



## Before I Fall

*Lauren Oliver*

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With this stunning debut novel, *New York Times* bestselling author Lauren Oliver emerged as one of today's foremost authors of young adult fiction. Like Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why* and Gayle Forman's *If I Stay*, *Before I Fall* raises thought-provoking questions about love, death, and how one person's life can affect so many others.

For popular high school senior Samantha Kingston, February 12—"Cupid Day"—should be one big party, a day of valentines and roses and the privileges that come with being at the top of the social pyramid. And it is...until she dies in a terrible accident that night.

However, she still wakes up the next morning. In fact, Sam lives the last day of her life seven times, until she realizes that by making even the slightest changes, she may hold more power than she ever imagined.

Named to numerous state reading lists, this novel was also recognized as a Best Book of the Year by Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, *The Daily Beast*, NPR, and *Publishers Weekly*. It has been optioned for film by Fox 2000 Pictures.

Supports the Common Core State Standards.

## Before I Fall Details

Date : Published October 25th 2010 by HarperCollins (first published March 2nd 2010)

ISBN : 9780061726811

Author : Lauren Oliver

Format : Paperback 544 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Fiction, Romance, Fantasy

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# From Reader Review Before I Fall for online ebook

## Penny says

Before I get to the review I just wanted to let everyone know I don't typically write reviews for books I love. The reason being, I'm not good at writing worth-while and positive reviews (as opposed to my uncanny ability to write crazy rants about books I totally loathe). Or rather, I know I'm not up to the task: writing a review worthy of a book so beautiful, so eloquently written I can't stop thinking about it long after I've finished it.

*I know* there is nothing I could say that could not be better said by the book itself, or even just a review written by someone who is ~~smarter than me~~ has a way with words.

That said, here I am, attempting to write a review worthy of *Before I Fall*. If I fail, which is more than likely, please do not hold it against the book--it isn't the book's fault I'm not a talented writer.

So without further ado...

Popular girl Samantha Kingston thinks a lot about the what she's done throughout her seventeen years of life as she relives her last day over and over again. In all, Samantha is given seven chances to figure out what went wrong, what chain of events brought about her death. Seven opportunities to change and make things right. Seven days to save herself.

At first glance, Samantha--Sam--doesn't come across as anything special. Sure, she's popular but other than her superior social standing she's basically your average teenager. Her biggest concern is her virginity, which she will be losing to her boyfriend that night--she's freaked out but feels it's time to get it over with. Other than that she's wondering how many roses she'll have by the end of Cupid Day and if she looks okay considering she didn't get to shower that morning.

However, it doesn't take long before we're given a better, more accurate picture of the type of person Samantha Kingston truly is. Over the course of the day she cheats on a test, flirts shamelessly with her calculus teacher, cuts class, gets pretty drunk and treats her classmates like garbage--Sam and her friends are especially cruel to one girl in particular.

All in all it's an average school day for Samantha Kingston.

Clearly I didn't like Samantha Kingston at the beginning of this novel. She's a horrible self-absorbed teenager. What's worse is the fact that she thinks so highly of herself and her friends, saying:

"I'm not going to lie, though. It's nice that everything's easy for us. It's a good feeling knowing you can basically do whatever you want and there won't be any consequences."

And then goes on to say:

"If high school were a game of poker, Lindsey, Ally, Elody and I would be holding 80 percent of the cards."

After Sam finishes recounting her last day--in which she clearly does not come out looking good--she tells us about how she died, then says:

"Before you start pointing fingers, let me ask you: is what I did really so bad? So bad I deserved to die? So bad I deserved to die like that? Is what I did really so much worse than what anybody else does? Is it really so much worse than what you do? Think about it."

Like everyone else I went to high school with girls like Samantha Kingston and her friends. And like most everyone else I *haaaaated* those girls. So. Much. Who wants to read a story about a bunch of horrible teenagers? No one. But you know what? Turns out when I was seventeen I was not that much better than Samantha Kingston. Sure I wasn't a total A-hole, but the truth is I gossiped, lied, cheated, cut class--the works. And I treated a lot of people badly--peers and adults. But I haven't really spent too much time thinking about the person I was in high school. Not until Sam asks us, the readers, if what she did is so much worse than what we do.

*That's why I kept reading.*

As Sam relives February 12 we see her grow and change. At first her attempts at being a better person are so half-hearted, or ill-concieved you wonder if she's actually trying. And yeah, as the reader I got frustrated with Sam. I wanted to see her change right away, and she didn't. Then I remembered she's a spoiled teenager that hasn't been made to work for anything in her life. Remember, it was Sam herself who admitted:

"It's nice that everything's easy for us. It's a good feeling knowing you can basically do whatever you want and there won't be any consequences."

That's Sam's mentality at the beginning of this story, her reality, so of course she has no clue how to truly change, to be the better person.

However, not many February 12ths pass when a horrifying turn of events forces Sam to acknowledge the ugly truth. Sam takes a good look at herself, at her friends, and what she sees drives her to an all-time low--when Sam hits bottom she *really* hits bottom.

Sam needs that low point, the chance to spiral out of control, even if it's just for one day because it is only after she's humbled we see her make any significant changes. She starts to look at all she has (or rather, had) and be grateful for it. She looks at her family in a whole new light, and realizes just how much she truly loves them. She looks at her little sister specifically--a sweet little seven-year-old who is proud of who she is--and realizes she admires her little sister because she embraces the things that make her different from all her peers.

After Sam's low point her thoughts, her ideas become downright beautiful/amazing. There were many times I stopped to reread passages, and even consider them for a bit. Example:

"Maybe you can afford to wait. Maybe for you there's a tomorrow. Maybe for you there's one thousand tomorrows, or three thousand, or ten, so much time you can bathe in it, roll around in it, let it slide like coins through your fingers. *So much time you can waste it.*

But for some of us there's only today. And the truth is, you never really know."

It's at this point that my feelings from this book went from like to love.

And no, Sam still doesn't get things right away. She still struggles, but the important part is she's really trying, really working. She learns from her mistakes and makes corrections. Sam realizes, despite her belief that she can't be fixed, it's never too late to change. Some of Sam's changes don't come about until the 11th hour, *but they do come*.

And yes, I love how this book ends. I know there are many people who simply didn't like this book because of how it ends, and for the life of me I cannot understand why. Any other ending would have been a complete cop-out (*think about it*). Plus, (view spoiler)

I love this book, it is one of my favorites. I haven't been able to stop thinking about this book since I finished reading it two weeks ago, and because of that it will always have a home on my bookshelf.

By the way, I've spent an embarrassingly long amount of time trying to cobble together a semi-decent review of this book. Now go purchase a copy of Before I Fall, stat, you won't be sorry.

P.S. this book deserves six stars.

Update April 4, 2010: my husband, who typically doesn't like any of the books I like, just stayed up all night reading Before I Fall. When he finished it he woke me up to thank me for all but shoving this book down his throat (and he wasn't being ironic. Believe me, I checked). He sincerely likes this book. More than anything he loves the way Lauren Oliver writes, but overall he likes the story quite a bit. It was nice talking to him about it this morning, we had a very pleasant discussion. :)

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### **Bonnie says**

Warning: Major Spoilers below (including the very ending). And foul language. MUCH foul language

La la la, spoilers.

Still spoilers.

And language to make your grandmother blush.

Fuck you book. Fuck. You. I want to drop this book to two stars for that *goddamn ending*. But I can't because even with that fucking ending it is not really a two-star book at all. So it gets dropped one star. DAMN YOU. I knew the ending was coming. This is the problem with reading the ending first (well, near the beginning). I think I'd have been even angrier if I hadn't known, though, because I'd be expecting that it would have a *Groundhog Day's* ending and Sam, having learned her lesson on being a better person, would get to enjoy the new, better life she's created. But no. She stays dead. FUCK YOU BOOK. I get your point, *Oliver*. Sam's real mission was to sacrifice herself for Juliet. That's what she came back seven days for, to be Juliet's guardian angel or something. You know what? FUCK THAT. Because Juliet might be better off, but everyone else in Sam's life? You don't think it will completely devastate her family? Her little sister? Her parents? Do you know what the divorce rate is for parents who have lost a child?!?!? It's not like they remember the other days Sam lived after death, either. So their last memories of her will be a wholly inadequate moment before Sam ran off to school and was nice and not a brat. Not a whole day together, not a dinner out, nothing big or something to hold onto. AND WHAT ABOUT KENT?!?!?!? He gets to see the girl he loves—who has just stopped being a bitch and admitted she likes him—die. How horrible. Really think he's going to be okay, Oliver? Really think you didn't just fuck up the most sympathetic character in your entire book? Scratch that, the *two* most sympathetic characters in your book (adorable little sister Izzy and adorable, amazing Kent)!?!?! Just because we don't get to see the tragedy rip through everyone's life like a bomb and you have Sam give some bullshit uplifting monologue at the end *doesn't make it okay*. Do you know why *Groundhog Day* doesn't end with Bill Murray dead? BECAUSE NOBODY WANTS TO SEE THAT ENDING!!! We want to see him ride off into the sunset with Andie Macdowell, both happier and better. WE DON'T WANT TO SEE BILL MURRAY'S GODDAMN FUNERAL!!! GAAAAAHHHHHH.

The book started out slowly, and Sam is a right proper bitch to begin with. It isn't until afterlife day five (she gets seven days) that she begins to turn around. Although the complete fucking breakdown of day four was *glorious*. I think I'm a masochist, because I love angry, self-destructive, insane meltdowns by heroines, especially when they end with the realization that there was no beauty in the breakdown, that it was a horrible, horrible mess and that instead of feeling free they feel even worse than before. And I especially love it when they are comforted by adorable, awesome love interests like Kent.

Although set-up Sam was annoying (though realistic, ouch), when Sam developed and stopped being so shallow and self-absorbed I loved her. And I loved her even more for knowing how horrid she had been. There was so much development, and it all rang true. WHICH MADE THE ENDING EVEN WORSE.

You know what, Oliver? I don't feel bad anymore for thinking your *Delirium* was a pathetic piece of crap cashing in on the post-Hunger Games dystopian YA craze. Because at least it will prevent you from DESTROYING MY SOUL for however many years it takes you to finish writing your idiotically premised trilogy (a society that hates love? Really? *Really?*). Maybe by then you will have learned a lesson and not written such, terrible, terrible endings to what otherwise could be a five star-level book. I actually contemplated hurling this book at the wall when I finished it, but it is 2am and I am a guest in someone else's house and I don't want to be rude. Now I'm going to pretend that the ending didn't happen and Kent and Sam live happily ever after and both go to college in Boston and show up happily married at Izzy's high school graduation and everyone isn't destroyed by grief because Sam threw herself into a truck for Juliet. Don't think I can't, Oliver, because I've managed to half-convince myself over the years that *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* ends with Jen & Lo and Li Mu Bai & Yu Shu Lien happily married with beautiful babies and everyone hanging out and kung fu fighting together (the real ending made me angry for days). So, *Oliver*, when I think about this book in the future (IF I THINK ABOUT IT AT ALL), don't think I won't half-believe that Kent and Sam are happily married with beautiful babies (AND MAYBE EVEN KUNG FU FIGHTING, I DON'T KNOW!!!).

P.S. If you are masochistic enough to read the book after this review, listen to “Only If You Run” by Julian Plenti on Days 5-7. It is awesome and if this ever gets made into a movie (WITH A BETTER ENDING) it *has* to be on the soundtrack.

**Addendum:** Okay, I've calmed down a bit and got some sleep and now am more coherent and less blindingly angry. And I've figured out why the ending bothered me so much: it was a cheap trick. Partly because it feels like Oliver's response to those who will identify this as *Groundhog Day* meets *Mean Girls* (which it totally is, but in a good way). The ending seems to scream, “It might be like those movies, but look *how much deeper this is*. The main character *dies*. You don't see THAT in those movies, hunh?!?” But mostly because martyrdom is fiction's shorthand for redemption. And, sometimes, it works (see: my undying love for Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*). But in this book it doesn't. There's a quote banging around my head that I can't source: “Dying is easy. It's living that's hard.” And dying was the easy way out for Sam. She spent her entire afterlife knowing that she would never have to live with the consequences of her actions. It was most obvious in the utter breakdown of day four, but it was present every single day. Throwing yourself in front of a truck can't be easy, but for Sam I think it would be even harder for her to live out the rest of high school, to have to stand up to Lindsay next time she tortured Juliet or wrote nasty graffiti about other girls or spread rumors about how so-and-so was such a slut or tried to talk Sam out of dating a social loser like Kent. Dealing with that every single day and *knowing* she had to live with the ramifications of her actions would be a *true* test of character for Sam. Could she do it? Could she stand up to the constant social pressure? Could she stand up to her *friends*? To Lindsay? Could she be nice to people and defend them and not let her friends be cruel? Could she risk being unpopular? Or would she slide back to the easier path, staying silent, telling herself it's not her fault because *she* didn't start it, that she saved Juliet's life that one time, so her karmic debt is paid?

A better ending would have Sam not be able to return to normal until she stands up for Juliet at the party. Not try to talk Juliet out of suicide in private. Not avoid future consequences by dying. But being there when Juliet walks into the party and Lindsay starts a chant of “Pscyho! Psycho!” Standing in front of *everyone*, in front of all her friends and peers, and telling them all to shut it, to stop being mean to Juliet. To tell everyone that Juliet's *not* weird, that they need to grow up and stop being such bullies. And then to wake up the next day and go to school and deal with the fallout of *that*. And actually befriend Juliet and deal with whatever the social consequences are. A less shocking ending, yeah. But a more satisfying one.

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### **Heather says**

I hated this book, and loved it. It's cruel, and frustrating, unfair, and yet it's also sad, and hopeful, and honest and authentic. I'm not sure how everyone else feels about their High School experience, but I despised mine. You couldn't pay me to go back. However, this story was so vivid, that I felt as though I could smell the grease from the cafeteria, feel the rough tile on the bathroom floor and the chill of that cold fateful night. I even cringed at the hurt that all these characters so casually inflicted upon one another, so I guess I went back after all.

Sam is not a nice girl. In fact, she is a bit of a bitch. Scratch that, she is a bitch. She doesn't set out to maliciously attack anyone, but she doesn't stand against it either. She won't instigate the chant of “psycho” at the school outcast, but she shouts it just as loudly as her group of popular she witches. Worse, she actually believes that others should just accept the way they are mercilessly attacked because she was once mocked in the third grade for blushing, as if blushing were the equivalent to being called a whore, who bared the goods for grass when the person at the butt of that malicious lie doesn't smoke or has even been kissed. Naturally,

when Samantha meets an unfortunate end after forcing us to spend a day in her insipid world, I hardly felt bad for her. How sad is that? A teen girl dies tragically, and I thought she got what she deserved. Thus is the beauty of this book.

Told in seven chapters, each representing the same day, *Before I Fall* tells the story of a typically popular girl, who gets six days to right some wrongs. Make no mistake. I hardly think one day is sufficient to mend the hurt that these girls created. It in no way rectifies the things that Samantha has done, but it's a start in the right direction. Rather, I felt this story allowed readers to realize that there is depth to us all, even the bitches and we all have thoughts that should shame us. The character development of all the characters was astounding, and the character growth, drastic though it may be, was entirely believable.

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### **Karolina says**

I had high expectations for this book for 2 reasons: 1. I loved *Delirium*, it's one of my favorite series and 2. so many people raved about *Before I fall*, saying it is the best of Oliver's work. I couldn't disagree more. At the beginning I couldn't get into the story, it was a bit repetitive, so I had to put it down and read something else in the meantime. In the end I was getting a bit frustrated as I couldn't understand the whole idea of the book. Having finished it yesterday I've been thinking about it since and I still don't get it. Let me explain why...

The whole story is focused on Sam's last day and her death in a car accident. Afterwards she keeps reliving it, no matter what she does when she wakes up it's still Friday the 12. The main thing I have a problem with is the dimension she is in, first I was hoping it's kind of coma and she will come back to life, but no she (or her soul?) keeps existing in a kind of a limbo and is trying to move on.

Final conclusion of the book is that she had to learn to sacrifice her life (remember she's already dead) in order to move on, where? why? no explanation whatsoever. She just dies one last time and that's it. And even tho she does change during the whole journey, and also learns all the awful things her fiend did (including driving someone to suicide) she still loves her because she's her friend, really? I understand Oliver tried to write a book about cruel reality of teenage life and high school, wanted to pass a message of values more important than money or popularity. That I understand, everything else not so much.

The book is well written, and if you don't focus too much on the metaphysical dimension of it you might enjoy it. I think that was my problem, I put too much thought into it. Unfortunately I was not affected by it and didn't enjoy it as much as I thought I would.

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### **Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

**I am not going for these evil •sshole girls on here!**

I cringed and raged through most of the book. I didn't give a rat's ~~ss~~ about these evil girls. The worse was Lindsay to me.

The only reason I have the book 2 stars is because Sam redeemed herself after all of the days she relived. She went back and did all of the right things. Whether it was all a dream or something, I don't know but she did good in the end. The very end was bittersweet in its own way.

But, going through the books and hearing all of the things the girls did to other people, because they were bullies, was just sick. I hate bullies so freaking much and the book has to blow my mind in order for me to love a book with them in it. This one just didn't.

I'm not going to go on and on about it. I'm so glad that sooooooooooooo many of my friends loved the book with the exception of a few =)

I'm not scared, if that's what you're wondering. The moment of death is full of sound and warmth and light, so much light it fills me up, absorbs me: a tunnel of light shooting away, arcing up and up and up, and if singing were a feeling it would be this, this light, this lifting, like laughing. . .

The rest you have to find out for yourself.

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## MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

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### **Elle says**

I'd heard from quite a few people that this book was pretty good...

That may be the most OUTRAGEOUS understatement of all time.

'Pretty good' doesn't explain the embarrassing amount of tears that poured out of me.

'Pretty good' doesn't touch on Lauren Oliver's incredible way with words and imagery.

'Pretty good' doesn't describe the range of conflicting emotions the story sparked in me.

And 'Pretty good' certainly doesn't account for the fact that, once I finished the final page, I literally threw the book at my husband and demanded he re-write the final chapter.

... but the ending is a whole other discussion for which I have no time/energy to get into.

But *aside* from the ~~infuriating~~ conclusion, this book was out-effing-standing. It had my absolute undivided attention EVEN THOUGH I was reading it while last night's episode of Hotel Babylon was on and I didn't

even stop reading when, out of the corner of my little eye, I saw Charlie take his shirt off. NOT EVEN THEN!

Ahem...

So no, pretty good doesn't exactly cover it. But why take my word for it?

*"Maybe you can afford to wait. Maybe for you there's a tomorrow. Maybe for you there's one thousand tomorrows, or three thousand, or ten, so much time you can bathe in it, roll around it, let it slide like coins through your fingers. So much time you can waste it.*

*But for some of us there's only today. And the truth is, you never really know."*

You see?

It almost got that final 5th star. Almost.

In fact, let's give it a grand total of **four-and-three-quarters stars** and call it a day.

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### **Raeleen Lemay says**

I honestly wanted to finish this book so it could go towards my 2012 reading challenge, but it was JUST SO BORING. I really couldn't care less what happened to the characters, and they were all so bitchy that I just couldn't stand reading about them anymore. I'm sure this Samantha girl will have some epiphany towards the end where she realizes that the way she's been treating people is wrong, then she'll finally move on and actually die like she should have a while ago. I don't see the point in reading this when I'm almost positive that this is how it will end.

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### **Tatiana says**

"Before I Fall" is Lauren Oliver's debut novel and I think for a first effort it is pretty good.

The premise of the book is not too original - it is a sort of cross between "Mean Girls" and "The Groundhog Day," but Oliver develops it well. Samantha, one of her school's mean girls, relives her last day over and over again, learning more about herself and people around her with each replay. Will she learn enough to make a difference, to change her attitude and her life?

Being a foreigner, I was spared the misfortune of being bullied by mean girls, I don't have any experiences of Samanthas and Lindsays of this world. Therefore I am guessing my opinion of the book is somewhat skewed. I don't hate Samantha and her friends, instead I find this gang amusing in a dysfunctional way and feel sorry for them. Samantha seems to be an extremely unaware person, with low self esteem who doesn't even realize that she is constantly mistreated by her boyfriend, she is directionless and has almost no

aspirations beyond getting drunk with her friends and sleeping with her boyfriend. Isn't that a total waste of life?

I don't hate the girls, because there are always those people who lash out at others and bring people down to hide their own insecurities. There is nothing new about it. What I find appalling is the complacency of people around them - their classmates, parents, school officials. How can these 4 teenage girls have a free rein of the school, how can they possibly influence everyone around them? It literally boggles my mind. Why every girl so eagerly calls another one a slut or psycho when she can be at any moment the recipient of the same fate? Is this not a dumb herd mentality, I don't know what is. It is a scary thing in these days of school shootings and student suicides. But I digress...

I liked the book a lot, it is certainly a page turner and Samantha's road to self-awareness is compelling. However the ending is fairly unsatisfying IMO. I expected Samantha to face the consequences of her actions, to find a road to redemption, but I didn't think she would achieve this "redemption" so easily and would also be rewarded with a nice guy in the end. I personally don't think she ever completely owns up to her actions, never fully acknowledges her part in Juliet Sykes' demise and never confronts her friends. The whole time Samantha is more interested in hooking up with Kent than in saving a life or at least pointing to her friends the things she has learned. Whatever "sacrifice" she makes in the end doesn't make a difference. In reality I think everything would be on the same track the next day - bullying, vicious gossiping, taunting of Juliet by Lindsay. So, what is the point of this experience for Samantha? To convince herself she is not so bad after all because she can do a couple of nice things like giving her little sis a necklace and sending Juliet a rose? Not enough IMO.

But regardless of my general disagreement with the outcome of the story, "Before I Fall" is a memorable novel. It is poignant in the portrayal of school bullying, and its effect on people, it is thought provoking and definitely current. I will probably check out Lauren Oliver's future works.

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### **jessica says**

i definitely know im in the minority here with my opinion, so please just bear with me for a hot minute.

i dont want to turn this into a rant because i absolutely adore lauren oliver, but this book just wasnt for me. and the only reason for that was the characters - i found myself not empathising with them, thought they completely unlikable, and it got to the point where halfway through the book i just did not care what happened to any of them. i know this is a story about growth and development, but even after sam supposedly became 'enlightened' and 'changed for the better,' she still seemed just as selfish and entitled as she did at the beginning of the story. which is such a shame.

because the message of the book is actually a great one - to live your life in a positive way, because you never know how the smallest of interactions can impact someone else - and i love that. but connecting with characters is a large part of what makes reading enjoyable for me. so if i dont like the characters, its pretty much a given that i will struggle with the book, even if the story is a good one.

im still a lauren oliver fan - i just think this book was a random miss for me amongst her large bibliography of hits.

**? 2.5 stars**

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### **karen says**

well, well, well,  
this one was a surprise.

yes, teen fiction, you have won me over, but usually it is the stuff on the "oh, no, the world has been essploded!!" or "oh, no - all the cats in the world have turned evil and are coming for us!!" end of the spectrum that captivates me.

realistic teen fiction usually leaves me cold.

and this is realistic teen fiction with a twist, obviously. this is *groundhog day* with a jerky teen girl in he jerky bill murray role. but all the day-to-day bits in between are simple, realistic teen fiction.

and it won me over. i could not stop reading this book. i was totally sucked in to the story, the narrator's "do thoughtless things unto others" mentality, and the comeuppance. (oh, i love justice. i love comeuppance) samantha is pretty and popular and easily swayed. seduced by the cult of lindsay, she forgets how to be a decent person and gets brainwashed into performing casual cruelties without even thinking about them; they become her default setting, so much so that she doesn't even remember half of them. those may be my favorite scenes, when a character is reminding samantha of some mean thing she has done and she doesn't even *remember*. it has become such a knee-jerk response for her - to be mean, that it is not even conscious enough for her to retain memories of it. good stuff.

there are a ton of weakly-written moments/characters/subplots but there is just so much *momentum* to the story that you barely notice it while you are reading, and only really notice it if, say, you start sitting down to write a book review of it.

the party scene/s is/are very well-written, though. i didn't drink in high school because i observed how idiotic teenagers were when intoxicated, so i never went to parties. i hosted small gatherings at my house where i would cook, let's call them "munchies," for a select group of friends and everyone was calm and chill and nothing got broken and no one puked and the music was good. those party scenes terrified me.i cannot think of anything worse than a drunken teen party. even when i was a teen. i loved this book, but all the characters were awful. they are always laughing over stupid things, and you can just feel that laughter - shrill and desperate and competitive. picture that drunk. oooh, no thanks.

favorite line - after a passage about clothing conformity in her school, "it's connecticut: being like the people around you is the whole point."

surprisingly good read.  
damn you, teen fiction!

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### **Kat Kennedy says**

I have to confess something before I write this review. This book is about a teenager, Sam, who is a Mean

Girl who trips into Groundhog Day world and is set on a path to redemption. My confession is that I used to be a girl almost exactly like Sam.

Shallow, egotistical and worst of all - mean. Really, really mean.

I've commented before on the fact that I was a terrible teenager. My parents did not so much try to raise me through these years. More like they tried to survive me as you would a hurricane. In this book, Sam comes to the final realization that she is a bitch. I know I related to this book more perhaps than some other readers would because I had to come to my own realization about that. It is a strange and aggravatingly unsettling experience to wake up and realize the world neither revolves around you, nor should it, because you are a horrible person. Yet, that's nothing compared to living your teenage years on the receiving end of bullshit people like me dished out to other people.

I can imagine growing up with that kind of experience would make you quite unsympathetic to Sam. But Sam is on a path and a journey. Oliver doesn't withhold on characterization. Every petty, mean, shallow act and thought is shamelessly paraded here. I loved the cast and the complicated relationships they all had. I loved Sam and Kent's relationship as well as Sam and Lindsey's relationship. Most of the people in this book felt like people I'd known or met in real life.

The writing worked well for this novel. Never too flowery or explanatory but rather serving the purpose of translating complicated thoughts and feeling to the reader without being burdensome or boring.

Every time I felt Sam was a little too...

Oliver managed to turn it around and make her...

I think it took a lot of courage to write Sam's characterization as she did. A lot of YA fiction depicts the Perfect Female ala Bella Swan. Where character flaws amount to being clumsy and everyone they ever meet thinks they're amazing and mature and wise beyond their years. (Note: Zoe Redbird, no, you are not.)

My only complaint about the book is in the spoiler down below. Basically, I loved it, I connected to it. I felt like the themes were handled in a believable, realistic way.

I guess this book made me melancholy. I think about Juliet Sykes and remember that I once had my own Juliet Sykes. I wish I could go back in time and change that. I wish I could somehow make amends to her. Hell, I wish I could even remember her real name and not just all the disgusting nicknames we gave her. I wish I'd been the kind of teenager I could be proud of. Yet this book made me glad that I did change, that I have tomorrow to keep trying and learning and growing. It makes me happy to think that even I deserved a chance at redemption and to choose a different way to live my life.

Most of all, this book makes me really bloody happy that I'm an adult now and that I never, ever, have to go back. Ever.

(view spoiler)

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## Emily May says

*I shiver, thinking about how easy it is to be totally wrong about people - to see one tiny part of them and confuse it for the whole.*

4 1/2 stars. Back in 2010, I read *Before I Fall* and immediately thought I'd found a new favourite author. I eagerly awaited every book Lauren Oliver released after it and yet, I have disliked every single one. My dislike for her writing style in books like *Rooms* and *Vanishing Girls* made me wonder what happened.

Could it be that Oliver's style had so drastically changed? Or was it my own changing tastes that had pulled me away from her books?

Returning to this book in 2015, **it is still as fantastic as I remember**. It is truly such a strong YA Contemporary (with a non-realistic spin) and the writing is perfect. The saddest thing about reading this book again was finally understanding how much Oliver's style has changed, in my opinion, for the worse.

*Before I Fall* is about popular mean girl - Samantha Kingston - and her group of popular friends. When Samantha dies in a car crash on the eve of her school's "Cupid Day", she awakens once again in the morning of the same day. Has she been given a second chance? A chance to put it right? To solve the mystery? To prevent her death?

For the next seven days, Samantha wakes up on February 12. She must learn the truth behind her unfortunate end and, by doing so, she finds herself tangled up in the lives of those she'd cared little for before.

The novel's strength is both in the **overarching story and its outcome, and also in the details**. So many characters are affected by Samantha's actions and they become more and more developed and complex as Samantha learns to *really see them*. Every character is handled with sympathy, turning mean girls, losers and geeks into human beings, each with their own story.

It is a lesson on the dangers of bullying and how careless actions can have a huge negative impact on

someone's life. But it also offers an understanding and sometimes sympathetic view of the people who do the bullying. It's such an interesting, multi-layered story.

Moving, thoughtful, and just as powerful the second time around.

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### **Zoë says**

3.5/5

Though I really enjoy Lauren Oliver's writing style, I struggled finding the motivation to finish this book. The main character, a popular and catty high school girl named Sam, dies and is forced to relive that day several times. I was absolutely in love with the story for the first couple of days, but then it felt tedious having Sam wake up and relive February 12th time and time again. I totally understand why it's many people's favorite book, I just wish it was shorter. Because of this, I do think it will make a fabulous movie and I can't wait to see it when it hits theaters!

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### **Annalisa says**

Reading through Sam's last day of life, I was transported back to high school with those girls who were shallow, self-centered, and unaware and thought they were cool and better than everyone else because they were shallow, self-centered, and unaware. I felt emotions I had not experienced in years, emotions I had long forgotten. Oliver captures that teenage-centric narcissism so vividly, so much more intently than I ever understood in high school, that I couldn't help but hate Sam and feel some level of vindictive justice.

As she starts the same day over again, just as full of herself, I doubted Sam could grow enough to satisfy me. But she did. It was slow and painstaking at times; sometimes I wanted Sam to just get it and be fixed, but that wouldn't have been realistic. She needed to figure it out on her own and at her own pace. Oliver does an excellent job showing us that gradual shift from spoiled teenager to thoughtful person, realizing that there were consequences to her actions, that the universe did not revolve around her, that maybe popularity wasn't worth the price she'd paid for it. While I don't think Sam reached perfect self-actualization, I don't think I wanted her to. She had a long way to come and I believed a character that was aware but still a little bit selfish.

Oliver is an amazing writer, so unobtrusive and descriptive. I didn't so much read this book as experience it. She manages to keep a day that is lived over and over again from being repetitive and gives us enough events in that day to give Sam plenty of chances to both mess up and unmess other people's lives. She manages to take a story that doesn't sound very original (Mean Girls vs. Groundhog Day) and own it. She manages to make me care about a girl that I couldn't stand, that represents very real girls that I couldn't stand (but not Lindsay; I never liked her).

(view spoiler)

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## **Evgnossia O'Hara says**

Review was originally published on my Blog Through the Chapters

**\*3.5 stars\***

This book has so many beautiful and meaningful quotes.

*“I think of all the thousands of billions of steps and missteps and chances and coincidences that have brought me here. Brought you here and it feels like the biggest miracle in the world.”*

I won't say that the plot was original. I **have seen that before** in a well-known and beloved movie, the “Groundhog Day”.

It is a story of an arrogant and a mean teenage girl who, with her shallow friends, cares only about her **popularity, parties, boys** and bullying her less popular classmates. I won't blame her young age and her inexperience for being this cruel to people who surrounded her. This behaviour was driven by the illusion of the power she had as one of the most “popular” girls at school.

*“Popularity's a weird thing. You can't really define it, and it's not cool to talk about, but you know it when you see it. Like a lazy eye, or porn.”*

Unfortunately, there are so many gruesome stories of bullying and how they have influenced people. This kind of psychological violence has led many people to mental health problems, low self-confidence, suicide and a load of other problems.

However, it is not only a story about bulling. It is a **story about life, death and the real values of life**. The main character develops throughout the story, improves her mistakes, and by doing that she saves the lives of people who really matters to her. She finds her **atonement** and she makes the readers to forgive her since she shows the greatest self-denial a person is able to demonstrate.

*“That's when I realized that certain moments go on forever. Even after they're over they still go on, even after you're dead and buried, those moments are lasting still, backward and forward, on into infinity. They are everything and everywhere all at once. They are the meaning.”*

Regarding the plot, it was quite a **repetitive** one, but given the circumstances it is absolutely understandable. The writing style was beautiful, **poetic**. However, I found a little bit difficult to memorize all the names, there were so many of them.

I would love to know how the actions of the main character influenced her best friends.

Have they reconsidered their lives?

**I hope so.**

It would be great if I had a bonus chapter called “19 years later”.

*“It's too late,” she says.*

*And I say, “It's never too late.”*

*It is really never too late to be a better version of yourself.*

*It is never too late to be a person you might have been.*

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