



The Color of Lies

C.J. Lyons

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From *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author CJ Lyons comes *The Color of Lies*, a world drenched in color and mystery.

High school senior Ella Cleary has always been good at reading people. Her family has a rare medical condition called synesthesia that scrambles the senses—her Gram Helen sees every sound, and her uncle Joe can literally taste words. Ella's own synesthesia manifests itself as the ability to see colors that reveal people's true emotions...until she meets a guy she just can't read.

Alec is a mystery to Ella, a handsome, enigmatic young journalist who makes her feel normal for the first time in her life. That is, until he reveals the real reason why he sought her out—he wants to learn the truth behind her parents' deaths, the parents that Ella had always been told died in a fire. Alec turns Ella's world upside down when he tells her their deaths were definitely not an accident.

After learning her entire life has been a lie, Ella doesn't know who she can trust or even who she really is. With her adoptive family keeping secrets and the evidence mixing fact and fiction, the only way for Ella to learn the truth about her past is to find a killer.

Perfect for fans of Caroline B. Cooney, Ally Carter, and Jennifer Brown, *The Color of Lies* blurs the lines between black-and-white facts and the kaleidoscope of reality.

The Color of Lies Details

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From Reader Review *The Color of Lies* for online ebook

Stephanie Ward says

'The Color of Lies' is an intriguing young adult thriller that will have readers on the edge of their seat to the very end. There were several things I really enjoyed about this book and instead of trying to explain them in an order to make sense, I'm just going to list them.

Characters: I really liked both of the main characters - Ella and Alec. They were both complex and rounded with unique qualities and traits. They had their strengths and weaknesses, which made them feel realistic for me. I loved learning about Ella's amazing gift (her synesthesia) and was amazed that things like this actually exist. It was fascinating and made me want to learn more about it after I finished reading. Alec was a great character too and I really liked watching Ella meet him and then seeing their friendship begin and then grow into something more.

Writing Style: The story is told from both Ella and Alec's perspective, in alternating chapters. What I especially loved about this book was the author used the first person for each of the main characters. If you've read any of my other reviews, you know how important point of view is to me and can make or break a book in my opinion. This was fantastic and I loved that the author chose to do both characters in the first person in alternating chapters so we really got to know each of them. Normally with the first person you have one narrator who you get to know on a deeply personal level, but the author managed to make that happen with two characters with this story - which can't be an easy thing to do. I really enjoyed getting to know Ella and Alec both on a personal level - their hopes, fears, dreams, memories, and everything else in between were there. The reader has the chance to really get to know them both and connect with them early on in the story.

Plot: I'm a huge fan of mysteries and thrillers, so this was an easy choice for me to read. Like I mentioned, I loved the way the author made the story her own with Ella's synesthesia and the alternating narrators. I can't say much about the plot because I don't want to accidentally give anything away, but I will say that it kept me guessing most of the way through the book and the ending had me on the edge of my seat reading as fast as I could to see what was going to happen.

I highly recommend this book to fans of YA, mystery, thrillers, contemporary fiction, and even romance.

Disclosure: I received a copy of the book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Kelly Brigid says

“The world is filled with magic. You just have to look and listen”

***The Color of Lies* is a novel whose story is as alluring as its eye-catching cover and title.** Although the mystery isn't particularly original, I love the use of synesthesia in the plot, and how it shapes the way Ella perceives the world. She uses this rare medical condition as a crutch to decipher people's true intentions,

regardless of what lies they may conjure. Essentially, she can read the auras, and associates the colors that arise, with vivid emotions and feelings. Romance between Ella and Alec is sprinkled throughout, but it refuses to overpower the mystery – to my delight! While the conclusion is fairly predictable, it's enjoyable to witness unfolding, nevertheless!

The writing is flowery, but certainly beautiful. Lyons' poise is captivating and draws you in, without feeling too poetic and forced. I personally love writing styles that aren't excessively metaphorical, and Lyons' perfectly balances this line, especially when describing the auras Ella interprets. Reading from her first perspective is quite fascinating, and makes it simple for the reader to place themselves in her shoes. It displays her on a more humanized level. She's a merely a young girl, who is susceptible to confusion and indignation – emotions not very challenging for us to relate to.

Lovely side characters, who should've been present more. Oh, how I love Alec and Ella's two closest friends, Max and Rory. On a completely unrelated matter, I'm quite fond of the name, Rory. I'm not necessarily sure why, but I've always found it to be lovely. This held true for Rory in *The Color of Lies*. She's a remarkably loyal and compassionate friend, who is far stronger than most presume. Her devotion to Ella is wonderful, and the utter oblivion she has about Max's feelings for her is amusing. Though Max is awfully stubborn, he's also kind and willing to wound his pride if it means helping Ella. Alec is a precious little bean, whose thoughtful nature is adorable in every regard. Sure, he may have an issue with speaking more than he should at times, but I love him all the more for it.

The mystery behind Ella's mother's murder is neat, but easily foreseen. Overall, I didn't consider the novel to fall victim to many tropes prevalent in YA literature, but wish the mystery could've delved through more unpredictable paths. Perhaps, a few more characters or elements could've been introduced to create a wider pool of individuals to suspect. *The Color of Lies* is a fun thriller with enough tensivity to have you biting your nails and scratching your scalp, and is perfect for those scouring for a light mystery!

I received an ARC from the publisher in exchange for an honest review!

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DJ says

Copy provided by the publisher and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Ella thinks she knows how her parents died, she's accepted it and tried to move on. Then someone from her past pops up on her birthday to change the way she see everything. Her life becomes chaos and confusion. She realizes she doesn't know as much about her family or her friends as she thought she did. *The Color of Lies* was a fast paced thrill ride, full of twist and turns! I wasn't expect that ending at all!

Christy says

Fast and addictive while keeping me on my toes...just how I like my mysteries!

Alex (Briennai) says

I've always been interested in books where a character has synesthesia, and this book was a thriller that had multiple synesthetes! I just knew I had to pick it up.

Ella is the only one in her family who seems to have a form of synesthesia that allows her to still live a normal life. Her grandmother and several others live their lives as recluses, avoiding sounds and words that might make them physically ill. Ella knows that her parents died in a fire when she was three, but then a boy named Alec comes along and turns her whole life upside down. He claims that her parents did not die in an accidental fire, that they were murdered. He says that he met Ella when she was younger, but Ella says that she was never at the scene of the fire. She must decide whether to trust Alec or to go back to believing her version of her parents' death.

Alec was trying to work with Ella to figure out the truth. It was definitely awesome to have a diverse group of characters in this story. I found that I didn't quite connect with him at certain parts of the story, but I was with him by the time that I reached the end.

The way that I would describe this story would be with the letter A. There are a lot of things going up the slope to build to the climax, and it seems a little bit slow climbing up the steep slope. Then, there is the top. The climax is abrupt, and almost out of nowhere. Lastly, there is a huge downward fall, where everything seems to happen all at once. And then we have a time skip at the end, and an almost "where are they now" with the characters, which I really enjoyed.

The story was good and had a lot of suspenseful details leading up to the climax, but because the ending felt so rushed, I still lost track of things. But I really enjoyed the book up until that point!

Ella in particular also went through a lot of character development as she started to remember things that she had forgotten over the years. I really loved her character, and how much she cared about her family. She was never a spoiled teenage brat, even if she didn't have the best circumstances.

Overall, this was an addictive thriller, and I enjoyed my time reading it! I hope you enjoy this novel as much as I did!

I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a new YA mystery-suspense novel.

I received an advance copy of this book and this is my voluntary review.

Kathi Rauscher says

This was a fast moving story. Told by both Ella and Alec. A mystery to be solved after Ella learns the truth of her parents death when she was a toddler. Seeing people the way Ella does with her synesthesia is a unique perspective. And to have friends as loyal as Max and Rory is a blessing.

Lisa Mandina says

I am a big fan of this author's YA books: *Broken* and *Watched*. And I am also very intrigued by the whole synesthesia thing. I even have a really good friend who has the condition. I remember first reading about synesthesia when I was in college. Studying to be a science teacher, I had a subscription to *Discover* magazine, which I would read cover to cover. That story on people who always thought of certain numbers having a specific color, or sometimes words had a taste to them, that story stuck with me. This story was a really good one that used a few different types of synesthesia symptoms for characters in a family, since it is considered to be genetic. I feel like this author with her medical background is able to be very realistic about things like this disorder, the same as she was with the genetic heart defect in *Broken*. But we also had at the heart of this story a very good mystery. To me, this book is right up there with many adult mystery titles that have a medical aspect to them. It reminds me in a way of the good old fashioned Robin Cook novels. Less complicated and conspiracy theory-ish, but definitely as good of a mystery with things you know are coming, but don't always see completely until the bad guys begin giving their plots away. I guess that makes sense since the author does write those same books for adults. In this case I guess my point is that she does this well within the YA genre as well.

Now I had a few questions about how it all wrapped up, and if there was more faking going on than just identities. And maybe those things were actually touched upon, but I was at the exciting action point of the book and probably reading faster to get to find out how we could keep both Ella and her friends and family safe. Other questions I pondered when I had to put the book down to go back to work included wondering if schools have synesthesia as something they might use to put a student on an IEP, or Individualized Education Plan, so that they could get help from the special education teachers. Because it seems to me that it could cause some learning environments to not be the best suited in some cases. At some point I mean to reach out to those types of teachers in my school just to find out for myself about this very topic.

Highly recommended book, one I will be ordering for my school library with future budget money.

This review originally posted on my blog, [Lisa Loves Literature](#).

Jennifer says

This is a very ambitious book. Synesthesia, mental illness, identity theft, war refugees, teen angst, race, murder... It's a smattered smattering.

This author has a talent for describing *things*. Lyons's descriptions of color and auras and eyes are done well. She clearly is a medical doctor that knows what she is talking about when it comes to procedure.

But that's about it. The story and reactions seem inappropriate for coming-of-age young adults and teens. They act like their pasts are storied and experienced (the incredibly vivid memories they share are from age 3); they act like their present is high stakes in their careers and ambitions (they are high school seniors and one college freshman)... While storied pasts and high stakes are technically true by the time the plot is resolved, it is highly unbelievable that 18 year olds would actually take things *this seriously* with very little to go on. They've barely graduated high school. I expect this sort of bland, dramatic, and frankly paranoid behavior from someone much older with a lot more life established (and more at stake).

This takes place over 3 days in the year 2011. I was suspicious of how little the teenage characters are using their phones - as well as the fact that at some point a character texts from their pocket without looking (I assume this is only possible because she still has a phone with actual buttons). Placing this in rural, central Pennsylvania just after the recession also helps to set the grey landscape that could excuse the tone of the characters' attitudes.

The characters are flat. Just because the author gives them hobbies and established this **very hard** and very early on, doesn't mean they are well rounded. We are told that they like or feel things, instead of being shown, which is ironic given the main character's synesthesia as an opportunity to really paint people as they are. The synesthesia, the details of which are explained repeatedly, feels like it is forgotten by the author as a tool to set the tone for a lot of scenes. At some point, Ella can see the aura of words on paper and lines from a movie... What are the limits? I'm not even going to complain about the overused trope of that "special someone" immune from the main character's powers.

I find it also pretty bold of this author to write from the perspective of a young man of color. While the effort is commendable to be inclusive, I'm just not sure Alec's thoughts or actions are realistic for a young black man of a presumably blended family from South Carolina. He wanted to wave to everyone on the street in a strange, predominantly white town in 2011? While I am no more inclined than the author to provide a genuine point of view, I highly doubt this. There are so many potentially unexplored layers to this character that it is a shame he was grossly oversimplified. At the very least, perhaps he shouldn't have been written in first person.

The fact that some characters are briefly mentioned as adult war refugees with no discussion whatsoever on the impact of that heavy experience on their lives is a grievous oversight and distasteful as a plot point.

*** A Note on the Audiobook Narrator ***

Good grief. The way she makes each character pronounce "ident-tit-ty" is straight out of drama class and akin to a knife scraping a plate. Accents came and went. Every character sounded bored. Some sounded bratty. And the breathlessness she breathed into Rory made her a caricature of a teenage bimbo instead of the supportive, optimistic friend I have a feeling she was meant to be. (At one point, I wouldn't have been surprised if the voice chosen for Joe started chanting "Red Rum. Red Rum!")

I'm just generally grumpy and annoyed about this book overall. Because I see so much potential in it, I am disappointed by the execution. I do not recommend this to young adult readers at all. I hesitate to recommend it to adults.

Vicky Who Reads says

3.5 stars

I've had a great year reading mysteries so far, and *The Color of Lies* did not disappoint with how it built up the backstory of Ella and her parents' death.

I *adored* reading about Ella and her family and their synesthesia, and it was really cool to read about the colors Ella saw and how she interpreted them, as well as her grandmother's feeling sounds and her uncle's reaction to certain words that became tastes (like, apparently 'sugar' had a bad taste for him!). I don't know

that much about synesthesia and thought it was only limited to colors, but now that I know I definitely want to research more about it because it sounds really cool.

Plus, the twistiness of the story was top notch, and I think Lyons plotted some of the confusion and the mystery out well, especially as Ella begins to doubt who she should trust and if the people in her life--the people who have been raising her--were lying.

This was probably the highlight of the book, and the part I would recommend the most to anyone who's interested in this book--read it for the twists and mystery!

I did find the romance to be somewhat cumbersome--although I thought they were cute, I didn't really feel like Ella should be in a relationship when she's going through so much emotionally and it felt a little instalove-like. But Ella and Alec were cute together and I loved reading their different point of views.

This story is told in two points of view, Ella and Alec's, although Ella's is much more dominant and we see a lot of the story from her side. It felt pretty traditional in its male/female POV structure, and I kind of wish Lyons had switched it up a little to something less structured.

I do feel like I just won't remember this story much outside of the synesthesia. I just didn't feel connected enough with the story outside of the time I was reading to really grasp the long-term effects of this. But not every book is meant to be a stick-with-you-forever book, and I think *The Color of Lies* is great for just a relaxing read.

Overall, *The Color of Lies* was an interesting mystery read that was well-written and something I ended up having a positive experience with, even if it didn't turn out to be that memorable for me. I'd recommend to fans of mystery and thriller based on twists more than action, and anyone who likes a little dash of romance in their books too.

Thank you so much to The FFBC and Blink for sending me an advance reader's copy in exchange for an honest review!

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Heather says

I received a complimentary NetGalley copy of *The Color of Lies* from JustRead Tours and a positive review is not required.

Oh. My. God. I was not prepared for the whirlwind that was *The Color of Lies*. I don't think I've read a thriller quite like this one. There a tad bit of YA-ness in some of the language and character building, but the storyline is completely out of the ordinary. So buckle your seatbelt for this one.

The Color of Lies follows Ella, a girl with synesthesia, who lost her parents in a fire when she was a toddler. So Ella basically sees people's emotions through the color of their aura. Pretty cool, huh? Ella's world is turned upside down when she meets a guy named Alex who tells her that her parents' deaths

may not have been an accident at all.

I won't lie, the book starts off a bit slow. A lot of the characters annoyed me at first and Ella's best friends, Max and Rory, were pretty one dimensional. But then the mystery slowly starts to unravel and all of a sudden tryout caught up in a story you can't put down. Seriously, I didn't even want to take a sip out of my water glass.

My brain was like "I gotta know what happens next".

I was completely caught off guard with the resolution. Pretty shocked. I had to reread a couple of passages because I couldn't believe it. C.J. Lyons does an amazing job at building the suspense in this novel, which makes up for some of the one-dimensional characters. She weaves a story that is both fascinating and horrific.

If you're looking for an awesome thriller that's out of the ordinary, pick up a copy of *The Color of Lies*!

Victoria Bunce says

I received a copy of THE COLOR OF LIES on NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you to the publisher and author.

Five stars and here's why:

This book is riveting. I simply couldn't put it down. The pacing is fantastic, the concept is unique, and the suspense nearly killed me. I had to drop everything to finish this story in one night!

Ella has a special gift called synesthesia. I had no concept this was a real thing until I Googled it! She can read people and this ability is both a benefit and detriment to any relationship she encounters because of her gift. Ella sees right through people and their intentions; either bad or good. Ella is not the only one gifted in her family as her uncle can taste every word and her grandmother can see every sound.

Until one day, Ella meets Alec. He's an enigma to Ella because she can't read him for some reason. This makes Alec intriguing and for the first time ever, Ella wants to get to know him better. After all, he's a hella-hot, young journalist who wants to learn everything about Ella. Soon after meeting Alec, Ella discovers that her whole life has been a big whopper of a lie. She doesn't know whom she can trust. Ella doesn't even know who she really is as her life has been upended after her discovery. What happens next had my head spinning and I dropped everything until I read the very last word.

C.J. Lyons does not disappoint. If you love fantastic writing, a plot splattered with color and infused with mystery, then this book is for you. Highly recommend.

Jazmen says

The Color of Lies relies heavily on its interesting characters, not-so-original plot, and captivating writing to

keep its reader--but as for the thrill, it just doesn't sizzle enough.

YA novels don't tend to be too wowing in the thrill department and while this one is not so different--what works is how engaging and captivating the story is written.

The writing is beautiful and really draws the reader in, it just took a bit of time to get there. The most action happens in the very latter half of the novel. If you are a patient reader, this won't be too much of a bother.

Ella or Nora depending on what section of the novel you're in has synesthesia--which is a fancy way of saying she can read your auras--based on what you're feeling, which is interesting in and of itself, and not used too often--giving the novel a boost in the unique department.

Ella's parents died in a fire and she's believed that her whole life, until the charismatic yet shy, Alec comes into town blowing up her entire world.

And he does that indeed.

He shakes up her world and readers get to come along for the journey of self-discovery and also to find out what really happened to her parents. What is a freak accident, or were they murdered?

Lyons does a good job of dangling the mystery over our heads, but for the wait, though it was sort of shocking, it also was predictable in that it made the most sense to happen/end the way it did.

This is a better selection of the YA mysteries available, but it just doesn't wow--but it gets major points for originality, interesting characters, and a decent ending.

Recommended for readers who like a more realistic mystery with the cant-put-this-down factor.

Jessica says

YA mysteries and thrillers are still relatively new territory for me, mainly because I still always seem to gravitate towards my safe fantasy territory. Which is why, when the opportunity to review a book like *The Color of Lies* presents itself, I'll happily oblige. This story in particular caught my attention because our protagonist had synesthesia. How CJ Lyons planned to incorporate that into Ella's story intrigued me, because it seemed to me that the ability to read auras would really come in handy in the event of a thriller. Ah, how right I was.

It should be noted that I don't have a lot of background knowledge of synesthesia, and I always assumed that it revolved around colors. So it was so fascinating to me to meet Ella's family members, each with their own unique way of experiencing the world. In particular, Ella's uncle Joe had the ability to taste words. How cool is that? I just kept imagining what that would be like, to be able to taste the things that you say. Absolutely fascinating, if I do say so myself.

I also really enjoyed Ella as a main character. She was enough of an adult to keep the teen angst to a minimum, but enough of a sheltered child to make this whole mystery really flow. Her love for her family and friends made me fall for her pretty quickly, but her love of art really sealed the deal. Had this book only been from Ella's point of view, I think I would have been completely smitten.

Unfortunately, this is a dual POV book. I normally am not a fan of dual POV anyway, but I really felt Alec's portion took away from some of the growth that we could have seen from Ella. I'll admit, Ella does get a fair bit more time in the limelight than Alec does. However since Alec starts out the story holding all the cards, and Ella has to play catch up, it makes her seem a little weak. I knew she wasn't. CJ Lyons has written a strong character who, despite her whole life being turned upside down multiple times, pushes through. I just wanted more of that, and more of her.

As for the plot line, I'm of the opinion that it was actually pretty easy to unravel. My inkling about how the book was going to end started around the 1/3 mark, and the further the read the more I knew that I was absolutely right. I know that Lyons was trying to lay a trail of breadcrumbs. In fact, I think that some of that actually was done well. However there is a lot in the first half of the book that all but lights a neon sign pointing to what will happen at the end. As I said, I don't read a ton of mystery and I was able to unravel it. I'm not sure how die hard readers of this genre will feel.

All in all, this was a pretty solid read. The Color of Lies drew me in with its premise, and kept me reading because I fell in love with the characters. Although the plot wasn't quite as twisty as I hoped for, that didn't stop this from being a book I all but flew through. I know this will be a satisfying read for a lot of you out there, and so I'll happily recommend you adding it to your reading list.

Mar says

4.5/5 stars *NO SPOILERS*

"She wasn't afraid of drowning- she was afraid of when she had to come up for air."

I don't think I have the words to justify how compelling this novel truly is. I am **SHOOK** to the core.

The Color of Lies is told from two points of view: Ella, a girl without parents, trying to find a way to explain to her grandmother, uncle, and godfather, that she doesn't want to take over the family business that was left to her by her parents, and instead wants to study art. And Alec, a journalist student from South Carolina, trying to solve the mystery of a lifetime that surrounds the deaths of Ella's parents. But when Alec arrives in this small Pennsylvania town, it turns Ella's world, and everything Alec knows, completely upside-down.

When I first came across this novel, it was the cover that captured my eye. But when I took a closer look into the novel itself, I knew I just had to read it. I am not a big mystery/thriller reader myself, but I **COULD NOT** put this book down. There was a constant push and pull between characters, with a classic who-dun-it, and made this book all the more intriguing and always kept me guessing.

I adore the style of writing, and applaud Lyons for writing such a dynamic, complex novel. I **HIGHLY** recommend to anyone looking for a new mystery to read, as it has utterly captured me.

- Mar

Chandra Claypool (wherethereadergrows) says

I love it when a YA thriller doesn't read TOO YA. There's some romance but it's so limited it doesn't prove to be a huge part which is nice. Thank the lord for no love triangles. (Ok, so there's a little bit of instalust but hey, it's a YA book after all....) What we get is a story about a girl who lost her parents at a young age to a fire. Her world gets turned upside down when Alec shows up on her 18th birthday with questions about her parents murder.... **screechy brakes** excuse me? MURDER?!

Ella and her family are gifted with synesthesia - Ella's particular "talent" are seeing people's auras - or the colors they emit as they emote. How interesting would THAT be? There's always good with the bad... but when you meet someone who has no color... how do you know if he can be trusted?

YA thrillers are surprising me more and more these days. I'd say this reads more contemporary for me over thriller/suspense. A fast, enjoyable ride. Nothing convoluted.. but a great read in its simplicity as well. I found it a bit easily predictable and the ending seemed to out pace the first half. While the book did read fast, I was surprised to notice that halfway through, we're still only into day two of the entire timeline. Just something I noticed, not something that took away from the enjoyment.

Those who like the lighter side of a thriller and the YA genre - will take a liking to this.

3.5 stars rounding to 4 for GR.
