



# Ripple

*Heather Smith Meloche*

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## **Ripple** Heather Smith Meloche

When their too-adult lives lead them down self-destructive paths, these broken teens find a way to heal in this YA novel perfect for fans of Ellen Hopkins.

With her impossible-to-please grandmother on her back about college and her disapproving step-dad watching her every move, Tessa would do anything to escape the pressure-cooker she calls home. So she finds a shot of much-needed power and confidence by hooking up with boys, even though it means cheating on her boyfriend. But when she's finally caught red-handed, she'll do anything she can to cover up what she's done.

Jack is a prankster who bucks the system every chance he gets—each transgression getting riskier and riskier. He loves the thrill, and each adventure allows a little release because his smug smile and suave demeanor in the face of authority doesn't make life at home with his mom any less tough. He tries to take care of her, but the truth is he's powerless in the face of her fragile mental health. So he copes in his own way, by defacing public property and pulling elaborate pranks, though he knows in the end this'll only screw up his life even more.

As they both try not to let their self-destructive patterns get the best of them, Tessa and Jack gravitate toward one another, discovering the best parts of themselves in the process. An honest portrayal of the urges that drive us and finding the strength to overcome them.

## **Ripple Details**

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Author : Heather Smith Meloche

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# From Reader Review Ripple for online ebook

## Julie Angeli says

Great read!! The characters are fascinating, the plot satisfying, and the writing superb.

The story revolves around Tessa and Jack, who each have their own troubled home lives to deal with while navigating the minefield that is their senior year of high school. They find each other and the stakes intensify as they fight their mutual attraction and attempt to keep secrets that refuse to stay hidden.

The book is intense as it deals with the issues surrounding addiction and mental illness, but more importantly, it is a great story. It's fast-moving, suspenseful, heartbreaking and even humorous at times as it follows Tessa and Jack as their lives spin out of control, hurtling them toward each other and to a dramatic conclusion. It is difficult not to become obsessed with these characters. Once you pick this book up, it is hard to put down.

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## Paula says

Well, "Ripple" by Heather Smith Meloche was a disappointment. I had such high hopes for the books, maybe they were too high. And maybe I made the mistake to let the cover do the talking when buying this book.

It's been a week now that I finished and I already can't tell you much about the characters. Or the story. There was nothing memorable for me about this book.

Maybe it was me, maybe it was the story. Maybe it just wasn't the right time for me to read it. I don't know. What I do know is that I don't think I could care less about the characters if I tried. They felt one-dimensional and stereotypical.

Especially Tessa was one of the worst characters I've read in a long time. Self-centered, selfish, irritating - if she had disappeared mid-book, I wouldn't have cared.

The writing didn't engage me. I can't put my finger on what the reason was but it didn't evoke any emotions that made it worth-while. It was too dry in a way.

2 this-wasn't-for-me stars.

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## Angie Elle says

3.5 stars

Tessa and Jack have a lot on their plates for being so young, but they find an uneasy solace in each other. To read my full review for **Ripple**, visit Books & Beauty Are My Bag.

*ARC from Penguin First to Read.*

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## Kristin Lenz says

I've been looking forward to this novel ever since I read Heather's award-winning short story in verse in *Hunger Mountain* a few years ago. Her writing is lyrical and evocative, and her debut novel lived up to my high expectations.

This is a story for older teens with cross-over appeal into the New Adult market. At first glance, it might sound like a familiar tale, two struggling teens intensely attracted to one another, who finally help each other recognize and move beyond their self-defeating behavior. What elevates Heather's story is the deep characterization, luscious prose, and much needed humor in the midst of challenging circumstances. The dialogue is snappy, the heat is raging, and Tessa and Jack are characters to root for. There were moments when I wanted to shake some sense into them, and moments when I cringed knowing there was an emotional train wreck ahead. Heather digs beneath the surface to show the shades of gray and depth of love. Most importantly, she shows that self-destructive patterns, even those that are deeply rooted in a family's history, can be broken and mended with the compassionate help of a community.

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## Holly says

Oh wow, what a gem of a story that I might not have gotten to for a long time. But once I started reading it, I could. not. stop. I LOVED IT. I loved the two main characters; two broken, scarred kids just trying to grasp some kind of power while their lives spiral out of control. But this never became a story about two teens saving each other, never became a *love cures all* type of deal. Tessa and Jack helped each other, challenged each other, and fell hard. But only THEY could turn their lives around and make them better. But they had each other through the bad parts, and the ugly ones. Neither of them is perfect. They both could be judgmental, and so, so self-destructive. There were some comments from Jack that pissed me off. They weren't easily likable. But they were easily rootable (my computer is telling me this isn't a word, but I'm keeping it, whatever). Under pressure, stressed to the max, and filled with a need to not confide in or ask for help from others, the two of them nearly destroy their futures before realizing like, hey, they can do better. They can *be* better. I loved that, and I loved watching the two of them get to that beautiful and heartwarming ending. An ending that made me tear up so much, omg. *Ripple* completely surprised me. I wasn't expecting to love it so much. But I did. It was an addicting and raw read about two teens who needed to figure out that only they can determine who they are. And that it's okay to lean on others every once in awhile, that it's okay to not be strong all the time, and that they deserved better, from themselves and from the people in their lives. Wonderful!

**Rating: 4.5 Paw Prints!**

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## PinkAmy loves books, cats and naps says

I received a free e-copy of RIPPLE in exchange for my honest review

GRADE: B

Tessa deals with the stress of her absent father and drunk, verbally abusive stepfather by sleeping with random guys to blunt her emotions. Jack copes with his brother's death and his alcoholic, schizophrenic

mother with his smart ass mouth and harmless but illegal pranks. The two open up to each other about their secrets, but danger lurks around every corner, for Borg Tessa and Jack and the loved ones they're trying to protect.

Both Tessa and Jack here sympathetic, likable, flawed characters. I was especially glad to see promiscuity as a defense mechanism portrayed in such a sympathetic, realistic manner and that Tessa's behavior had its roots in low self esteem.

Heather Smith Meloche's writing style, while pleasant, lacked a strong style. Both Jack's and Tessa's chapters lacked differentiation in voice. Some of the dialogue felt clunky and artificial. I wish I felt more of a connection to the emotions of the characters.

THEMES: sexuality, alcoholism, mental illness, schizophrenia, friendship, dating, family

RIPPLES is a sensitive story about a friendship between teens battling family difficulties.

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### **Kathy MacMillan says**

Tessa and Jack, two teenagers whose lives are spinning out of control, become one another's unlikely confidants – and maybe more – in this gripping coming-of-age story. Paralyzed by her stepfather's drunken verbal abuse and her wealthy grandmother's well-meaning yet myopic plans for her future, Tessa seeks comfort in a series of meaningless hook-ups that she will do anything to hide from her popular boyfriend. Jack is flip and cocky, but also hard working, earnest, and fiercely protective of his brilliant mother even as her mental illness makes her more and more dangerous to herself and others, and his only outlet is the elaborate pranks he pulls to buck the system. When Tessa and Jack meet, the electricity of their connection is more than just romantic – each recognizes the desperation of the other and is able to see through the layers of hurt and artifice to the goodness underneath. Both of their roads to redemption are paved with hard truths and painful confrontations, but in finding the good in each other, they are finally able to see the good in themselves. In alternating first-person narratives, Meloche takes us into the imperfect lives of these imperfect, entirely relatable characters, and shows how good as well as bad can ripple out of human connections.

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### **Deborah Dunbar says**

I LOVED this book! Perhaps growing up in a blended family with addiction issues and mental illness made these characters believable and real to me, but I fell in love with them! Jack and Tessa are complex characters that navigate not only the day-to-day issues facing high schoolers, but the very real issues of growing up in highly dysfunctional families while finding ways to both cope and escape. I loved the storyline and enjoyed Meloche's writing style. There were sentences and phrases I stopped to re-read because the words were strung together so artfully. This book left me with a "hangover". Waking up the morning after finishing the book, I was still pondering the story and the characters and wished the adventure wasn't over. I missed Jack and Tessa! I can't wait for Meloche's next novel!

I put together a short playlist of songs that speak to me about Jack, Tessa or both.  
In no particular order...

Beth Hart - Leave the Light On  
Beth Hart - Broken and Ugly  
James Bay - Scars  
Miranda Lambert - Vice  
Breaking Benjamin - I will Not Bow  
Nickelback - Burn it to the Ground  
3 Doors Down - The Road I'm On  
Jack's Mannequin - Swim  
Halestorm - Beautiful With You  
Dashboard Confessional - Thick as Thieves

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## **Elise (TheBookishActress) says**

\* I received a copy of this via my local bookstore. This does not impact my review in any way.

Sometimes you read a book that's just utterly forgettable in every way, and that's how I felt here. *Ripple* has a lot of potential with its characters, but ended up as a simple bad boy meets good girl romance.

This book doesn't really have a ton of positives, but it did manage to avoid outright slutshaming. Tessa's sleeping around is a specific issue because it involves cheating, not because she's sleeping around in the first place.

### **Now, for the issues.**

The romance promised to be two troubled characters finding solace in each other. It didn't work out, and it's hard to point to why. They've got a hint of instalove, but that shouldn't have stopped me from believing in their connection.

The main fault of this book is the lack of character work. Tessa and Jack are so cliché. Neither of them had any personality beyond “good girl letting loose” and “bad boy with heart of gold”. Which sounds pretty good, right? Unfortunately neither of these characters are interesting unless you develop them well. There were some good character moments, but they were few and far between. No character made me feel connected, and no book can survive when I don't connect to the characters.

In terms of other factors: the writing was nothing special, the plot is paper-thin, and with no interest in the characters, I couldn't forgive either of these things.

There were *moments* where I believed in the characters and their connection. But all in all, this book didn't make me feel anything. Not recommended.

Although shoutout to this being my first-ever arc! Can't believe this has only lasted June-February and I've already read 42 arcs.

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## **Christina says**

## ***Review Originally Posted on Books & Prejudice***

This book guys. This book. I'm not even totally sure what to say.

We follow Jack and Tessa, who have both had to grow up a bit too fast. Tessa sleeps around to deal with her problems. And Jack causes as much mischief and trouble for authority figures as he can. Tessa's home life is terrible. Whereas Jack is hiding a secret. If anyone learns the secret, his life will forever change.

I didn't think I would like this book as much as I did. There were a lot of parts that were difficult to read (I mean in the "omg this hurts it's just such an awful situation" kind of way). But the characters were surprisingly likable, and constantly made me want them to have a happy ending.

Ripple deals beautifully with issues that caregivers go through--caregivers for those with mental illnesses specifically. It even shows little bits of certain kinds of abuse and/or neglect, and what kind of effect that can have on a person.

While I wouldn't say the romance was anything steamy, I did enjoy it. Mainly because I loved how Jack and Tessa became pillars for each other. Each became the other's strength. It was really nice to see them grow a friendship when they didn't have anyone else to turn to. And so their friendship grows. Until they learn of something that happened that has affected everyone. Jack was a surprising character to me. I hadn't expected him to be what he was. And I certainly didn't expect to like Tessa. But I did. She's just trying to figure out what to do with her life when everyone is laying plans for her and not asking what she wants.

### **Reasons to read this book**

- 1) The idea that one event can change everyone around you is pretty interesting.
- 2) The characters are interesting.
- 3) It deals with mental issues.

### **Reasons not to read**

- 1) Cheating is involved.
- 2) Mental issues (if that is an issue)

### **Overall**

This was a really good read. If you like darker contemporary, you'd probably enjoy this one.

**Note:** I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Macarena Yannelli says**

Un drama, demasiado dramático. La autora abarca mil y un problemas todos al mismo tiempo, que no quiero decir "no le puede pasar tanto a alguien", pero me parece que era demasiado para la historia.

Los protagonistas eran los típicos clichés de estas historias.

**Reseña completa en *Gracias a los Libros*.**

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## Nina-Tala (JustAddAWord) Shannak says

*\*I received an Advanced Reader's Copy from the publisher in exchange for my honest review. This has not influenced my opinion in any way.\**

Actual rating is probably around a 2.5-ish? Yeah, that seems about right.

Well, well, well....

So, I must admit that I approached this book expecting a lot more than what I received instead. So frankly, this was a bit underwhelming.

Wait, scratch that. This was *very* underwhelming, and my expectations for this book weren't even that high to begin with. Exceeding, or *meeting* , at least, my expectations, should not have been hard at all.

Because in all honesty.. this should've worked. It really should have. This book is, loosely, about two teenagers dealing with their own problems in their own way. The synopsis sounded interesting enough. But apart from that.. That's really all the praise I can give it.

So what didn't work? Well, for starters, the characters. They felt a bit.. cliché. Very. Perhaps I slightly liked Jack more than Tessa, but really, that's as far as my concern went out to either of them.

The writing, too, felt a bit..disengaging. It just couldn't hold my attention and felt more distracting than descriptive.

But for those now thinking: then why two stars instead of one?

Well, for a very simple reason: this is a debut, and I usually ease up a bit when rating those. Just a bit.

You're welcome, *Ripple*.

This review also appears on my blog, **JustAddAWord.com**

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## Laurie Weeks says

This is a fast-paced story about addiction's ripple effect on families and two teenagers who find a way to leave the ever-widening circle of self-destruction.

Through the alternating voices of Tessa and Jack, Meloche reveals the psyches of teenagers who find temporary affirmation in the wrong places when their parents' alcoholism and other troubles at home become too much to bear. Jack compares the thrill he gets from pulling pranks to climbing cliffs. "It's like I'm dangling up high, seeing everything sharper," he says. "Hearing things louder. Hyperfocusing on the words, the strategy, and the wit I know I can use to get myself out of trouble...." Tessa lets her mind float above her random hook-ups "so I can picture it all, a scene with that girl who looks like me—only more attractive, more confident, who has a boyfriend who can't get enough of her. And I fly toward dizzy, toward the awesome high of it."



As Tessa's and Jack's risky behaviors put them in ever-greater danger, they begin to open up to each other. Meloche's emotionally-taut prose makes the pressures weighing on Tessa and Jack feel real and overwhelming. When they become "Strong Friends without Benefits," as whip-smart Jack puts it, he and Tessa discover the solace they both crave and the strength they need to forge healthy futures. The novel's resolution is uplifting and convincing.

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

OMG! This book was painful to read at times. The things the people go through in this book, I can't even!

This is a story about Tessa and Jack.

Tessa lives with her mom, stepdad and little sister Willow. Tessa's stepdad is an alcoholic. Things are not all that great. Tessa's grandmother (who is the mom of her biological dad that walked out on Tessa and her mom) is rich and owns a business called Leighton Custom Homes. She wants Tessa to go to the U of M and work at LCH and take over one day. Tessa wants to be an artist, but she feels forced to do what her grandmother wants because of reasons I won't say due to no spoilers.

Jack and his mom move in next door to Tessa and her family. Jack's mom used to be a big attorney and still does some tiny cases. She was always an alcoholic, but now she's worse and she has schizophrenia. Jack's father left after a tragedy happened and caused Jack's mom to lose it. Jack's dad wants him to come and live with him but Jack needs to take care of his mom. He goes to school, gets in trouble, is very smart though, and he works a few different jobs to try to pay the bills. He also plays the violin.

Tessa has a boyfriend on the football team and his name is Seth. But Tessa does some terrible things to try to make herself feel better. They are not good things and she knows it but for now she feels that is all she has got.

Jack is a trouble maker. He doesn't do really bad things, mostly funny stuff that does get him into a lot of trouble. It's sort of a way to get his mind off all of the bad things in his life. But he's also a good guy, he plays his violin for the nursing home. He's just stuck.

Tessa and Jack find each other and can be honest with each other with their most terrible secrets. They don't have to be afraid of each other. This does take some time to happen but it's nice to find a true friend and they do have a love interest with each other. But this isn't a big time love book. It's about people going through things and helping each other. It's really bittersweet.

There is a moment in the book when something else bad happens that I should have seen. I am usually good at that, but it slipped right by me. One of those parts that breaks your heart for so many people and almost gets someone killed! This is why I like reading with other people so we can talk about the OMG moments!

Anyway, I thought the book was really good. I loved most of the characters even with their flaws. Well, okay the not so good characters were very well played as well.

I also like that the author put in some websites at the end concerning, sex, alcoholics and mental health. All of these things are real and need to be addressed and people helped if they can be.

For guidance with alcohol/drug abuse and mental disorders contact: [samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)

\*I would like to thank Penguin Books and The First Reads Program for a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.\*

MY BLOG: [Melissa Martin's Reading List](#)

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### **Karen Fortunati says**

This is a beautifully written dark and suspenseful YA debut. Two high schoolers, Tessa and Jack, navigate lives filled with pain, grief and anxiety by engaging in dangerous and harmful actions. Tessa battles the abandonment of her father, the emotional abuse by her stepfather and the rigid college and career demands of her grandmother. Her coping mechanism: casual sexual encounters with strangers all the while keeping it from her quarterback boyfriend. Jack's family has been destroyed by the death of his younger brother and his mother's alcoholism and schizophrenia; Jack fights to keep his tiny family together while watching his own dreams for his future fade away. To handle the stress, Jack is well-known to both school and police as a prankster and his risk-taking grows in direct relationship to his mother's downward spiralling.

This story moves fast and Meloche is tremendously skilled at creating a tension and suspense that builds steadily as different subplots take on greater significance. The chemistry between Tessa and Jack is electric and one of my favorite parts was how Meloche developed a true friendship before any romance. Dialogue and characters shine here and Meloche is just a flat-out gorgeous writer. Don't miss this fascinating, fast paced, hard-to-put down debut!!

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