

LoveReading Reader reviews of The Bees by Laline Paull

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

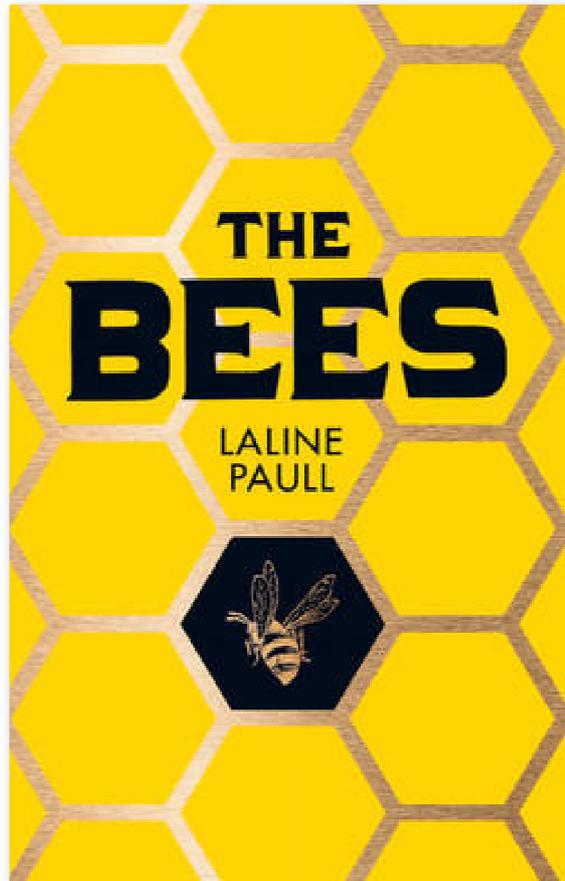
Sophia Ufton

***Brilliantly gripping,
unputdownable. Loved the book
so much.***

*Flora 717, is a new honey bee that dares to dream, from the life she is living. Beautifully heartbreaking. **The story will capture your heart forever. You certainly won't want to miss this book. Read it!***

Carolyn Huckfield

*I know nothing about bees but after reading this story I just had to read up on them. The story does mirror what happens in hives and how they develop but it is much more than a natural history. The heroine is a strange bee - the other bees don't know what to do with her. She can communicate with senior bees and is very strong and dark. She rises above her station and falls again. **The life she leads and the story of the hive over one year paints an exciting and frightening picture.** The wasps and spiders are their enemies and the drones were my favourite bee characters. Laline Paull paints a wonderful picture of all the characters. I was initially left wondering if this an ecological allegory but I think it is just an unusual natural tale, combining human emotions within the bees and creating one bee, Flora 717, who dares to break rules but still remains fiercely loyal to her kin. **I'd recommend it to anyone who likes an unusual take on the world around us.***



Phyllis Avery - www.stalbansenglishtutor.moonfruit.com

*Interestingly different, 'The Bees' offers an insight to the world of bees offering an anthropomorphic narrative allowing the reader to empathise with the heroic Flora 717. **This story had pace, action and emotion and was refreshingly lacking in vampires, angels or demons. The depth of research was impressive, allowing the story to unfold in a number of intriguing ways.** The structure was also well thought out, bringing the story of Flora 717 into context and grounding the novel in the real world in which insects and man co-exist to the benefit and detriment of each other in equal measure. All in all, this was an enjoyable read, offering something refreshingly different.*

Katy Noyes

You've never been inside a hive before, have you? Read this unique debut and you might feel you've visited one, where bees live by the motto "accept, obey, serve". The question is - can Flora?

The Hive motto is "accept obey serve". Each bee has a role to play in the hive, and Paull plays with this idea to create a world set at the insect-eye level.

Flora 717 is born to be a worker. She emerges from her egg with this knowledge. But Flora immediately shows herself to be unique - able to talk unlike the other workers, she is moved to areas of the Hive a worker would not otherwise have access to. And thus we are also granted access to the workings of the Hive. However, the Hive is nesting a secret, one which threatens to destroy Flora's swarm.

I adored the bee's point-of-view writing. I don't think you have to be a fan of natural history to enjoy this, but I finished and immediately went online to look at how much of the book is based on real bee behaviour. Set over the course of a year in the life of one hive. Flora (rather conveniently, but usefully for the book) is moved around the Hive in various roles, meeting higher-up Priestesses (bees who serve the Queen directly), the Queen herself and (in the book's few comedic scenes) the male drones.

I loved the drones. When we meet the males, it's like the opening scene of Romeo and Juliet with male posturing and sexual innuendo. One drone repeatedly crosses paths with Flora, and through Linden we also get to learn about the males' role in Hive life.

I liked the way Paull used religious fervour, like 1984's devotion to Big Brother,

as a form of control and unity between the bees. They worship their mother, she is the centre of their world. And that's also the crux of the story.

I loved reading about Flora's world. Loved the idea, loved playwright Paull's writing and plot. A unique and hard-to-put down story.

Phylippa Smithson

'Accept, Obey, Serve' – 3 words on the cover of a book which reveals nothing of the plot but boy did I want to read it and find out what it was all about. And what rewards awaited me.

The basic plot can be summarised as 'Watership Down' for bees. We follow the day-to-day lives of bees who are inhabiting a hive and in particular, Flora. Flora is a worker bee responsible for cleaning out vacated cells in advance of them being re-inhabited.

As with all walks of life, there is a caste system of which Flora is at the lowest rank. Unusually, however, she has the power of speech and is a strong, fearless and committed member of the hive. Whilst this attracts negative responses from many bees higher up the chain (jealousy the main reason), Flora gets the attention of the Queen Bee and survives many of her ordeals as a result.

The Bees is a simple of story which is equally applicable to the human world and this is no more demonstrated by the introduction of wasps who challenge the stability of life in the hive. The threat of the male of the species is one of the many areas that allows Flora to show her bravery and allows the reader to truly care about what befalls.

Having read the book, I am honestly surprised as to how absorbed I have been in a book about bees. Laline Paull has a winner with this one me thinks.

Linda Rollins

A clever and insightful story about a bee named Flora and her short but extremely eventful life. Flora's adventures will inspire courage and hope, and a greater respect for bees.

A clever and imaginative approach to fiction, this is like Bee Movie for adults. Flora is a bee, a bee born to serve in the lowliest and most humble of roles. But flora is different, she has special talents. As she hatches unceremoniously from her cell her story almost ends there in one terrifying moment, but she is rescued

just in time by the seemingly kind actions of a higher-ranked bee.

Having started off at a pace the story doesn't slow down. There's always something happening, sometimes joyful, often frightening. Relationships and personalities in and around the hive reflect those of humans but are mashed up with bee and insect behaviour to make a fascinating, exciting and insightful tale of drama, desires, rivalries and comradeship.

Imagine you are on holiday in a foreign land – many things are strange and new, but there is an element of familiarity. Every moment of every day you are led on daring adventures. You experience every possible emotion from fear, terror and suspense to pure bliss and then, finally, you arrive exhausted and disheveled back at home, somewhat bleary eyed but completely satisfied – that is what it felt like to read this story.

Jane Macleod

*The Bees is set in the complex and fascinating world of the beehive where structure, order and class are finely tuned to ensure the sustainability of the hive. From the opening pages the reader is drawn in to the world of bees and the balance nature must have to survive. Flora 717 is destined to be different, born a lowly sanitation worker her duty is to keep the comb clean, however, much to Floras surprise she goes beyond her class, learning more about the different levels of class within the hive. She is torn between the greater good of the hive and her own needs and wants. **This book will enlighten anyone who reads it, a really captivating story of a society previously unknown to man.** The reader sympathises immediately with Flora and how so much of Floras life has been pre-determined before she has even lived it.*

Melanie Chadwick

Flora is a young cleaner growing up in a caste-based society who wants more out of life and dares to dream big, and even gets to meet the queen and spend time with her ladies in waiting. She thinks outside of the confines of her conditioning and dares to venture into unknown sectors of her society. She makes some great friends such as Lily 500 who passes down all the knowledge she has gained in her lifetime of service to Flora. Humour is supplied by the male characters especially the pompous, self-important and incredibly vain Sir Poplar who expects any female to be swooning and fawning in his presence. It's a fascinating book based entirely on the lifecycle of the bee and the structure of

*the beehive. **Once you've read it you'll not look at a honey bee in the same way again. Engrossing and highly original, a brilliant idea, executed very well.***

Gill Williams

You'll never look at honey or a bee in the same way again.

***'The Bees' is an intriguing book of genuine imagination which gives us an all too believable insight into the strictly regimented world of the hive.** The obligation to Accept, Obey and Serve being central to the order and discipline necessary for survival.*

We follow the story of Flora 717, born into the lowest order in the hive, sanitation workers, whose only role in life is to clean up the messes of their betters, dispose of the bodies of dead hive mates and generally do exactly what they are told without thought or question. Through her bravery and intelligence she raises herself to experience all aspects of hive life and what aspects there are and what complexities. It's a sort of what Flora did next!

It's a well written book with a clear narrative style and the reader is drawn on through the story to the shocking climax at the end.

It's not perfect, there are some minor irritations re plot and some loose ends that didn't quite make sense. Maybe that's just me though and I would recommend reading this book.

Charlotte Connolly

The Bees follows the life of Flora who is born into the lowest ranking group of the hive, where our story is set, and her struggle to be more than the role she was born into.

I chose to read this book as I love Dystopian fiction and it sounded interesting and the kind of book I would pick up myself if I was choosing a book.

I did enjoy reading 'The Bees' but there was one or two things that made the experience less than perfect for me.

The first was I found the bees in the book one dimensional and quite hard to relate to at times as there were so many different bees in the story and at times I had to reread parts to distinguish between the characters and they did not leave a strong enough impression on me. The second thing I found a bit confusing was the lack of description of the way the hive works and when the Bees were doing

certain things I found it hard to imagine what was going on.

Overall I was really interested in the story and kept picking up the book to find out what happened to Flora but I did find it a strange book to read, unlike any book I've read before, and I would recommend trying a few chapters to see if it is a book for you before buying because of this.

Edel Waugh - www.edelwaugh.blogspot.ie/

Bee Astonished! Wow this was imaginative!!! Meet Flora, a modest bee and the hive that she was born into.

This dystopian world where everyone is segregated into different sections and the queen bee rules all was such fun to read. There is not a lot of giggles in this book but there sure is a detailed life of a hive and you can almost forget that it is bees and not humans you are reading about. The author clearly put a lot of time and love into this book as the characters and their world really came alive for me and it made me take a better look at the Bees outside my own home.

*The story which was often brutal showed the bees for the hard workers that they are and the work that they do each day was fascinating. **I found this enlightening and inspired, I recommend to all!***

Frida Spanberger

The story is told through the eyes of Flora 717. She is born to the lowest of kins within the hierarchy of the hive where the bees work endlessly in Sanitation and their sole purpose is to clean and obey but Flora is different. Whilst bees that at all differ from their kin are normally instantly killed Flora gets taken to a different section of the hive by one of the Sage Priestesses and from here her remarkable journey begins. Starting as a nurse feeding the infants in the nursery, then becoming a forager and through bravery in battle she gets an audience with the Queen. Flora gains an insight into the inner workings of the hive community which proves vital when she discovers that life has more to offer.

A truly fascinating and original read. I loved all the details about bees and how a hive works but at the same time I kept forgetting that the story wasn't about people.

It is very well written with vivid descriptions and strong characters.