

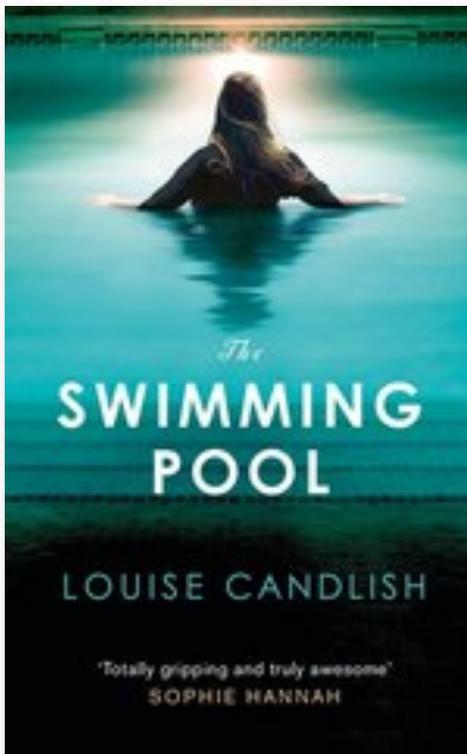


Helping you choose
your next book

LoveReading Reader reviews of **The Swimming Pool** By Louise Candlish



Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Gemma Niven

***Excellent book that will keep you guessing until the very end!
Thoroughly enjoyable read.***

*I knew immediately from reading the back of 'The Swimming Pool' that I was going to enjoy it. Louise Candlish is a fabulous writer who draws you in from the first page and keeps you enthralled right to the last sentence. The story is around Natalie, her family and her new friends during the first summer of a re-opened 'lido' in their street. Louise writes in such a way that made me visualise the lido and the characters and left me thinking about them for a while afterwards. It is an exciting read which I really didn't want to put down! 5**

Emma Barton

This is an enthralling tale, set during a summer heat wave, when habits and morals are relaxed around a newly renovated lido in an affluent part of London.

I truly loved this book and allowed it to monopolise my time and thoughts during the few days it took to complete it.

Teachers Ed and Natalie are upstanding members of the community, but during Natalie's summer spent at the local lido, their behaviour begins to change due to

the glamorous and influential Lara and her family.

The book starts in June, but regularly moves forwards to the August Bank Holiday and the aftermath of a terrible accident. The story unfolds to tell of unhealthy obsessions, poor judgements, guilty consciences and retribution.

I highly recommend this book as a thrilling read and great opportunity to judge other people and how they live their lives!

Joan Sidwell

'The Swimming Pool' opens at the beginning of the school holidays when Natalie Steele and her family, husband, Ed and daughter, Molly, are looking forward to the plans they have made for the next few weeks.

However Natalie becomes obsessed with a new family who have just moved into the area and makes every opportunity to spend time with them at the newly opened local Lido, her obsession focusing particularly on Lara Channing whom she feels is everything she isn't. Despite Molly having an extreme phobia of the water Natalie spends more and more time at the Lido as events take a more sinister turn and the long hot summer turns into a nightmare for Natalie and her family.

*I am not quite sure what category to put this book into, family story, thriller, psychological, it covers all those genres without actually fitting into any one of them and, for me unfortunately, it didn't hold my attention enough. **Told partly in flashback and even with a twist in the tale, I found the plot and characters quite unpleasant and creepy**, the writing style is slow and ponderous at times. It is quite a long book but towards the end it became rather predictable and repetitive and although I persevered, sadly it struggled to capture my interest all the way through.*

Natasha Motton

Enthralling page turner that draws you into the complicated relationships of the characters and leaves you wanting to find out more!

This is the story of a bored middle aged woman Natalie Steele who is drawn into the hedonistic world of the mysterious and alluring Lara Channing. Not everything is as it seems though and the more infatuated Natalie becomes with Lara the more her own world and relationships start to unravel and fall apart.

Natalie's past comes back to haunt her with tragic consequences. This book is well written and interweaves the historical flashbacks and current day plot well. The author guides you into predicting the secret connection between the main characters and then throws in a curve ball! I enjoyed this book and would highly recommend it.

Cheryl Kinney

A gripping read.

I have read a couple of Louise Candlish's books in the past and have always enjoyed them. 'The Swimming Pool' is no different, I really enjoyed this book and could not put it down as I wanted to know what happened.

The book starts with a prologue that is dark and mysterious, this really draws you in as a reader.

The book has some small chapters that begin to hint at some tragic accident and the details are slowly released in these, which I thought added to the tension and really got me thinking. The other chapters cover the events leading up to the accident, including flash backs to the summers of the main characters childhood.

The main Character Nat is likeable although she is obviously easily led! This is a story about obsession, holding onto things from the past and how they affect your present life in a number of ways. The relationship between her and her husband is well written and you can feel the pain of it when Nat builds new friendships and starts to change.

There is a dark under tone to this book that is evident from the beginning and it builds the tension making the reader want to read on.

The twist comes right at the end and I didn't see it coming!

I would definitely recommend this book.

Follow Cheryl on Twitter: @cheryl_bookworm

Beryl White

An excellent novel of the mixed emotions of one woman who is infatuated by the life style of her glamorous new friend with almost devastating consequences.

I certainly loved reading it - a compulsive page turner and extremely well

written. The characters were so wonderfully described that I despised them all. Natalie Steele is obsessed by her daughter to the point where the daughter's phobia almost takes over their whole lives. Ed Steele is a boring man whose life seems to centre on his career as a teacher, no wonder Natalie was looking for a bit of excitement! Then there is Lara Channing who provides all the glamour and excitement that Natalie can cope with having been used to very little. Lara and her husband and friends wrap a new life around Natalie but little does she realise that although she knows little about their past, they know all about hers.

Rebecca Whymark

Excellent, full of intrigue and glamour.

Teachers Ed and Natalie Steele normally spend their holidays with daughter Molly, this year however they meet glamorous Lara Channing and her family. With the opening of the Lido the community is excited and Natalie in particular become swept up with the change in pace of this summer.

All that comes to a head at the end of summer party at the Lido.

Louise makes the characters very believable, you are drawn into their extravagant lifestyles and are eager to find out what the conclusion will be.

About halfway through the book I thought I had guessed the outcome but I was slightly off with my guess which was a good thing because the book didn't have the predictable ending I was expecting.

I would read something by this author again as I enjoyed this one very much.

Cleo Bannister

Risky friendships past and present.

'The Swimming Pool' gets my recommendation as a must-read novel of the summer, preferably by your own swimming pool, the sounds and the smells enhancing the wonderful backdrop to this scary tale about female friendship.

When previously staid, middle-aged teacher Natalie Steele hears that the swimming pool near her home has been renovated, she's anxious. Her daughter Molly has an extreme water phobia after all and a pool isn't going to help. But, all too soon she is drawn to it, to the exclusion of pretty much everything and everyone else, well everyone that is except her new best friend Lara. Lara is confident and glamorous and the more sceptical in Natalie's circle wonder what the attraction is, that there is one on Natalie's side is not in doubt though. As the

summer holiday unfolds Natalies begins to question all that she held most dear and for a while wishes that the summer could last forever!

A clever unfolding tale where the reader gets pulled into the story, like the onlookers wondering what is behind the friendship and even more so what do the events of a long-ago summer back in 1985 have to do with anything, except the haunting of Natalie.

Louise Candlish takes a believable situation and clouds the underbelly in shadow, so go set up your sun-lounger and prepare to be entertained by the characters, setting and a plot that swirls like a whirlpool!

<http://cleopatra loves books.wordpress.com>

Edel Waugh

This is a dark and eerie story about one summer at the new Elm Hill Lido club that has a glorious swimming pool. The main character is Natalie, a school teacher on her summer holidays who is encouraged along to this seemingly idyllic place by the glamorous Lara. The place is great fun , and Natalie is drawn to it even more because of Lara , but not everything in this bright shiny world is at it seems and the darker side of it is just waiting to come out and cause plenty of hurt.

I really loved this story, the twists were surprising, and kept me on my toes.

The characters are not all as they seem, making the plot twists all the more surprising. I really enjoyed this!

<http://edelwaugh.blogspot.ie/2016/03/the-swimming-pool-by-louise-candlish.html?m=1>

Rosie Watch

I initially struggled with the story line and could find no affinity with the characters in the first few chapters. However, as the book and Natalie's summer at the Lido progresses so I became more involved. As the characters develop, the converging story lines become more gripping and the need to know the outcome more compelling. Although initially the relationship between Lara and Natalie was unconvincing the plot develops cleverly and with a sinister and surprising twist.

Beneath the heightening tension and subplots there was a more real

element of family relationships and the underlying story of aging and loss of youth and opportunity that made the story very readable.

Vicki Wardman

When a book keeps you up reading until 2.30am you know it's a good one. The whole novel has a seductive atmosphere that draws the reader in, and keeps you guessing right up until the very end.

Once I really got into this I couldn't put it down. The whole novel has a seductive atmosphere that draws the reader in as much as Natalie is drawn to Lara. As the summer wears on towards its inevitable end, so does the story - and the tension really ramps up as the novel nears its conclusion. There are a lot of time jumps in this novel, from the present day, to the recent past, to Natalie's youth, and there's even a flash forward at the end. Throughout the course of the novel we are drip fed information within each of the timeframes, until we eventually begin to see the bigger picture - although I certainly didn't see the big twist(s) coming. I didn't actually like any of the characters - I think that's maybe the point - and a lot of the time I wasn't sure whose side I was supposed to be on. Just as you think you have events - or characters - sussed along comes another twist that completely changes your perspective, and I was kept guessing right up until the last few pages. The epilogue, which was brilliantly done, serves not only to highlight how different viewpoints of the same events can be, but also brings home the fact that the centre of the novel is the relationship between teenagers and their parents, and how the need to be popular and liked is something that we never really grow out of. The whole story was very cleverly plotted and put together, and made for compelling reading. 4/5 stars

<http://lilmissvixreads.blogspot.co.uk>

Alex

It was one extreme to the other, whilst never quite running with a singular idea. The novel had a clear ending point that seemed the most disinteresting aspect of the novel.

The summer holidays are the foundation of numerous coming of age novels and dramas. Louise Candles has used this as her setting, but with the perspective of Natalie Sawyer, a teacher. Despite her daughter's fear of water, she cannot resist the temptation to visit the newly opened Lido, and she soon meets the

bewitching Lara Channing. The novel then plays out with youthful idolisms; it feels like a coming of age story. Its strength is when it manages to switch back to when they are adults and parents. The novel has a mixed timeline, starting at the end of summer when there has been an accident.

This novel has a short cluster of characters, delving deep into all of them. The past and consequences of mistakes haunt all of them and it is unsure who or what to believe at any point, creating such an effective tense atmosphere. However, having set so many finite flaws and context with the characters, I felt it became incredibly misplaced. It was one extreme to the other, whilst never quite running with a singular idea. The novel had a clear ending point that seemed the most disinteresting aspect of the novel. It pushed through with it and in the end I felt it lost so many of the exciting points of the novel. At any point, this novel could have taken a U-turn and followed a different path, embracing its seductive summer vibe; however, in the end it failed to leave me wanting more.

<http://boylestalkaboutbooks281.blogspot.co.uk/2016/03/the-swimming-pool-by-louise-candlish.html>

Claire Nethercoat

A book that twists and turns with every page. One to take to the beach, just stay away from the water.

I have loved this book with its clever twists. From the minute Natalie and her husband Ed meet the Channing's you know that they somehow don't fit into this glamorous lifestyle that sees Natalie getting more and more drawn into and Ed fighting against. A great beach read it will keep you guessing till the end.

Carol Peace

A rollercoaster of a ride you do not want to miss.

Ed and Natalie are teachers and in the summer holidays they usually have activities planned with their daughter Molly, this summer however things are not the same for them as there is a lido opened up and Nat is drawn to it even though Molly has an extreme phobia of water. The new couple Lara Channing and her husband Miles were instrumental in organising the opening of the lido and have a daughter Georgia who is Molly's age. Nat and Lara are drawn together and Nat finds it exciting to be part of their glamorous lifestyle and spends more and more time with them even though Ed is not as enthusiastic and

Molly really doesn't want to spend time round the water. The chapters jumped from the present day to the recent past but it was done in such a way that was easy to follow and the suspense grows, I loved the way it just told you snippets of the past and not quite enough to give the game away I found myself rushing to the to find out how it all came together.

Sue Burton

A well written book but maybe dragged out too much.

Not sure about this book to be honest, did not really like any of the main characters and the storyline was not as gripping as the authors other books. Worth a read but would not be top of my recommendation list.

Helen Appleby

A psychological thriller that entwines and brings together stories of the past and links them to the future. 'The Swimming Pool' is a tale of how your past always has a habit of catching up with you.

'The Swimming Pool' is a story of how teacher Natalie's summer is like none she has experienced before due to the opening of the Lido in her home town and the new friends she meets that are not all they seem. The main focus of the story is about her daughter Molly and her extreme phobia of the water and the events that unravel whilst she is trying to overcome this phobia and the friends that her and her mum meet along the way.

The book has an intertwining story line and a complex plot and brings together the here and now and links it into another summer from years ago that still haunts Natalie even now. The swimming pool brings the characters of the story together and the story gradually unravels Natalie's friendship with Lara and addresses the reasons behind if this is genuine or are things not all as they first seem?

The story explores Natalie's secrets of the past and how years later she is made to face the consequences of her actions.

The book is a psychological thriller which is hard to put down as each turn of a page brings about a new dimension and twist to the story.

Follow Helen on Twitter: Helenrachel123

Hannah Ward

*I was lucky enough to get an advanced copy of this book from Lovereading so want to say thank you for them for sending me a copy. I have always loved Louise Candlish books, this one didn't disappoint either. The first book I got to review was by Louise Candlish and I have not looked back since. **Louise has a brilliant way that just draws you into her characters worlds, her writing is exceptional. There are twists and turns that will leave you thinking 'Oh my god! Did that just happen?'** You think you may know what is going to happen but trust me you don't. An outstanding book you will want to get your hands on.*

<http://echoesinanemptyroom.com/2016/03/15/the-swimming-pool-by-louise-candlish/>

Hayley

'The Swimming Pool' is full of simmering tension, and the rising temperature is a great catalyst for what follows in Natalie's life.

Natalie and Ed are happily married with a teenage daughter, Molly. They have a quiet, steady life and have fallen into an easy rhythm within their family unit whereby their lives run very smoothly. The couple are a bit too earnest at times and Natalie, in particular, is very over-protective of Molly. Molly is aquaphobic after an incident when she was younger but Natalie seems to have an overly tight rein on her daughter.

One hot summer the local lido re-opens thanks to a campaign by the glamorous Lara, and Natalie immediately feels drawn to her. The two quickly become friends and Natalie begins to imitate Lara and to lose all sense of herself. Her relationship with Ed begins to show strain but Natalie is too intoxicated by Lara to care too much.

The stifling atmosphere as the heat rises is so well done; it gives such a claustrophobic feel, and made for a great catalyst for the protagonist to temporarily lose who she was.

There is a simmering tension running throughout this novel. It is apparent to the reader that there are secrets been kept by more than one person in the novel and that things are building to a head. The denouement of this novel is so good, and while not everything that happens was a shock to me, it was all so well done that I was still on the edge of my seat.

<https://rathertoofondofbooks.wordpress.com>

Follow Hayley on twitter: @hayleysbookblog

Tanera Simons

An interesting and thought-provoking read, although slow at times.

This is the first of Candlish's novels that I've read, and whilst I did enjoy the storyline I must admit that I also found myself losing interest at certain points of the book.

The story follows teacher Natalie Steele, her husband Ed (also a teacher), and their daughter Molly. Candlish introduces the family to the reader at the start of the summer holidays: just as the glamorous Channing family moves to town and assists in the grand re-opening of the town lido. This event sparks the plot of the book because Molly, after a traumatic childhood accident, has a severe phobia of water. The reader follows Natalie as she spirals into obsession and begins to lose perspective; sacrificing her family in favour of the exciting and enviable new lifestyle that Lara introduces her to.

I enjoyed this book, but it was also incredibly frustrating at times! I found the character of Natalie interesting but hypocritical: it is ironic that, as a teacher who preaches the importance of resisting peer pressure, finds herself bowing to such pressure and becoming caught up in the hype that is Lara Channing. I enjoyed the flashbacks to Natalie's past, but did find that these sections – apart from towards the end of the book - tended to slow the pace of the story, instead of build tension.

Janet Monks

A thriller set in the heart of London. Parents Natalie and Ed have a daughter Molly who is afraid of water, and the summer in question socialite Lara opens a swimming pool in a well to do area.

Candlish creates a fantastically dark atmosphere revealing the depths of the mind of her main character and the almost eerie unveiling of the 'goings on' surrounding the pool.

But, this is the best I can say about this novel - I hated every character from the weak or threatening husbands, to the self-pitying (despite pretences otherwise) Natalie and even the children were awful. I lost interest in the plot and couldn't wait for the ending...

Laura Gardner

Compelling but not always likeable characters - A captivating read.

'The Swimming Pool' is a book with which I found myself taking my time. Ordinarily, if I enjoy a book, I want to race to the end and devour it as quickly as possible but in this instance I felt like it needed to be taken at a more leisurely pace, despite the fact that it was just as enjoyable as novels which have me speeding my way through.

There was no lack of suspense and intrigue in this story and I, absolutely, wanted to know what happened at the end, but the gentle development of the characters, and their relationships, gave the book a depth and intensity that is often missed in other novels.

The story itself is simple - A rather unremarkable family become friends with a very remarkable family and it culminates in an 'event' (which is alluded to from the very beginning of the book) but the success of this story hinges on the characters who are, for the most part, rather unlike able but absolutely compelling. This book stays with you because the characters really do come to life in a way that I've not experienced many times before.

I, very much, recommend this book.

<http://www.petitmoi-bigworld.co.uk>

Kerry Bridges

Totally contrived and unbelievable nonsense from start to finish. Not one I can recommend I am afraid!

Natalie Steele is a Primary School teacher with an unglamorous life as the wife of a teacher with a teenage daughter. One summer the local lido reopens and, whilst there, Natalie and her daughter Molly meet the beautiful Lara Channing and are drawn out of their own world and into that of the local celebrity and her family. Slowly it appears that their friendship is not all it seems, and Natalie must pay for her actions of the past, no matter how long ago.

I was drawn to this book because the main character is a teacher who likes swimming, so perhaps a kindred spirit, I thought? I could not have been more wrong. Natalie, Ed and all the adult characters are totally unpleasant, self-centred and frankly unlikeable and behave in a way which is so totally opposite to the expectations of a professional person and to be laughable. In their own way, the children are also pretty unpleasant, although, of them all, Molly is the

only one who comes out of the novel with anything about her at all.

I also thought the story was very contrived, and although the first sentence really does grab you, when you find out what is behind it, it is also totally ridiculous and should be indicative of the totally unnecessary behaviour to come.

All in all, I really didn't enjoy this novel at all, and I am afraid I certainly couldn't recommend it. Use your time more sensibly, read something much better instead!

<http://iamalwaysreading.wordpress.com/>

Ann Alderton

A highly compelling story about a cat and mouse game between people who are willing to go to great lengths to pursue a psychological chess-game of revenge and their naive and unsuspecting victim.

This is a book about people who play mind-games and are prepared even to sacrifice the protection of their own families in pursuit of a psychological chess-game of revenge. When the glamorous, rich and popular former celebrity Lara Channing seemingly hand-picks ordinary and frumpy teacher Natalie Steele as her new best friend, the reader is immediately put on alert that something is not quite right in the suburbs of Elm Hill. With Jane Austen-esque attention to manners and mores of the chattering classes of the twenty first century, accompanied with flashbacks to Natalie's days as a feral teen tearaway, it soon becomes apparent that more lies behind Lara's gestures of friendship than meets the eye. The novel starts a bit slowly, with scene setting and a gradual transition for Natalie from observer of the glamorous and decadent Elm Hill "in-crowd" at the newly opened Lido, to full participant in their aspirational lifestyle. It soon picks up the pace, however, as Lara's motives for the friendship start becoming clear. Highly compelling, **Louise Candlish has exploited a deep-seated insecurity about friendships that many of us will recognise from our teenage years** and will mean that we will experience both empathy and shadenfreude when things start going awry.

Margaret Madden

This novel is dripping with atmosphere. Clouds make way for sunshine at Elm Hill's lido, but the tension is building behind the scenes.

An outdoor swimming pool (lido) is lovingly restored and becomes the meeting place of choice in a quiet town just outside London. Families gather, friendships are formed and the cocktails are flowing. School teacher Natalie suddenly finds herself in the inner sanctum and barely notices the changes to her own personality. Her husband suddenly seems dull, her wardrobe dowdy and her life begins to swivel on its axis. She develops a huge girl-crush on the stylish Lara, and the summer takes a sinister turn.

I am a big fan of Louise Candlish. She has a way of delving into the lives of seemingly ordinary lives and showing a persons weaknesses or sore-points. Her descriptive prose is razor sharp and enticing. The characters are built up gradually, usually with a climatic result. This novel is dripping with atmosphere. Clouds make way for sunshine at Elm Hill's lido, but the tension is building behind the scenes. The author dangles a proverbial carrot in front of the reader, reeling them in closer, one step at a time. Natalie and Lara are the most unlikely friends yet their chemistry is palpable. This is a very clever read, more tense than thrill, yet not suffering because of it. A definite recommended read from one of the UK's finest GripLit authors.

bleachhouselibrary.ie/@margaretbmadden

Phyllippa Smithson

There were that many red herrings in this very readable thriller, Candlish could have filled her Swimming Pool.

Natalie Steele is married to a fellow school teacher with an 11 year old daughter, Molly. Throughout the story, Candlish rarely spells out details but slowly reveals them. For example, Molly evidently has problems but what and why is held back until I sense the author wants to avoid frustrating her readers too much – although there is very clever use of loaded language before she is prepared to do so. Nat too has a led a way more different life in her childhood compared with her conformist, organised and regimented current world with victimisation of children and bullying key themes.

When the glamorous and excessively wealthy Lara and her family move into the area and enter the lives of the Steeles, Nat's world turns upside down as she

fights to free herself from what previously had been a very tolerable life into something far more alluring and exciting. She becomes so intoxicated with Lara and what she can offer that she allows her long-term friendships and even her marriage to be compromised.

Switching between the past (Nat's childhood in particular, Aug 1985), the immediate past (June-July 2015) and the now (31st Aug 2015), this total guessing game of how the story will end is a roller coaster of great reading. The key question that is eventually answered is whether Natalie's past will return to haunt her current life.

Great writing and reading.