Lovereading Reader reviews of The Good Girl by Fiona Neill

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereading members.

Josie Barton –
www.jaffareadstoo.blogspot.co.uk/

Secrets and lies form the basis for this very modern family saga which exposes the risky business of sharing information online.

The Smiths have recently relocated to rural Norfolk, where Ailsa is the newly appointed headmistress of the local secondary school. Her husband, Harry has agreed to conduct his neuroscience research from home, which, whilst commendable, doesn’t quite sit well within the family dynamics. For their three children, Luke, Romy and Ben, a new school and new friendships bring their own set of challenges. Their neighbours, the Fairports have a more relaxed attitude to family life, which adds a rather interesting element to the story. However, when a devastating scandal emerges, life for both families will never be the same again.

In many ways this is a modern coming of age story which shows that the risks to young people are coming from a very different direction. The focus on the perils of naïve cyber-promiscuity, when, with just one click of a button a reprehensible video can rampage through cyber space, acts as a salutary warning. The dynamics of modern family life is well explored; the relationships between husband and wife, parent and child and sibling versus sibling is well thought out and it becomes fascinating to watch the whole thing unravel, strand by strand. Scattered throughout the novel, like pearls of wisdom, are snippets of
neuroscience about what makes the brain function as it does, explanations which are quite fascinating and which add an extra dimension to the story.

At times quite poignant and other times quite shocking, 'The Good Girl' commands your attention from the beginning and shows both the vulnerability and the overwhelming strength of family life.

Cat Hogwood

Family life can be complicated and love can force you to do something that can change your life.

This book was easy to read and I didn't want to put it down in parts. It follows a family after a recent move to the countryside. It soon appears that there is more than meets the eye to their neighbours but also to Romys parents relationship.

There are many things addressed in this book - Young love and how you'll do anything to help the person you care about, relationships between siblings and how hard it can be as a parent to always try to do the right thing.

Ailsa is a headteacher at the school where Romy attends. From Ailsas point of view you see how her relationship with her family alters as she comes to terms with what's happening to her family. Simultaneously she is trying to take care of her widowed father and it’s a constant battle to keep the family together in hard times.

The characters in this book danced from the pages as they felt so real and down to earth. Situations are explained that could happen within a family and it therefore keeps its realism. As Harry is a scientist there is a nice scientific basis to many conversations which adds interest for the reader.

I enjoyed this book and felt the aspects it touches on are important ones for adult and teenagers.

Sandra Rabiasz

“The message you think you are sending might not be the message that other people receive”.

To put the problems of the past year behind them Ailsa and Harry move their family - Luke, Romy and Ben - from London to Norfolk, but new secrets escalate, old ones resurface and everything starts to unravel with frightening speed - and just one click of the send button. A compelling cautionary tale of how easy it is to make mistakes and how impossible it can be to
escape them.

Maggie Patterson – www.bookgasms.tumblr.com

Full of well developed characters and interesting plot twists.

‘The Good Girl’ by Fiona Neill tells the story of a teenage girl with a leaked sex tape and her family. Point of view alternates between the girl, Romy, and her mother Ailsa, who has secrets of her own that eventually come to light.

This book is full of well developed characters and interesting plot twists. I did not see a lot of them coming, which was refreshing because there were several moments of genuine shock for me. Even though, presumably, most people reading this book will have some idea of the negative consequences of trusting the wrong person with something personal or sensitive, the characters were so well written that I found myself understanding Romy as she makes terrible decisions.

In the first part of the book I thought that some of the characters’ thoughts, in first or in third person, were over explained. As the reader becomes more familiar with the characters and the various twists and turns of the plot, this eases off. At the end I would have actually liked a little more, because so much of the book leads up to the sex tape’s release and the backlash against Romy, Ailsa, and the rest of their family is so severe that I really wanted to see more of what they were going through.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book and would highly recommend it.

Jane Pepler

How well do you really know your children? Is the internet damaging our children's generation? How much can we really protect our children in the digital age?

This is the story of the Smith family, who move from London to Norfolk, escaping one scandal, only to become involved in something much worse, which affects the whole family and has far reaching consequences.

Matt Harvey, head of Biology at the local school, confiscates a phone from a pupil that has an explosive sex tape downloaded on to it. What follows is the story of the family of the girl involved in the tape, and why the girl decided to make the film that has such dire consequences for herself and her family.

This book had great potential as a family drama about the very current issues
of addiction, pornography and sexting. I initially found the narrative over detailed and found myself flicking through the information about neuroscience, which whilst interesting, was not necessary to the plot. This stopped happening so much about a third of the way through the book. I enjoyed the way the book was told through the different perspectives of characters Romy and Ailsa.

I have read the author's other books – ‘The Secret Life of a Slummy Mummy’ and ‘What the Nanny Saw’, and whilst I enjoyed this book, I do not think it lives up to Fiona Neill’s previous works.

Suzanne Marsh - www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com

I think in a way this is what Fiona Neill is simply saying in her new book ‘The Good Girl’ is that sex tapes can go viral with one click and that shatters the whole family’s life.

‘The Good Girl’ is released in March I highly recommend this book and if I was you I would order your copy now. I am so thrilled with Fiona Neill's writing that I now must read every book that Fiona has had published.

We often read in the newspapers that famous stars that have made sex tapes with their partner get leaked on to the big wide net and with coverage of the sex tape in the newspaper. It is often the fact that when the famous girlfriend or wife made the sex tape with her boyfriend or husband, when they split up the ex for spite will upload the sex tape onto the web for all to see just to upset their ex girl friend or wife, which sadly effects the ex girlfriend or the ex wife's privacy.

‘In The Good Girl’ Matt Harvey, the new head of Biology, confiscated a mobile phone from a pupil as he is watching a seventeen-year-old school girl kissing a boy with the girl fumbling for the boy's zip. They end up making an indecent sex tape that has gone viral, it is everywhere on porn sites and social media. Why did they both make this sexual video together? Could it just be the fact that this is only childish innocent with the very adult scene taking place centre stage? But the most important question everyone is asking is who is it that is responsible for sending the indecent video everywhere? Lots of kids at the school are downloading it onto their phones, and sent it to other schools in other parts of the country.

There are lots of secrets hidden in every corner with two families that are slowly torn apart by what has happened and with the parents own secrets.
Caroline Mathews – www.mrsmsmeanderings.wordpress.com

There was a good family drama somewhere inside this novel, and the storyline had great potential.

Sadly, however, unless you have more than a passing interest in neuroscience and the workings of the brain, you will find yourself skipping chunks of this book, as I did.

I did like the characterisation, and although I didn’t like one of the central characters, Ailsa, at all, I felt that she was well written and realistic.

I preferred the chapters written from Romy's point of view, and felt that the author got inside the head of a teenager very realistically and believably.

Megan Abbott

An enlightening and compelling novel.

‘The Good Girl’ by Fiona Neill is an enlightening novel about a family that moves to rural Norfolk, to escape the pressures of London. It starts with the mother finding out about her daughter's sex tape and then goes back to when the Fairports move next door.

I really enjoyed this book as it showed the consequences of what teenagers put online, and how it effects all the people around them. It was also nice for the book to be told from two perspectives: the mother and the daughter. From these two perspectives you can see the different reactions to the same situation, and how it effects each of them. As I am a teenager it was good to have a glimpse into a parents view; to understand what they go through. I would definitely recommend this to other teenagers so they can see the consequences as well.

Dana Captainino

The Smiths move from London to Norfolk makes sense - Ailsa has a new job and she can keep an eye on her dad. But there’s rather more to it than that. Family members are all hiding behind a necklace of sexual secrets that hold major implications for the all of them.
Next door are the Fairports a 'new age' family whose lives become more interlinked as do the hoary arguments of science and facts versus free spirit and creativity. ‘The Good Girl’ explores the grim reality and challenges of increasingly sophisticated technology and social media and the sometime devastating effect this is having on the previously understood ring of growing up and relationships and the inequalities faced by women and men. The logical, scientific, controlled Smith family is slowly torn apart as the beads start falling off and the devastating secrets compound. However, it is from the least likely source the final blow is delivered.

This is a well-written novel which tackles serious issues in an engaging way. Ultimately it's a good read that makes you think...

**Jennifer Moville**

Ailsa and her family move house - trying to hope it will pick up the pieces of a breaking family. There is quiet and calm for a short spell until new neighbours move in. The Fairports are a little different in their ways - the mum and dad are sex therapists and they believe in youngsters growing up and experiencing things for themselves with little parental control. Consequently their son Jay seems to be addicted to porn - you can just tell things are going to change for the Smith family from then on. The Smiths pry and snoop watching as the Fairports move in and, well, see some things they definitely shouldn't!

Ailsa Smith is busy trying to keep her family in line, always suspecting her husband has had an affair, keeping her kids in line and also coming to terms with her grief after the death of her mother whilst looking after her elderly dad who seems to find drink an answer.

Needless to say Romy Smith and Jay Fairport have an attraction to each other which leads them to try and learn about their sexuality but because Jay things he has a problem Romy thinks she can help. A sex tape is made...and soon becomes viral...every one at school knows about it and then her parents are shown it - you can guess a showdown ensues with Jay's parents taking a lesser stand against what the teenagers have done.

This book is more than a classic family with a few problems trying to patch themselves up - their problems seem to reach a different level than most ...read it and I bet it will make your family seem more normal!

**Alison Greenacre**
A very interesting look at the modern family life.

I really enjoyed this book. Frightening in parts, lots of interesting facts about the brain, but most of all study in modern family life. Addiction, affairs, even disability is covered. I should mention, is it more the story that leads to "the incident", than the story of the aftermath. That was dealt with a bit quickly in my opinion, but perhaps because I was so invested in the characters by then. Definitely worth a read though.

Rachel Hall

For a novel which in the early stages offered so much promise and had the potential to make a real statement, I felt this book ultimately fell short of the mark. Initially gripping, the reader is thrown headlong into the story as a seventeen year old student, Romy Field, is called to her headmistresses office after the discovery of a sexually compromising video on a mobile phone of a fellow student. The fact that the headmistress of the school is also the girls mother, Ailsa, and this video has now gone viral on the Internet serves to heighten the tension and ensured that this was a novel I wanted to see through to the conclusion.

I was hoping for an exploration of the consequences on the Field family and the fallout which followed, but in my opinion the novel spent too long dealing with the build up to these events and a scant amount of time examining how their lives continued after this bombshell discovery. The reader covers almost 400 pages before this comes to the fore and for me this was disappointing. However, this is not so say that the build up in itself is not a compelling storyline, which has triggered the recent relocation of the family to Norfolk and serves to expose some dark secrets along the way. The fact that these twists were well signposted meant that none of them came as a shock yet the book still managed to keep me thoroughly involved in the story.

Whilst I thought that each of the main characters in the story were well developed and realistic, there was one exception and this was Romy. She always seems too wise and insightful for the realistic portrayal of a teen in the Internet age and I constantly found myself questioning her behaviour. I struggled to believe that even before or after the explosive video revelation, she had this much understanding of the motivations of seemingly every other character in the book. As the novel proceeds, Fiona Neill seems to turn to neuroscience in looking for a possible understanding of why this has occurred. Whilst this was interesting at first and full credit must be given for the immense
research involved, as the book moved on and the neuroscience theme seemed to occupy more and more of the novel I found it became laborious and the casual reader may find themselves bogged down by this.

Whilst I have my criticisms of this novel, I think that is partly because I had such high hopes for its potential examination of a world where our data is a valuable commodity, a persons privacy is limited and how it is opinions of complete strangers who often end up defining our lives.

Margaret Madden - www.BleachHouseLibrary.blogspot.ie

Do we know what our teenagers are doing? How well do we think we know them? Are their lives as simple as we think? A mother finds out the hard way, via an explicit video posted online...

Romy is sixteen and has just moved with her family to a sleepy, rural town in England with her family. Life suddenly seems brighter when they get some new neighbours, with two teenage sons. A bohemian family, Romy finds herself drawn to handsome Jay, while her conservative mother struggles to hide her distaste of the neighbours lifestyle. Young love leads to Romy uncovering her new boyfriend's secret and making an offer that may change her life forever. Meanwhile, her parents secrets are about to be uncovered and may make things worse.

A difficult book to review as it has multi-layered stories with different themes. I was expecting a psychological thriller but it is more of a literary read with added thrill. The ending is placed at the start of the novel and the story unfolds gradually. A little to slow unfurling, I found the story lost its momentum for the middle third of the book. The dangers of online activity and the lack of privacy is one that all parents of teen worry about. This story looks at the issue, but the teenage Romy is an unusual example of a sixteen year old, so it was hard to see her making this mistake. Her mother and father’s mistakes also seemed improbable. A good read, if a bit too long.

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