



Paperback Crush: The Totally Radical History of '80s and '90s Teen Fiction

Gabrielle Moss

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Paperback Crush by Gabrielle Moss is an immersive examination and commentary on teen and tween fiction from the 1980s and '90s. It's sprinkled with personal opinions and memoir elements as well as interviews with authors like Christopher Pike.

The full-color graphics and myriad covers of well-known series like *The Baby-Sitters Club* and *Sweet Valley High*; forgotten series like *Cheerleaders* and *Camp Sunnyside Friends*; and books like *The Against Taffy Sinclair Club* and *Sixth Grade Can Really Kill You* will evoke nostalgia in every reader who grew up in the '80s and '90s. Examinations of their formulaic writing, trends that worked (babysitting, boarding school, horror stories) and those that were a bit more precarious (teen pregnancy, teen sex, AIDS, and LGBTQ story lines), along with various cultural expectations and backlashes, contain reminders that young adult fiction has always been vital to the lives of teens and has even helped to foster social change.

Reading the book is like having a conversation with a close friend with a shared obsession for young adult literature. Moss provides lots of details with humor and freshness, though piqued fans might want even more in-depth discussions of the titles. The age ranges of the books discussed are somewhat blurred, with books series like *Pen Pals* and *Sleepover Friends* appearing alongside *Cheerleaders*, *Sweet Valley High*, and *Class of '88*—titles more squarely aimed at teens.

Though the book builds up momentum throughout, its ending seems abrupt, as if the last chapter ends in the middle, without an epilogue or a segue into contemporary YA. Still, this is an enjoyable book that will appeal strongly to millennials and Gen Xers who are eager to relive some of their early reading years or to dive into comfort reading.

JAIME HERNDON (November/December 2018)

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