

# Reading for Pleasure Competition

★ WINNER ★

Isabelle Clayton

## Book Review 1

### The Raven Boys

*Author: Maggie Steifvater*

*Genre: Fantasy*

From start to finish I absolutely adored this book. In third person, the story follows the lives of a group of friends who are interested in the magic of their hometown. 'The Raven Boys' is a nickname for boys who attend the local private school in comparison to Blue who is a daughter of a psychic. When their worlds collide in the most unexpected and beautiful of ways, you become easily encapsulated in their story.

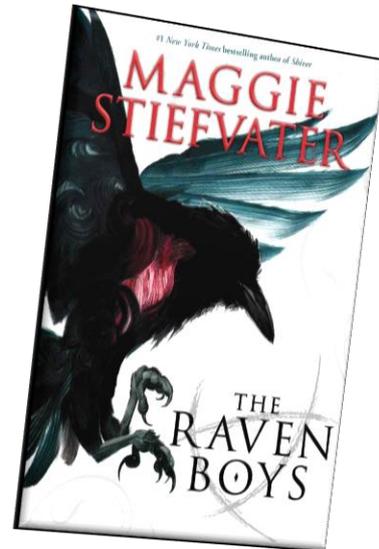
The writing is so intriguing! I was hooked from the first page. Even the trickier bits which go into the depths of magic and spirituality were well explained and not too complicated. I can't fault the way it's written; it's not even remotely cringe. And as a fond lover of tarot, crystals, psychics and magic I enjoyed and understood this book in depth, but if you aren't, it still is an informative read for sure.

There are mentions and in-depth parts about the characters' home lives, but it doesn't go overboard and discuss too much; it simply feeds you what is necessary for the rest of the plot, or where it'll tie in later. The author is brilliant at leaving any mundane parts out. It's all go, go, go.

Although my favourite thing about this book has to be the characters. Yes, they each have things about them that annoy the other characters, but it is that what makes their bonds stronger (and I wholly felt their love for one another while reading). Similarly, I am also in love with the characters! The boys are so charming, yet endearing and comedic. And Blue and her older female family/friends are so interesting and amiable.

My favourite character has to be Gansey, swooney with his words and actions, I still think about this character even weeks after finishing the book.

I was super excited to read this one too and I can confirm I am not let down (apart from their being no blossoming love interest - the main focus of the novel is the magic). However, I really do want to follow their journey into the sequels and see what romances are uncovered. All in all, it was such a fun read and I enjoyed every bit of it.



## Book Review 2

### Before The Coffee Gets Cold

*Author: Toshikazu Kawaguchi*

*Genre: Daily Life Fiction*



I didn't read much into this novel before buying/reading it and I'm so glad I didn't. It is set in a cafe in Japan (beautifully translated from Japanese). The cafe is known for a specific seat in the cafe which allows you to 'time-travel'. You can go back in time if you follow certain rules; one being to return to the present before your coffee gets cold.

It is such a fascinating and original concept - not the time travel of course - but the way in which it is set and happens.

The book is split into four chapters, each following a different person into time travel. It makes for four stories in one, but what I appreciated most was that although each story is separate, they involve the same characters in ways you would not even think to imagine. It left me stunned in such a gentle way, and made it four times as better! The characters didn't even feel like 'characters'... They felt like people.

My absolute favourite thing about this book is the meaning behind it. This novel doesn't encourage time travel to be a way to fix regrets or find redemption: instead, it gives you one last chance to talk to the person you lost; one last moment with the person you love; and a last bit of hope that everything is okay.

I found comfort in this book in ways I never thought I would. I have heard good reviews about it but, seriously, you need to read this - it's beyond amazing.

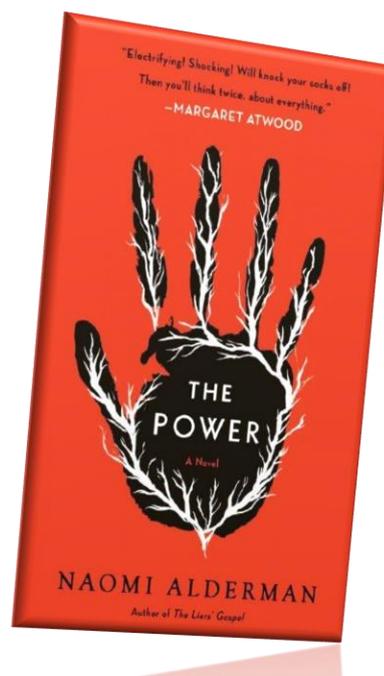
## Book Review 3

### The Power

*Author: Naomi Alderman*

*Genre: Dystopian Fiction*

'The Power' is a political, fictional novel set in a world where women have a biological power which allows them to inflict pain towards others. I saw it as a reverse of the patriarchy; with women ruling and men submitting to their authority.



From the get-go, the book features several narratives of the different protagonists. I found that the book being structured this way kept me informed of every character's whereabouts while the main events were occurring. The characters that I grew to like most were Tunde and Roxy because they found a way to reach one another and grew as people while continuing to do what they needed to survive.

My favourite thing about it was that despite all the characters having separate lives (not knowing one another at all), by the end they are all connected. To see that unravel in front of me in such a natural way was astonishing! The way it was written proves how incredibly talented the author is.

A few things in particular that I loved about it:

- The scientific explanation of what 'the power' is and how it came about
- How it explores religion and flips it on its head so that people worship Mother Mary instead of Jesus, which as a RPE student you can imagine this was gold for me to read!
- It's written as a person's book within a book. This is hard to explain, but the contents of the novel is a fictional guy's manuscript to a publisher! I love that, and the correspondence between the author and publisher at the start and end was powerful.
- Diagrams and pictures which further aid to the intricacy of the plot.

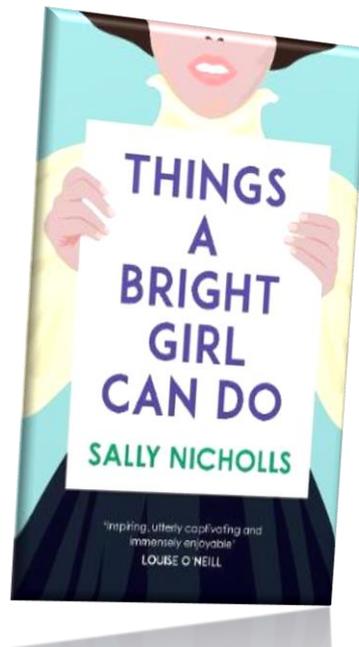
Overall, I loved this book an insane amount. It was consistently interesting and never once became boring. Somehow the ending got progressively better and I could not put it down in the last third. This is truly a masterpiece of gender and politics.

## Book Review 4

### Things a Bright Girl Can Do

*Author: Sally Nicholls*

*Genre: Historical Fiction*



This is one of the best books I have ever read; it is enthrallingly brilliant and inspiring.

It follows the lives of three aspirational teen girls in the period of 1914-18. Their lives are all vastly different, but it's the history they're living through that shapes, unites, and drives them towards their end goals.

The book revolving around the Suffragette Movement in the early 20th century and the First World War brings out so many raw emotions (all captivated perfectly in the novel). The author's writing portrays every emotion and feeling exactly right, encouraging you to feel the love and hurt that the writing evokes - I felt like I was there! Additionally, the characters are shaped so beautifully, and their character arcs are well defined, their evolution being clear. I felt connected to the protagonists and hoped all the best for them throughout. I want to know what my fictional characters are doing in their life right now.

Alternating between the point of view of the three girls kept the book interesting (not that it was boring in any section) because there are short chapters. It didn't drag at all and I finished it in 2 days despite being 400+ pages!

I also loved how informative the book is about the history of women and war; as a result I feel heaps more educated on the topic than previous to reading. It was so lovely to uncover such a sensitive and life changing part of history in this creative way.

It has a rewarding ending which leaves you feeling satisfied and almost as if you've completed the journey with these young and inspirational women. Things a Bright Girl Can Do is a remarkable book that should be recognised so much more than it has been! Emphasising the stories, struggles and successes of women before us, we owe them everything.