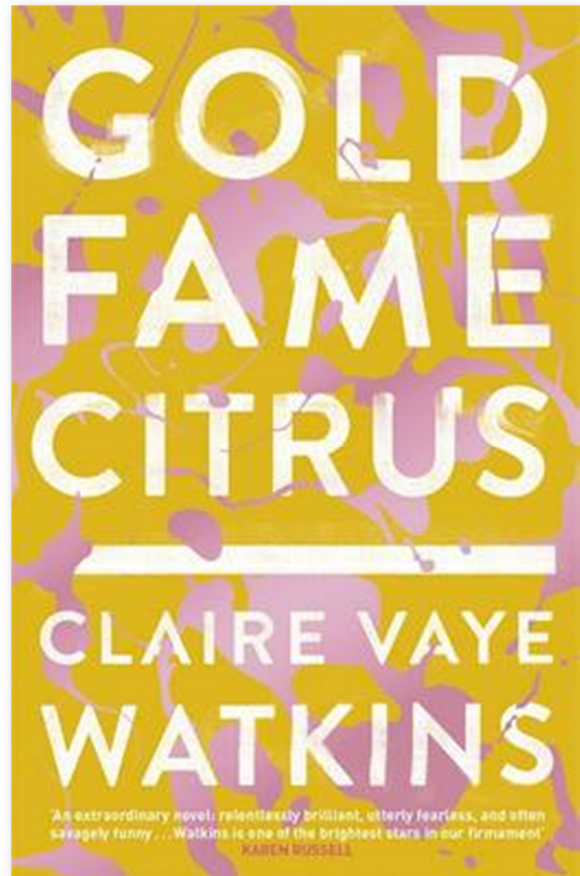


## LoveReading Reader reviews of Gold Face Citrus by Claire Vaye Watkins

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

### Victoria Halliday

*'Gold Fame Citrus', by Claire Vaye Watkins, is a **lyrically-written dystopian novel about life in California after all the water has run out.** Focusing on a couple, Luz and Ray, the novel explores their life in an abandoned - opulent - mansion in Los Angeles and then, after "adopting" a little girl, their attempts to give her a better life. The novel is beautifully written and the world it creates both beautiful and frightening. When they go in search of a better life - and water - the novel moves from a work of dystopian fiction into an exploration of life within a cult, adding an extra dimension to an already interesting story. **Highly recommended,** particularly for those who are interested in dystopian/post-apocalyptic fiction - and also anyone who loves beautiful writing.*



### Vikki Patis

*I am a huge fan of dystopian fiction. **There's something deliciously awful about society disintegrating and humankind having to fight for survival.** I probably love it because I know I'd be one of the first to die, if the water ran out or most of the women died or we developed a resistance to antibiotics, so I'd never have to deal with it. It's why we love series like 'The Walking Dead' and 'The Hunger Games'; we, the people, love watching people suffer. But we also love the tidbits of hope and love found in these stories.*

*'Gold, Fame, Citrus' is a perfect example of a dystopian setting, with suffering and hope and horror and love in equal measure. The south-west of America has*

*been transformed into a desert, buried by sand and desertion. Water is restricted, as is escape. But Luz and Ray don't want to escape. They live amongst the chaos and despair, bringing their own with them, until Ig finds her way to them, and they steal away with her.*

*They soon, of course, run into trouble, and while Ray goes to find help, Luz and Ig are found by Levi and his band of believers. It's said he can find water, and Luz soon falls headfirst into his life. But Levi is a mirage, and carries a hidden danger for Luz and Ig.*

*Luz is the despair; Ray is the desert; Ig is the hope. The characters are fleshed out and brought fully to life. You find things to like and things to hate; if you aren't a fan of children, Ig frustrates you, and you sympathise with Luz. If you've ever been scared enough to make the wrong decision, you understand Ray's battle. And if you've ever had blind faith become clear enough to turn into doubt, you've come to the right place. Welcome to the desert.*

### **Keith Currie**

***This novel blazes with a dangerously brilliant intensity, a polemic on man-made ecological disaster, which happens to be beautifully and inventively written.***

*The western states of the USA are being swallowed up by desert because of the draining of the aquifers. Most of the population has been evacuated to the east, but some remain in the seaboard cities - the derelicts, the dispossessed and the outcasts of society. Among these, holed up in a starlet's mansion are Luz and her lover Ray. When they abduct a small child whom they call Ig, they decide to leave the desert lands and make a future in the fertile east.*

*It is not until Luz, Ray and Ig drive out of LA in an attempt to cross the desert into Utah that the central, dominating entity first appears, the enormous Amorgosa dune-sea, which is relentlessly swallowing up the south western states. At its edge exists a small settlement, a cult by any other name, moving with the dune sea, led by the charismatic water finder, Levi.*

*This is not Mad Max, but Watkins has some quiet amusement with the conventions of the genre. In its frenetic, graphic and violent description it is in stark contrast to Emily St John Mandel's Station Eleven, with that novel's cool and stately narrative.*

*I thought long and hard about my reaction to this book. Many will not find in it what they might expect. Some will be upset by the content. Yet, this is an important novel, which does not shirk its serious theme. It is genuinely frightening as a result.*

## Mary Gibson

*'Gold Fame Citrus' by Claire Vaye Watkins is a drama set in the near future. Great swathes of the American southwest have been drought ridden for a generation. Luz, a young Anglo-Hispanic woman, once the poster child for conservation, travels through the desert with her boyfriend Ray, an armed forces deserter. They survive on government rations and anything else they can scavenge on their dusty quest for a way out. On their journey they acquire a small child, Ig, and steal her away from a drug addled group of nomads. Their vehicle breaks down and the small family is separated when Ray goes in search of fuel and water. Luz and Ig are rescued by a strange colony of people living on the edge of a massive dune sea. The people are led by the charismatic and mysterious Levi, a scientist who has secrets and a hidden agenda.*

*This novel is **a dystopian drama that echoes some of the great American writers - Margaret Atwood, Marge Piercy, Cormac McCarthy.** I found it a difficult and disturbing read, could not find empathy with the lead characters but the author redeems herself with some beautiful and insightful prose.*

## Sarah Musk

***A haunting, strange book about a part of America which has turned to desert and the people who cling on to a world which is gradually slipping away into the sand.***

*I found this a strange, sometimes difficult book to read. Claire Vaye Watkins writes quite sparsely and often with brevity. The story is a good one but a lack of explanations make it very frustrating in parts.*

*The story hops backwards and forwards with some insights into their lives before but the writing does not enable the reader to get to grips with the personalities of the people in the book. The result of this is that you don't feel much empathy with Ray, Luz, Dallas because you don't really know who they are - there is no defining picture of them.*

*In parts the story is interesting and colourful but then the pace slackens and it drifts along with no purpose. I suppose it is reflecting the lives and attitudes of the survivors still living in the desert. The child, Ig, who they take seems odd and you can't decide whether it is because she has had an unconventional start to her life or if she is a child with new developed skills which makes her in tune with her desert surroundings. Sometimes the narrative lapses into strange monologues which again are difficult to understand.*

*This dystopian book probably needs to be studied a few times to understand its hidden depths. I feel I might need to re-read it sometime in order to appreciate the messages the author intended to convey.*

### **Tanya Thurling**

*This for me was one of those books that leaves you not too sure how you feel about it. **I honestly thought I was going to love this book, but I struggled to get through it and I must admit that even though I stuck it out and read until the end, it's left me feeling a bit confused.** There are quite a lot of unanswered questions for me and I'm not sure if it was explained or if I just didn't get it. Since reading the book I've had a look at other reviews and it seems to me this is one of those books that you either 'get' and love it, or like me, you just simply don't understand it.*

*Basically you have Luz and Ray living in California, which for whatever reason is parched and they have no water supply. I truly don't know how or why this happened and this one of the things I wasn't sure if I missed or if it just wasn't explained. For me if the story is centered around something I'd like to know why or how and maybe that's why I didn't get on with the story. Who knows?*

*They set out on a journey to find a man who can find water but not before they come across baby Ig and rescue her. And things pretty much go downhill from there for them. There's a fair bit of action and drama, there's just a lot that lefts unsaid.*

*I wouldn't go as far as to say don't read this book. There were lots of parts of the story that did grab my attention. As I've said it seems to have mixed reviews with plenty saying they loved it. Give it a try. It might be for you.*

### **Alex Hetherington**

*'Gold Fame Citrus' paints a future vision of post-apocalyptic America, when all the water has run out leaving a drought and those who remain are left to suffer. It has had so much acclaim throughout the literary world and yet I became lost in its pure fixation on intricate detail. These elements add an interesting amount of complexity to the story but the way it moves around between characters, documents and places just didn't correlate and as a reader I just became frustrated.*

***The writing is very eloquent and at times the individual harrowing moments of what lies around them works,** but then the context and characters that go with that just leave you awash with detail and its complexity just adds to the confusion, making it an uncomfortable and almost impossible read. I found the book was at its best when it was focused on its relationships with the main characters. The relationship between a mother and baby*

throughout this turmoil shined through the novel and is what kept me going with it. Luz and baby Ig have a good relationship but when you add in the extra surrounding characters that becomes lost again and left me confused not only at the actions but with the whole direction of the book in general. There were only a handful of interesting moments in a dystopian world which ultimately had me feeling lost right to the end.

<http://boylestalkaboutbooks281.blogspot.co.uk/2015/12/gold-fame-citrus-by-claire-vaye-watkins.html>

### **Julie Bertschin**

***A strange and mystical voyage through the people left behind the desert sand dunes. Luz and Ray are nomads who journey together through the deserted west coast of America in search of hope.***

Luz and Ray are not likeable characters, they appear self-absorbed and vacuous, yet the reader is somehow drawn to feel empathy for their sorry lives. This is a dark story, there is little hope for the people of the American west once the sand dune has trapped them in the desert. Luz becomes more likeable when her mothering instinct kicks in, and they decide to take the lost toddler, yet her needs become selfish once more once Ray has gone. I cannot say I enjoyed this novel, yet it was strangely engaging, even though at times it was hard to follow and read like a stream of consciousness. Fans of dystopian stories may well enjoy it.

### **Edel Waugh**

This story is set in an alternative present day and begins in a luxurious home where we begin to meet the main characters Luz and Ray. They begin a journey in search of water and answers through much changed America. Sand and dry barren areas surround them and there is a real sense of isolation and a feeling of worlds end while reading this. Their journey seems hopeless but they come across a toddler called Ig who they take care of and bring with them so the three of them become the most unlikely travel companions. ***There was a real dream like quality about the story, but it was easy to imagine a world where it could alter so much,*** that humanity would have to alter its way of breeding so the human race could continue and there would be new leaders and life would be forever changed. Definitely an intriguing book for all dystopian book lovers.

[http://edelwaugh.blogspot.ie/2015/12/gold-fame-citrus-by-claire-vaye-watkins\\_27.html?m=1](http://edelwaugh.blogspot.ie/2015/12/gold-fame-citrus-by-claire-vaye-watkins_27.html?m=1)

**Ian Tyreman**

***Interesting concept for a novel but just didn't grip me.***

*Really wanted to fall in love with this book having read the description and the other reviews. However really struggled to get into the book. Maybe it was the style of writing or dialogue but unfortunately it was just not for me.*

**Angie Rhodes**

*'Mad Max' meets 'The Road', The world has changed and deserts are now where cities once were, Las Vegas the vibrant city that everyone had dreams about is now buried, gone. Now there is just sand, sand and people fighting for water, the one thing we all took for granted. In California the people who are there are now stranded. There is no escape. Luz and Ray survive by any means they can, rationed water, fruit from the black market, and of course they have each other.*

*They are happy until they find wild undernourished two year old Ig, Ig steals their hearts. On the night of the rain dance they steal her and now they have to escape.*

***This is so well written, you can taste the sand grains and feel the heat and panic, as they look for a way out of the nightmare.***

