



## The Fever

*Megan Abbott*

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**The Fever** Megan Abbott

**The panic unleashed by a mysterious contagion threatens the bonds of family and community in a seemingly idyllic suburban community.**

The Nash family is close-knit. Tom is a popular teacher, father of two teens: Eli, a hockey star and girl magnet, and his sister Deenie, a diligent student. Their seeming stability, however, is thrown into chaos when Deenie's best friend is struck by a terrifying, unexplained seizure in class. Rumors of a hazardous outbreak spread through the family, school and community.

As hysteria and contagion swell, a series of tightly held secrets emerges, threatening to unravel friendships, families and the town's fragile idea of security.

A chilling story about guilt, family secrets and the lethal power of desire, *The Fever* affirms Megan Abbott's reputation as "one of the most exciting and original voices of her generation" (Laura Lippman).

## The Fever Details

Date : Published June 17th 2014 by Little, Brown and Company (first published 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Megan Abbott

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## From Reader Review The Fever for online ebook

### Emily May says

My first thought was to compare Abbott's depiction of teenage girl politics to *Lord of the Flies*. A manic, intense world that feels somehow completely set apart from the rest of reality. But I think that comparison would undermine the complexity of what the author does. This book (and *Dare Me*) is about more than mean girls - though her "YA" novels contain more than their fair share of savagery and malice too - but it is also about every beautiful, unfortunate, disgusting detail of female adolescence. I can't wait for her to write more.

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### Jill says

The thing about red herrings is that they have to be believable. A red herring is plainly not a red herring if it doesn't inspire you to believe something false while distracting you from the truth.

*The Fever* is one giant trail of failed red herrings. Teenage girls are falling sick in a small town and the entire book hums along trying to find out why. We are presented with two main options: either the HPV vaccine has led to unanticipated side effects (an awful red herring because um, it's a real-life vaccine with real-life evidence showing its safety and efficacy--Abbott would have been better off creating a fake vaccine) or the toxic algae coating an off-limits local lake has infected the girls (again, an awful red herring because um, what? it should at least be sensible.)

There is too much jumping from character to character, a tactic that mainly serves to bamboozle and frustrate as you wait for a viable reason for the teenage girl plague. I gave up 52% through because Abbott and the characters were still languishing among the protozoan lake viruses and dangerous yet FDA-approved vaccine reasons, even though these options were ridiculous from the get-go.

I read someone's spoilers and the final solution is believable but nothing earth-shattering, certainly not incredible enough to justify countless meandering chapters lamely asking and never properly trying to answer "What could possibly be causing this disease???"

All in all, a big disappointment.

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### Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

*"The first time, you can't believe how much it hurts."*

*"It just kind of burns," says another. "You're sore for a few days. I heard by the third time, you don't even feel it."*

This is from the prologue, and no, these girls are not talking about losing the big V.

**This is an extremely hard book for me to rate.** On the one hand, I enjoyed the writing. On the other hand, there was nothing remotely scary about it, and overall, I felt like I was **led on a merry trail filled with red**

**herrings that looked like Jenny McCarthy screaming that vaccines are evil.**

It was filled with teenaged pettiness, and it wasn't scary in the least. It did creep me out, but not in the "Omg this is scary!" kind of way, more like the "Oh, dude, the dad is *so* totally gross in a sorta Kevin-Spacey-in-American-Beauty-kind of way, like did he seriously say THAT about his little girl's best friend? Eww!" kind of way.

Wow, that was a long sentence.

Almost nothing happens in this book. Don't expect creepiness. From the cover, I totally thought this was going to be similar to the Japanese horror sort of books where a long-haired, scary as fuck girl crawls slowly up the foot of your bed as she slowly grins at you through blood-filled eyes. But no. Nope. Nothing like that at all. **Not for a single moment did I remotely approach the feeling of fear.**

So here's the good:

1. The writing is quite good, bravo, Ms. Abbott
2. Family dynamics is great, even if the brother and the dad totally squicked me out sometimes

**Seriously, nothing happens in this book.**

The Summary: There are three narrators in this book, father **Tom Nash**, a science teacher at the local high school, and his children, **Eli** and younger **Deenie** (Denise), both in high school.

It is a quiet town, it is a dead town, and it is a quiet, unevent high school life until **a girl starts foaming at the mouth.**

*Her desk overturned, clattering to the floor.  
And with it Lise. Her head twisting, slamming into the tiles, her bright red face turned up,  
mouth teeming with froth.*

That was **Lise**, Deenie's best friend, and everyone in school has their theories. Some dumber than others, from a **grand mal seizure**, here referred to as **grand male** by the brilliant young ladies at the school.

*"She had a grand male in Algebra Two," Brooke announced, eyes popping.  
The jocks broke into a fresh round of laughter.  
"A grand mal?" he asked, squinting. "A seizure?"*

To pregnancy.

*"Is she pregnant?" whispered Kim, her tongue thrust between her wired teeth.  
"Pregnant people faint all the time," Kim said, tugging her tights up her legs.*

**To a sexual parasite.**

*"He had a big house on the lake and he gave her all this great red-string Thai stick. He leaves for the Philippines, she wakes up with trich. That's a sexual parasite. It crawls inside you." She reached down for her bag, tangled with fringe. "So."*

To Toxic Shock Syndrome...

*Have u heard of toxik shok? tampax can kill u*

Then another girl falls sick, and the town runs rampant with theories.

The end.

**Yeah, that is literally it.**

**The Characters:** The one thing that stands out about the main characters in this book is **the level of creepy sexuality within the family**. I don't mean in an incestuous way, but I thought it was pointlessly sexual at many points.

We have **a creepy, sad dad**. Tom Nash. A middle-aged schoolteacher whose wife has left him for a more exciting life and a married lover. A man who has **seriously creepy observations about his teenaged daughter's friends**. Lise, Deenie's best friend, whom he has watched grow up.

*He'd known Lise Daniels since she was ten years old and first started coming to the house, hovering around Deenie, following her from room to room. Sometimes he swore he could hear her panting like a puppy. That was back when she was a chubby little elfin girl, before that robin's-breast belly of hers disappeared, and, seemingly overnight, she became overwhelmingly pretty, with big fawn eyes, her mouth forever open.*

And recalling how Lise looks in a swimsuit.

*Tom felt his face warm. Last summer he'd seen Lise in a two-piece. From across the town pool, from behind, he'd mistaken her for one of Deenie's swim instructors. Carla, the graduate student in kinesiology who always teased him about needing a haircut.*

It's not out of place. I mean, I know perfectly well that middle-aged men (and let's be honest, most men in general) have sexual thoughts about pubescent women, but I just found it very creepy and odd reading about it in a book where it felt out of place.

His son **Eli, is somewhat a school stud**. All the girls line up for him, he gets constant texts to hook up, and **he is oddly conscious about his sister's sexuality**. I don't get the sense that it is incestuous, and again, I understand that this sort of dynamic will probably exist between siblings of similar age, but not having a male sibling, I can only imagine. It's still pretty weird.

*There'd be those moments he was forced to think about her not just as Deenie but as the girl whose slender tank tops hung over the shower curtain. Like bright streamers, like the flair the cheerleaders threw at games.*

And when he's having sex in the room next to his sister, he's conscious of her, in the next room.

*Since then, he could only ever think about his sister, one wall away. And how he hoped Deenie never did things like this. With guys like him.*

So why not just avoid the situation, man. And he sees sexuality in his sister's eyes, the way another boy would see her.

*But she didn't realize what they saw, looking back at her: a girl, lips slightly parted, her head tilted hungrily. What they saw was I'm ready. Let's go.*

Again, I don't have a sibling, but I can't say I've ever looked at my sister in any kind of way and imagine a guy interpreting sexuality through her facial expression. It's far too much.

And geez, Eli's **stud status is so overemphasized in this book**. He gets a ton of texts from girls wanting to hook up and sending him PIXXXX.

*Eli Nash looked at the text for a long time, and at the photo that had come with it. A girl's bare midriff.*

*Eli, for you xxxx!*

His dad notices that he ignores the flocks of girls coming after him, and makes a note in his mind that it makes his son even more popular. He has to fend off the number of girls who just want to spread their legs for him.

*Did she want him to text her back, invite her over? To sneak her into his bedroom and nudge her shaky, pliant legs apart until he was through?*

Hell, even **his sister Deenie** falls victim to Eli's promiscuous ways. It's pretty gross, she receives **lewd text messages meant for him**.

*One of the texts had said—Deenie never forgot it—my pussy aches for u. It had to have been the worst thing she'd ever read. She'd read it over and over before deleting it.*

She also overhears him having sex in the next room. Ugh.

*Once, a few weeks ago, she'd heard a girl's voice in there and wondered if it was porn on the computer until she could tell it wasn't. She heard the voice say Eli's name. E-lieee.*

I understand that sex is a normal thing, but in this book, it just **felt squicky and out of place**. There was really not much point for it in the narrative, other than a break from the constant monotony.

I just really don't have a lot to say about this book. It was tremendously dull. All the characters were pretty dumb. The teenagers are nitwits. The mystery was a letdown. There's a tremendous amount of **misogyny, too, because both the Tom and his son Eli don't seem to have a good opinion about any females in the book besides their daughter and sister**.

*He could tell she was the kind of woman who told men what they wanted to hear. That didn't strike him as a bad thing, even though he knew it should.*

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**Andrea ♥Ninja Bunneh♥ says**

Eh,

\*\*\*\*\*SPOILERS\*\*\*\*\*

How the hell does an incredible sounding synopsis result in a craptastic book? Seriously, I just don't get it. If you read the blurb of this book, you expect horror, thrills, chills, maybe a little blood and gore. You expect to be shocked, scared out of your pants. Not even close.

I guess I should first explore the plot a little bit.

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Oh, wait! There isn't one!! For the sake of this review, I shall attempt to put one together.

There are some random teen girls from Tiny Miny Town, USA. I won't even go into their names because honestly they are so interchangeable it doesn't really matter. Actually, *all* the characters sound exactly the same. Anyway, one of the girls suddenly suffers a seizure. She is whisked away to the hospital and it's all very hush hush. Another girl has a seizure, and another! What could possibly be plaguing these fabulous teens?!?!

It must be the fact that the girls got the HPV vaccine! YES! So for about 80% of the book, the reader is inundated with the fact that the HPV vaccine is bad. Excuse me, if I want to get a PSA about a vaccine (that actually helps prevent cervical cancer), I'll ask my fucking Gyno. I don't expect it to be the running plot point in a novel. Seriously. This book made me feel stabby.

There's also a lake that has algae in it. The girls are told not to go in the lake. But they do. DUH. Did I mention it has algae in it?

Finally, in the end, it isn't a fucking vaccination *or* a barely mentioned sinister lake. It's teen angst over a boy!!!!!! One friend poisoning another because the victim fooled around with a boy psycho-bitch has been in lurve with forever. Then for whatever reason, psycho-bitch decides to poison other girls just for shits and giggles I guess.

I am so done.

I wish I could get my 4 hours back.

### **Zero Ninja-Bunnehs**

*(ARC received in exchange for an honest review.)*

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#### **karen says**

oh, megan abbott.

she does such a good job of writing bad girls.

i have loved her neo-noir books with their saucy femmes fatales, but her last three books have all been contemporary fiction spilling all the secrets of mean girls and their strategies or laying bare the dark side of the modern teenage girl's coming of age and entrée into sexuality. this one does both.

it's a crawlly story of an epidemic that begins plaguing the girls, and only the girls, of one suburban high school, causing seizures, hallucinations, and a community-wide panic. is it a result of the polluted lake nearby, with its urban legends and fluorescent algae? is it a side effect of the HPV vaccination to which the girls have been strongly encouraged to submit? or is it something more insidious and supernatural in nature? the not-knowing is what drives this story, as more and more girls succumb, while the boys treat it all like one grand joke.

*"You're all going down." The other boy laughed, beats thrumming through the open mouths of his headphones. "One by one."*

which is echoed by deenie's earlier observation about the loss of virginity amongst the other girls in the school:

***Sexual debut.** Sometimes it seemed to Deenie that high school was like a long game of And Then There Were None. Every Monday, another girl's debut.*

in this way, the epidemic seems to be tied in some way to female sexuality, as the novel keeps emphasizing the onset of the illness with the sexual histories of the girls. deenie has just lost her virginity, unexpectedly, to someone she feels guilty about having attracted. as her closest friends are taken ill, she keeps her secret, feeling that it is all somehow her fault as she remains unaffected.

it's a tight and haunting story as the situation escalates, and abbott does a fantastic job creating the life of a close-knit community and its secrets and crimes. as we learn more about the people making up the community; the social and sexual politics of high school girls, the long-incubated romantic yearnings, the failures of parents and the helplessness of a town in crisis, the story becomes much larger than i had anticipated, and once again she has managed to convey perfectly that particular minefield that is adolescence. another dark and bloody gem from megan abbott. if you have never read her, it's time to remedy that.

come to my blog!

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### **Paula M. of Her Book Thoughts! says**

I just wasted my time on a bunch of teenagers having problems about their virginities.

It's so weird guys.. so weird. I'm surprised I finished it. Kudos to Abbott's sophisticated writing. Too bad the multiple POV's has to ruin it.

So here's the gist. One by one, every girl in Deenie's town has been having seizures and hallucinations. No one seems to know the cause behind it. What's causing this contagious illness? Why girls only? But most importantly, WHY ISN'T DEENIE AFFECTED BY THIS CONTAGIOUS ILLNESS? Why isn't she in the hospital like her friends?

Excited and thrilled yet? Well trust me, you're not gonna stay that way. As I read through out the story I admit that I was deeply intrigued. You can see it on my status updates. But geez, the multiple POV's, unnecessary chapters and the bland and boring MC makes me want to hurt myself. You can notice that the author really gets out of her way just to confuse and make the readers think.

And when I finally got some answers, I LOST IT. I can't believe I've been through 80% dull chapters for that shallow and stupid reason. **THAT IS THE REASON?!** Just to give you a heads up, it wasn't really explained the WHY. Also the HOW. Also, when I started reading The Fever I had this feeling.. like, *oh my word this is going to be insanely good or wait is this paranormal or gosh! this book might haunt me forever.* **STOP RIGHT THERE.** Don't get your hopes up. And I don't want you to be crushed so I'll do you a favor. It's not paranormal. It's not gonna haunt you, unless you hurt yourself out of frustration then you will surely remember it. Insanely good???

Hmmm.

Anyway I AM A BIG FAN of the writing, I really am. Actually, it was the only thing that kept me going. I was tempted (a lot of times!) to put this book down.. nothing is happening, the author keeps confusing me (and not in a good way), also all I got is *it doesn't look like her, i feel different*, blah blah blah..

Just staaaahp.

BTW, thanks Netgalley.. for nothing.

YOU CAN ALSO READ MY REVIEW HERE.

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### **Elise (TheBookishActress) says**

I don't know what it is, but **there is just something about Megan Abbott's writing that is exactly my niche.** She writes these brutal yet beautiful descriptions that feel as if they're hitting me in the chest. She

writes these characters I hate and want to hug at the same time, these horrible human beings somehow right on the page.

*The Fever* is a claustrophobic read, a book about the dynamic of small towns and the dynamic between parents and children. And it is a book about teenage girls, in all their flaws.

This entire concept succeeds because the characters here are immensely flawed, yet somehow they draw your empathy. Deenie, the lead, is a character stuck somewhere between naivete and adulthood. Her friends Gaby and Lise were both written excellently. And Mr. Nash got my empathy despite my hatred for him in the beginning.

I didn't guess the answer to the mystery, but I honestly think it doesn't matter if you do. This is a downright creepy book about the horrifying things teenage girls are capable of - the horrifying things we are all capable of, and exactly how scared we are of those who show it.

TW: heavy sex discussions and some of the weirdest imagery.

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## Kemper says

(I received an ARC of this from NetGalley for this review.)

The whole time I was reading this I had to fight the urge to walk around imitating Christopher Walken from that famous Saturday Night Live skit. "I got a FEVER and the only prescription is more Megan Abbott!"

Sorry. I had to get that out of my system....

Deenie Nash is a pretty typical American teenage girl. She lives with her school teacher father Tom and her brother Eli. After her best friend Lise has a seizure in class followed by more girls becoming violently ill, a wave of hysteria rises which makes all of them examine what they thought they knew about the people around them.

Megan Abbott showed her impressive noir chops in great books like *The Song Is You* and *Queenpin*, and in her more recent work (*Dare Me*) she's been illustrating how the inner lives and social circles of teenage girls can be a darker and scarier topic than mob-owned night clubs or the seamier side of Hollywood. She's outdone herself in *The Fever* by starting with a simple premise of a mysterious illness causing panic, and then using it to touch the variety of things that would come up in any teenage girl's life. When Deenie is jealous of her friend Gabbie's new relationship with the odd Skye or struggling to understand her adolescent sexual urges or angry at her mother for leaving her father it makes adult reader remember the confused emotionality that goes along with teenagers.

What impressed me even more than her ability to put us inside the head of a teenage girl was how Ms. Abbott also nails the male side of the equation. Tom is a single dad trying to do his best for his kids but still constantly feels like he's failing them in one way or another. Eli is a handsome hockey star who is bewildered by the attention he gets from girls, but that doesn't stop him from occasionally hooking up with one of them. Tom and Eli often regard Deenie and her friends as mysterious creatures best observed from

some distance.

Another terrific aspect is how authentic the reaction of the community is portrayed. Parents embracing conspiracy theories based on no evidence and pointing fingers at school administrators and government health workers is exactly the kind of irrational and panic-stricken total bat-shit freak-out that would occur.

Mystery illness, paranoia, teenage angst, high school politics, sex, divorce, environmental issues, social media gossip..... This book has something for everyone and proves once again that if you aren't reading Megan Abbott, you should be.

Also posted at Kemper's Book Blog.

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### **Delee says**

After reading Megan Abbott's *Dare Me*, and recently learning she was coming out with another twisted "mean girl" tale- I knew I had to get my hands on it. As soon as it came in the mail...I dropped everything else I was reading, so I could focus on Abbott's newest, dark and sinister novel- *THE FEVER*.

Deenie's world is turned upside down when her best friend- Lise- starts convulsing on the floor in front of her entire class. After Lise is rushed to the hospital- rumors run rampant- kids texting and posting photos and gossip on social media sites. At first it seems like an isolated incident...

...but when other girls start showing the same symptoms- seizures, hallucinations and strange tics- The town of Dryden goes into panic mode. Is it something in the town's water? Why only girls? Is it an STD? A reaction to the HPV vaccination? Is it female teenage hysteria? Or is it something darker and more personal...because the victims all seem to somehow connect to Deenie herself.

*THE FEVER* is told from three different POVs-

Deenie Nash- a typical high school student- whose best friends Lise and Gabby were first to fall ill.

Eli Nash- Deenie's good looking brother, and heart throb to many a high school girl.

Tom Nash- Dennie and Eli's divorced father, main caregiver and beloved teacher at the high school.

Megan Abbott is quickly becoming one of my favorite authors. Once again she delivers a mesmerizing look into the frightening world of the modern American teenager. If you haven't read one of her books yet...what are you waiting for? Hurry..go. Go now!! I will wait. \*tap tap tap\*

\*ARC -Provided by publisher for review.

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## Trudi says

*Sexual debut.* Sometimes it seemed to Deenie that high school was like a long game of And Then There Were None. Every Monday, another girl's debut.

--*The Fever*, Megan Abbott

Nobody (and I mean **nobody**) writes the dark and secretive interiors of a teenage girl's psyche better than Megan Abbott. But make no mistake: while she is writing about teenagers, she *is not* writing Young Adult. Her books are so far removed from YA Lit it's not only a different country, but another *planet*. So if you haven't had the shocking and titillating pleasure to read her yet and have Ms. Abbott shelved as Young Adult, get her off there post-haste please -- asap -- I mean immediately.

Seriously, do it.

Go on.

I'll wait for you.

One of the things I've come to love about Abbott the most is that even when I think I've figured out how the story is going to go, she always manages to surprise me. And she never cheats. Here, she not only surprised me, she creeped the hell out of me, something I wasn't expecting at all. *The Fever* isn't a horror story, but Jesus damn, there are aspects of the story that are extremely unsettling and *creeeeeepy*. I was reading this into the wee hours of the morning last night, and got to this one part and the little hairs on the back of my neck stood to attention:

She started clearing her throat, and once she started it was like she couldn't stop. "But most of all it's here," she said, clawing at her neck. "It feels like there's something in my throat. And it's getting bigger."

::shiver::

I've been fangirling for Megan Abbott for awhile now, but with this she's made me her slave. And she's so pixie-cute petite you can fit her in your pocket. Looking at her mischievous, Mona Lisa smile you'd never expect her to so eloquently and ruthlessly explore the twisted, perilous, coming-of-age waters of teenage girls, waters that run black and deep. There are monsters that swim in that water, monsters that bite, scar and maim for life.

### **Megan Abbott**

My only sadness and regret is that I'm finished, and this book isn't even coming out until June, which means I've got a bit of a wait before I get my next Megan Abbott fix. I'm jonesing already. What can I say: she's made me her junkie bitch.

**A free copy was provided by the publishers through Netgalley for an honest review.**

**This review has also been posted to Busty Book Bimbo**

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### **Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

Crap. This book.

I think most of it I was just damned scared. Teenage girls.

They think the whole world revolves around them.

I've had some pretty bad experiences in RL with teenage girls who decided that something wrong was done to them and the means they will go to make someone pay. So this book for me is classified as horror. Real life flipping horror.

I almost didn't read this book after I realized the way it was headed. I can't say that I won't recommend it because honestly it's one of those it's not you book it's me moments for me.

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### **Joe Valdez says**

My "Girls Girls Girls" jag concludes with *The Fever*, the 2014 thriller by Megan Abbott. This is my fourth venture into the fiction of the Edgar Award winner who alternates between 20th century noir and between mysteries set in the present day, where high school girls use cell phones to destroy their enemies instead of a .45. This novel proves again that Abbott can write psychologically nuanced and compelling teenaged characters without being slave to the brain dead conventions of the Young Adult genre, but in tackling an outbreak storyline, baits her hook with lures that I wasn't biting on.

Deenie Nash is a sixteen-year-old high school sophomore in Dryden, a town of perpetual cloud cover that hints at the tempest brewing within its young women. Deenie's brother Eli is a popular hockey player with a parade of freshmen groupies. Their father is a well-liked chemistry teacher at their high school. Deenie's two best friends are Gabby Bishop and Lise Daniels. Gabby is a cello player who obtained a certain star power when her mother survived a brutal attack by her cocaine addled, claw hammer wielding father, while Lise is a chubby gigglepuss who dieted, lost her baby fat and turned into a goddess overnight.

The most remarkable thing about Deenie might be her lark to let a hockey player from Star-of-the-Sea High School she works with at a pizza parlor give her a ride home and parking in the woods, give her her first time. Deenie avoids Lise at school the ext day in shame. Seated next to Deenie in class, Lise goes into a seizure and falls to the floor. Two football players help carry her to the nurse's office, where Lise remains lucid, but bites the arm of the school nurse. She's retrieved by her protective mom. Hoping to share her news with Gabby, Deenie is unable to pry her friend away from a bohemian named Skye Osbourne too cool for school with plenty of pet theories on Lise.

*No one said anything for a moment. Skye was somehow to be trusted in these matters. It was part of her mystique. That white-blond hair and thrift-store peacoat, the slave bracelets and green vinyl cowboy boots. Sunny, the artist aunt she lived with but whom Deenie had never seen and who let Skye's ex-boyfriend sleep over, even though he was supposedly twenty-six years old, though no one had actually seen him either. The rumor was he'd been one of her aunt's students, even her boyfriend. After they broke up, Skye wore his coat, a long leather Shaft duster, to school every day until a hard winter rain shredded it.*

Encouraged by Gabby to cut class, Deenie attempts to visit Lise at home. She discovers that her friend has been transported to the hospital with a seizure. Reporting to the hospital with her father that night, Deenie learns that Lise suffered a cardiac arrest and hit her head on the coffeetable. Sneaking into Lise's hospital room, Deenie isn't convinced that the girl in the bed is Lise. Her philandering mother having moved to another town some time ago and her father difficult to confide to, Deenie loses her pillar of strength when Gabby collapses into a seizure during an orchestra recital. A video of the attack goes viral and Dryden begins to become unhinged with hysteria.

Eli encounters Lise's mother on their driveway at the crack of dawn, babbling about "the dangers our girls suffer at your hands." When Lise goes to visit Gabby, she finds Skye there with another hanger-on named Kim Court. During their visit, Gabby's jaw goes into uncontrolled convulsions. Lise's mother blames the mystery illness on the HPV vaccine that the school district recommended for its teenaged female students "before sexual debut," while Deenie has started to think more about Dryden Lake, a dead body of water with algae blooms that has drawn its swimmers, including Deenie's mother before she left them, and more recently, Lise, Gabby and Deenie.

When Kim Court is wheeled out of school in a gurney, Deenie is able to rule out the HPV vaccine as the perpetrator because Kim never received the shot. Kim posts a video of herself in the hospital and casts suspicion on Deenie, the common link between all the girls who are falling ill. State health officials begin to investigate while all parents and their paranoid teen daughters can do is speculate about the lake, the groundwater or something poisonous in the school. Deenie's sleuthing reveals that Lise was fooling around in the bushes by the school with a boy who Gabby believes was Eli. Deenie's brother, meanwhile, has misplaced his phone and become an object of affection for Skye.

*As he approached the classroom, he saw another girl lurking, but this one didn't seem sickly or afraid.*

*It was Skye Osbourne, wearing a long scarf the same color as her mouth, like those dark figs that hung from the tree by the practice rink every fall, the ones that split under your skates.*

*And this time it felt like she was looking for him.*

*"Ditch with me," she said, nodding her head toward the double doors.*

*He stopped, headphones still on.*

*"Why?"*

*"Because," she said, a slanting smile. "I'm pretty."*

*Funnily, Eli wasn't sure Skye was pretty.*

*If he saw her without all that hair, which looked like it'd been stripped from a corncob and massed thick, and without all the things she draped over and on top of herself, the scarves and snake rings and coiling bracelets, he wondered if he'd recognize her at all.*

*"What's the point of here," she added, waving something in her hand, a joint, a white Bic.*

*What's the point of here, he thought, looking at that fig mouth of hers.*

Megan Abbott has all the pieces to deliver a compelling outbreak drama with *The Fever*. Her characters are distinguishable in both behavior and dialogue and most of them have qualities that cut more than skin deep. Deenie, Gabby and Lise are believable teenagers, as is Eli, and I was ready to be emotionally invested in them as doomsday set in. I'm always grateful to find a teenage heroine in fiction who is sexually active and not treated like a pariah by her author. I'm also distrustful of plot and grateful that Abbott didn't try to write a medical thriller, but her novel is killed by ponderous existentialism.

One of my favorite writing tips comes from Trey Parker & Matt Stone, creators of *South Park*. Casual observers might not think the long running, crude animated series was a master course in narrative, but Parker's advice that every scene in a good story outline should end with the words "but" or "therefore" and lead into a new scene applies here. Stone's observation is that scenes concluding with "and then" before going somewhere else have been responsible for more messy movies than not. Novels too, like this one, which is one long "and then ... and then" after another. I grew disconnected and typing out my review summary, struggled to stay awake.

At the point in *The Fever* when the story needed to progress--with a quarantine, a race against the clock, a siege--there is instead too much wondering, speculating, reassuring. And repetition. I lost count of how many times characters stood around muttering, "Everything's going to be all right". Abbott was inspired by (view spoiler) and this choice seems like one much better suited to a short story than a novel,. I'm enamored by Abbott's skill at plundering the insecurities of teenage girls and expressing it through powerful, imaginative writing, but these girls deserved a more compelling story than this.

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### **Dana says**

The first 70% percent of the novel...

Reading the first 70% of this novel felt like a penance for a terrible crime. It was so **dull** and reminded me of English class in high school where everyone would say everything in the longest way possible to meet the word requirement. This novel felt twice as long as it needed to be.

The last 30% of the novel...

The novel improved exponentially. It was interesting and suspenseful. Unfortunately it was just too little too late. The last bit of the story did buff away some of my resentment ,but I still mourned my time wasted from reading this

Note: I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Dan Schwent says**

When Deenie's best friend suffers a violent seizure in class, the students are shocked. When other girls begin suffering from mysterious ailments, chaos ensues as the community tries to find a cure. Is a strange illness caused by HPV the culprit? What about the town's polluted lake? Or is it just hysteria?

**I got this from Netgalley.**

After seeing Catching Fire in the theater, I noticed most of the teenage girls in the crowd were sobbing. I remarked on this the following Monday at work. One man, whose wife has been a teacher for 30 years, said his wife calls it "teenage girl hysteria. When one girl feels a strong emotion, pretty soon they all feel it." I don't know how accurate all of that is but it was on my mind when I began reading The Fever.

Before I forgot to mention it, I had this cover song by The Cramps playing in my head portions of this book.

Anyway, The Fever is the tale of one girl falling victim to a mystery illness and the fallout from that event. Megan Abbott, as much as I love her noir tales, writes the hell out of what it's like to be a teenage girl during a time of crisis. It's like she used to be one or something...

I had a feeling what was up with the girls besides Lise who wound up in the hospital but it took me forever to figure out what actually happened to Lise. Megan paints a vivid picture of small town panic, high school girl politics, and how hard it must be to be the parent of a teenager. I think I'd rather be a guest at The Red Wedding than be a teenage girl in one of Megan Abbott's books.

The characters are well drawn. The Nash family were the POV characters for the novel. You've got the divorced dad who is a teacher at the high school where everything goes down, Eli, older son and star hockey player, and Deenie, the girl who knows all the girls who've fallen ill and is sure she'll be next.

Megan did a great job providing misdirection. I knew the HPV vaccine wasn't causing the trouble but she had me blaming the algae bloom in the polluted lake for part of the story, even though I was sure it was all in the girls' minds.

It was a great book. Megan Abbott makes teenage girl politics look like the Starks vs. The Lannisters. Four out of five stars.

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## Char says

3.5 stars!

**The Fever** features more messed up girls from Megan Abbott's dark, dark high school world.

I liked how it all worked out in the end, and I wondered if the "fever" ended up referencing the parents and other town officials, rather than the illness itself? When people's children are possibly in danger, there's no telling what parents will do to protect them.

As with most of Ms. Abbott's books that I've read so far though, it's the teenage girls that are the scariest of all-BY FAR. I could see parts of myself and parts of other girls I knew in high school in these characters.

I found **The Fever** to be slightly repetitive and I disliked the narrator of Deenie's father. The other two narrators were great and contributed a lot to my overall enjoyment of this book. I look forward to reading more from Megan Abbott.

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