

LoveReading Reader reviews of Precocious by Joanna Barnard

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

Clair Chaytors

Chilling but captivating...

A deep and dark story which at times is quite uncomfortable to read but simply because of the realism Joanna's writing has brought to the story line and her choice to write the book as though it's her own diary, using the first person. We are allowed access to snippets of the diary Fiona Palmer has kept all these years from the day she first encountered Henry Morgan and it's hard not to be drawn into Fiona's world and therefore her awful dilemma. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, even if I did find myself at times shouting out-loud at Fiona to wake up and smell the coffee, but as the story reaches its climax it is so easy to see how much Fiona has been caught up in something which she should have been

protected from and she is the real victim here. This book will strike a fear in the hearts of all parents with teenage girls and I feel with similar cases highlighted recently in the news this book couldn't be any more topical. This is an utterly convincing portrayal of an awful situation but hugely mesmerising with the added message of being careful of what you chose to write on paper because, even in this technology obsessed society we live in, the written word can be the most powerful tool we own.

You can follow Clair in Twitter: @clair_louise80



Nicola Hawryszczuk

This story is about a 14 year old schoolgirl crush which begins again 15 years later when Fiona is married, unhappily so she thinks. Henry Morgan still has lots to offer, or has he?

*Let's face it, who hasn't had a schoolgirl crush on a teacher? This one happened when Fiona was 14 and it ended after a "relationship". A chance meeting 15 years later and the affair begins again. Fiona is unhappy in her marriage and believes Henry is the one for her. As the story unfolds we discover that the past wasn't perhaps as wonderful as she first thought and maybe Henry isn't the man she thinks he is. **Written with so much suspense and quite unnerving at times, this is a real page turner which keeps the reader guessing what's going to happen next.** I would recommend this book and can't wait for another novel from this author as she writes so well.*

Amy M

Offering a stark and almost brutally honest account of a schoolgirl infatuation and what lays behind the innocence. Absolutely could not put this book down.

This was an uncomfortable read on many different levels. Initially, I found myself struggling to connect with the book, and stopped and started on the first few pages as I found the narrative quite stilted. After the first chapter, I soon settled in and adjusted to the pace - finding myself quickly absorbed into the raw emotion on each page. I realise now how well the book works as a whole, and definitely needs time for the reader to "digest" in sections at a time.

I wished on more than one occasion to shake sense into Fiona and make her see what is so clearly obvious for the whole time. Frustrating and emotional reading for someone who has already been in those shoes and popped clean out the other side, now able to reflect as an adult on how badly wrong things could have gone.

If you read this as a parent, be aware how of how paranoid/hyper vigilant it may make you.

Oh, teenage infatuations!!!

Nicola Kingswell

A modern take on the 'Lolita' storyline.

Fiona Palmer bumps into Henry Morgan in the supermarket, 15 years after she last saw him. The chance meeting reignites her feelings for Henry. Theirs was an illicit affair; Fiona being a 15 year old schoolgirl and Henry her English teacher. Bored with her job and her steady husband, Fiona and Henry restart their affair.

This was an interesting novel told part in flashback to the original affair and the parallels to the current romance. I liked the exploration of who was actually seducing who. The final twists in the storyline were very welcome and added interest to an otherwise mediocre read.

The supporting characters were good. Fiona's mother had obviously been looking for excitement in her own marriage and this lead to some interesting observations into the mother-daughter relationship. Fiona's husband was a bit of a non-entity, who gave in a bit too easy for my liking. Her friends Mari and Laura were better characters, especially the suffering Laura was experiencing with her own philandering husband.

The writing style was a bit over wordy. I'm hoping this was trying to emulate the fact that Fiona fancied herself as a writer.

Overall, a good read. There are some moments of brilliance but I've read better takes on the same story theme.

Danielle Holyland

Really interesting book, couldn't put it down towards the end. It faces a very serious topic, but handles it extremely well. The lead female is very relatable, and I just loved the ending of the book.

This book was a challenge to read, purely because of the seriousness of the topic, however, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I think that a lot of people will be able to relate to the main lead as she goes through struggles with relationships. This novel is fantastically written & the plot remains throughout. Overall, I was really impressed with this novel.

www.foreverbound15.blogspot.co.uk

Emma Barton

Fiona Palmer had an affair with Henry Morgan when she was a teenager and he was her teacher. How does she feel about that now

that she is an adult?

'Precocious' adopts an interesting angle on a theme we are all too familiar with. A person in a position of trust and responsibility takes advantage of an underage child and they begin a sexual relationship. Now that Fiona Palmer is a married woman she can look back on her teenage self and assess the relationship with Henry Morgan (her English teacher) from a different perspective.

The story unfolds at a slow pace with flashbacks to Fiona's school days. As Henry's character unfolds we start to see how Fiona is coming to realise that the past may not have really been how she perceived it at the time.

Suzanne Bellingham

*This is a book which makes you think of how you remember the past, looking back through adult eyes. The basis of the story begins when Fiona now an adult bumps into her old teacher, who she also had a relationship with when she was 14, it stirs up lots of emotions and they decide to meet up again. Once again she starts to fall for Mr Morgan and when she rereads her notes from school she begins to question the intent of the relationship and starts to see she wasn't quite as grown up then as she thought she was, realising how different it looks now as the adult. **I found myself looking forward to reading this book** and couldn't put it down as more questions start to unfold and secrets start to come out. **Well written, thought provoking and real, a page turner.***

Suzanne Beney

Beautifully written tale with elements that I'm sure most women can look back and relate to their own teenage selves.

I really enjoyed Precocious as for me it has everything a good book should have. A complex and brooding love interest, friendships, dramas, reminiscent memories, plus a few twists and turns all brought together with realistic description and beautiful prose.

Whilst I was concerned, as I neared the end, that I was going to be disappointed with the conclusion, I was in fact left with a wry smile. It couldn't have lead up to a better ending.

I always turn the bottom corner over when there's a sentence that grabs me, for me it's the sign of a well enjoyed book and a good author. And this book has

plenty of dog eared bottom corners!

Suzanne Marsh

'Precocious' is a story of how Fiona Palmer writes with enthusiasm in her diary on scraps of paper and notebooks. This page turning scandal takes us through how Fiona meets up with her ex school teacher that she used to have a crush on.

There are some lessons you shouldn't learn in school. At school fourteen year old Fiona had fallen in love with her teacher Henry Morgan. Her crush developed into an intense relationship.

Fifteen years later married Fiona by chance meets up with her former school teacher again. Are they both just becoming friends again or could it plunge into more? Fiona shares her secret with one of her best friends that she had just met up with her ex teacher Mr Morgan and went for a meal with him and that they kissed. But Fiona is supposed to be married even though she thinks that she is unhappily married. The reason why Fiona got married to Dave was to protect her from the catalogue of mini disappointments that surrounded her life.

I highly recommend this new novel 'Precocious' by Joanna Barnard.

*The story of Precocious is **a controversial, compelling debut novel from an award-winning writer, 'Precocious' is a Lolita for the modern age.***

www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com

Sophia Ufton

Wow! This was a scandal and half. Blown away! Awesome...

Fiona Palmer is unhappily married when a chance meeting with her former teacher Henry Morgan, who she first met as a lonely fourteen year- old- boy. She develops a crush on him, which in turn, turns into an intense relationship, which 'she' assumed she controlled! But does she?

Cathy Petersen

Are things ever, really how you remember them?

I really enjoyed this skilfully constructed novel that relates the relationship between Fiona and her teacher Mr Morgan both as a 14 year old and later, as a

woman in her late 20s. Fiona as the narrator steadily unravels the story as she embarks on an affair with him 15 years after leaving school and having bumped into him by accident. As she looks back on how she remembered their earlier affair, you as the reader begin to question her memory and understanding of his actions, while events in the present begin to make her reassess her infatuation and his motives. It's cleverly done, sinister in places and quite convincing in the way the teenage Fiona constructs her recollection of events. **As a debut novel I thought it was an extremely good and compelling read.**

You can follow Cathy on Twitter: @Cerysthepup

Margaret Madden

Overall, a beautifully written book with clever character-based narrative. Just who is to blame in this tale of crossed boundaries?

A schoolgirl crush is almost a rite of passage. An influential teacher. A bright young girl. A love of literature and a disdain for frivolity. Fifteen year old Fiona Palmer idolises her English teacher, Henry Morgan, and he returns her unwavering attention. A line is crossed, but just who is to blame?

Years later, Fiona bumps into her former teacher and the passion inside her is reignited almost at once. Their past is not long becoming the present but can they stop it before someone gets hurt?

*Can a precocious child and an enigmatic teacher work together with no sexual involvement? Can a mutual respect for each other remain innocent? Does age really matter? Joanna Barnard asks these questions, and more, within the pages of her debut novel. It is a story of obsession, trust, honesty and betrayal. **A coming of age tale with a sting in its tale***

Although this is not an original idea, the concept of a teacher/pupil relationship is addressed in a slightly different way. This time the narrator is a thirty year old, married woman, recalling her experiences as a fifteen year old student in love with her mentor. She almost loves him before even setting eyes on him, as he is extremely popular with the students of the school. In his twenties, handsome in an intelligent way, he is a bit of an enigma and this appeals very much to the unusual Fiona. She is the stereotypical, angst-ridden teen, with dreams of becoming a writer and being different to her peers. Mr. Morgan spots this trait, and plays on it. However, Fiona is also very adept at playing the game of seduction. Is it as simple as abuse of authority or does some blame lie

with Fiona's 'mature' nature?

<http://bleachhouselibrary.blogspot.ie/>

Edel Waugh

*If you have read and loved Lolita in the past then I think you will really appreciate this story with a more modern feel to it. The main character is a woman who comes across a man she had a relationship with when she was a young teen. The big difference with the relationship she had was that she was a student and he was a teacher. Many years later they meet by accident, while she is married to a sensible, reliable guy and her ex teacher is single. Meeting again brings back memories and she innocently agrees to meet up with him. Does a leopard change his spots with age and could they make a go of their relationship now? The story is deeply disturbing on many levels ... abuse of power in all forms, and **you can't look away when reading this** as you need to know what is going to happen by the end. While not explicit it still causes unease.*

If you loved Lolita you will likely enjoy this tale too. Fascinating reading!!!!

<http://www.edelwaugh.blogspot.com>

Ruth Carson-Byrne

*Precocious is a novel about a schoolgirl's affair with her teacher. Years later they meet again and throughout the story she remembers what happened during her schooldays. This is **a well written novel but wasn't really for me.***