.

The writing in this novel is beautiful. It almost glides off the page and reads like the work of an established author, with many awards under their belt. Outstanding debut which would make a great movie!

You can follow Margaret's blog at: <http://BleachHouseLibrary.Blogspot.ie>

Tess Olson

Wow! The storyline reels you in slowly until nothing else matters more than getting to the end of the book. Very satisfying read.

Get the chores done, grab a drink and then settle down to read this book cover to cover. From the start there is a feeling of 'I know there is more' and the reader is teased into continuing on that quest to find out what 'more' is. In some ways it is a familiar story, ill-placed adoration makes a person do something bad for the person they admire. The teenagers' characters were a little bit off the peg, but subtle enough for me to be drawn into being interested in them. The story did become a bit of a who-dunnit, however what I really liked is that even though I started to guess what might happen, I still had the satisfaction of being somewhat surprised at the end. The book had different strands which were interesting in their own right - Greek tragedies, loss and revenge, ill placed

loyalties, social background, kindness, raw pain, all bundled up with 'what would you do for love'. However oddly enough, in spite of the dark subject matter, the book gave a suggestion of 'happy ever after'. I really enjoyed it, thank you!

Jocelyn Garvey

A book of love and loss. Can exploration of Greek tragedy unlock hidden emotions?

We meet Alex when she has left London for a new job in Edinburgh at a Pupil Referral Unit.

We know that she has lost her fiancée in dreadful circumstances but quite how unfolds during the book.

She has done a post graduate in course in dramatherapy and intends to use drama to engage the difficult pupils at the unit.

She has one difficult class of teenagers and uses the Greek tragedies to try to get through to them.

The black and whiteness and cruelty of the tragedies help them to express their feelings and open up to her. However she doesn't realise that she has stirred up their interest in her as well.

We know from various pieces in the book that something terrible has happened concerning them all and by then the book has completely grabbed you.

You have to keep reading to find out what and how.

As everything is revealed slowly we realise that the tragedies and their lives echo each other.

This is not all gloom and doom, it does have lighter moments but Love and Loss are the main themes.

Good writing, it engages you from the start and keeps you reading.

A good book.

Kath Martin

This is an exceptionally well-written first novel. I found it dark, moody, and terribly sad. *The settings are mainly grey, misty, cold, wet, dark, dingy - even the classroom is in a mouldy basement. The shock of sudden*

death, bereavement and grief are handled really well. There is a sense of foreboding throughout and it is just a case of waiting for the inevitable tragedy. I would have preferred a little more 'light' in the 'shade'. It is not the book to read if you need a bit of a lift.

Rachel Bridgeman

This is an amazing book, as a debut it comes across as self-assured with a very definite author voice. *The story reveals itself slowly and is one of those 'Have to finish it/don't want it to end!' novels.*

'The Amber Fury' reminds me very much of 'The Secret History' by Donna Tartt. It's the style of writing as well as the content, wherein a heartbroken Alex Morris, a drama teacher whose fiancé has died in slowly revealed circumstances, leaves her home behind and takes up a new position in Scotland, courtesy of a teacher friend and tried to rebuild her life. She is given a 'Last Chance Saloon' of 5 pupils and uses ancient classical plays to try and connect with them in a marvelously realised basement classroom where you can almost smell the mould. Atmospheric, engaging and marvelous.