



# The Adoration of Jenna Fox

*Mary E. Pearson*

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## **The Adoration of Jenna Fox** Mary E. Pearson

Who is Jenna Fox? Seventeen-year-old Jenna has been told that is her name. She has just awoken from a coma, they tell her, and she is still recovering from a terrible accident in which she was involved a year ago. But what happened before that? Jenna doesn't remember her life. Or does she? And are the memories really hers?

This fascinating novel represents a stunning new direction for acclaimed author Mary Pearson. Set in a near future America, it takes readers on an unforgettable journey through questions of bio-medical ethics and the nature of humanity. Mary Pearson's vividly drawn characters and masterful writing soar to a new level of sophistication.

## **The Adoration of Jenna Fox Details**

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Author : Mary E. Pearson

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# From Reader Review The Adoration of Jenna Fox for online ebook

## Susan says

Set in the not too distant future, this is a story that deals with medical ethics and how far is too far to preserve human life. Jenna Fox, 17, has just awoken from an 18 month long "coma" following a horrific accident. At first, she has no memory of who she is or what happened, but she remembers details bit by bit. She gets the sense that there is more to the story than her parents lead her to believe, especially regarding the secrecy of her accident and the self-imposed isolation of the family. Throughout much of the book, the reader is not quite sure who to trust. Although science fiction, there is a minor romance side-plot between Jenna and Ethan, a boy from school with a shady past. The conflict grows as additional characters are introduced - Alyss who is a victim of the future's regulation of antibiotics (and she has lost limbs due to bacterial infections) and Dane, another shady character, whose complete story and true nature are unfortunately never cleared up. Also, Mr. Bender, the "neighbor" who years ago had a change of identity - his story remains a bit fuzzy throughout. "chapters" are very brief and interspersed with well done poems relaying Jenna's emotions.

*\*real spoiler\** Overall an interesting read about the length a parent will go to to save a child, as well as what makes a person real and where does the soul go in such a situation. Jenna has an identity crisis - is she the real Jenna, while only 10% - if she is real then what happened to the original Jenna...and her soul. Jenna cannot age, does not eat, breathe, etc. She, essentially, is a medical creation with the memories of her former life uploaded into her...she has gone from the computer box storage (her "hell" for 18 months where they kept her "mind" moving) into a man-made Blue-gel storage. There is also the suspense of her illegal status and whether or not she will be found out, and if so, what will happen to her? She is torn between resentment of her new state and gratitude of life. Her potential adversary, Alyss, who opposes artificial life as unethical, eventually becomes her peer when her body is dying and her parents plead with Jenna's despite Alyss's dying wish to turn Jenna in. The afterward is 260 years later, and we know that Alyss and Jenna live together and that Jenna and Ethan spent 70 years together, many years after which Jenna has his child (presumably through surrogate or the like). Apparently in the future the laws and perceptions have changed, and then people like her are not illegal, however 10% is the minimum, and then they are designed to age and die out after a normal life expectancy, unlike Jenna and Alyss, who do not age and whom Jenna's father listed as a 2-200 year life expectancy...260 years later Jenna is still around and has plans to move back to cold Boston, where the climate is inhospitable to her type...because no parent should outlive the child. interesting book, lots of discussion points. However I think it is too complex for the average Cafe Book reader.

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## Rusty's Ghost Engine (also known as..... Jinky Spring) says

**UPDATE 2017: I definitely liked this book more the second time round!**

I really don't know what to think of this one. I liked the philosophical aspects but I regret to admit I forced my way through the vast majority of this book.

Spoilers (perhaps)

I really liked all the ideas of keeping one's soul in a box and then reconstructing their body, thus bringing them back to life. The science behind that whole process was very well thought of. But I felt Jenna's discovery dragged a bit. The whole atmosphere in this story felt rather dull and slow. But I've got to remind

myself there is a continuation of this story so it's far from over.

So overall, this book made me think about this quote I read at the beginning of Genesis "Is the soul more than just a hum of its parts?" I'll admit I'm not entirely sure what that means but it immediately came to mind when reading this. I think it also has something to do with the question "Will the humans of the future still be human?" or "When does a human stop being human?" I've heard that question many times when watching science documentaries.

I definitely feel there's something big coming in this series. Something that'll take the term "thought provoking" to a whole new level.

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## **paula says**

Interesting. The adoration of Jenna Fox is many things. It is:

\* a young adult speculative fiction novel for girls who don't like science fiction

# a coming-of-age novel for people who eschew the touchy-feely (me!)

# a medical thriller, fully as suspenseful as early Robin Cook

# a meditation on choices nearly as profound as Walden, which it frequently quotes

And I think it is, very subtly, a pro-life statement.

Now, I, like the reviewers at SLJ, Publishers Weekly, The Horn Book, etc., and my colleague Other Paula, who recommended it to me, enjoyed this book. I liked Jenna, who has awoken from a coma with no memory, and who struggles to assimilate information that will help her interpret her world and make sense of her often conflicting impressions. I enjoyed watching her evaluate her former life, explore her new life, and forge a new identity from the best pieces of both. The near-future world that Pearson has invented, full of genetically engineered species and antibiotic-resistant bacteria and oxygenated transplant gel loaded with neurochips, is both believable and intriguing. And I thought that "waking from a coma" was a serviceable metaphor for teenagers just beginning to realize that they are not merely extensions of (or reactions against) their parents, and that they can choose what kind of person to be.

But although this book is a suspenseful, thrilling read, I went through it slowly, because there's a lot going on in it beyond the mystery of Jenna's past. Specifically, the frequent ethics discussions merit very close attention.

In Jenna's world, "Science" (it almost wears a capital S in this book) is responsible for the disappearance of native species and an epidemic that killed a quarter of the world's population. In response, the federal government has enacted laws and created an ethics board that controls access to and application of advanced medical treatments. To ensure equitable access, a point system is in place, under which every person is assigned 100 points. Medical procedures use up those points: physicians decide whether a person 'needs', say, biofeedback software for their prosthetic limbs, or a kidney, or a heart transplant, based on how many points they have left.

Jenna is the daughter of a biotechnology billionaire, and she has recovered from a truly devastating car accident. I don't think I'm giving away too much of the plot when I say that Jenna has exceeded her points.

This fact, along with various revelations pertaining to what was lost and what recovered from Jenna's body after the crash, as well as a quadruple amputee whom she meets at school, and the fate of her best friends from before the accident, leads Jenna to question her right - and desire - to be alive.

I was skating right along with Jenna, feeling her dilemmas, rejoicing in her rebellions, all the way up to the book's ending, an artificial-feeling happy coda set two hundred and forty years later. 240 years is a long time: long enough, presumably, for a character to gain complete perspective. And 240 years later, Jenna is content with her choices, and the world's society backs her up. She muses on faith and science, and thinks that they are two sides of the same coin. At this point, I thought to myself, "Faith"? Was this book about faith?" Earlier in the book, Jenna wondered if she had a soul, and her grandmother is Catholic... and then I realized that Jenna's post-coma memories include events that happened before she could talk: a near-drowning as a toddler, her baptism, and... being in her mother's womb. This representation of a fetus's perceptions and feelings is extremely provocative and, amid Pearson's well-written examinations of the meaning and value of human life, I think it's unnecessary. It made me go back and re-examine all of the science and ethics in the book.

I feel sure that Mary Pearson did not write *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* as Christian or pro-life propaganda (although, if that title isn't Jesus-y enough for you, I'll write the sequel, and call it *Ecce Jenna*).

Until that ending, I would even say that her presentation of the ethical issues faced by the characters is basically balanced - though that point system thing rather reeks of pro-life rhetoric. If the book had been left open-ended, I would recommend it without reservation. It could be used in many terrific science-class discussion topics (some of which are listed in the discussion guide, some, not). Teen literature should challenge convictions, should poke holes in the status quo.

But resolving Jenna's ethical conflicts - presenting her choice as the one right choice - damages the credibility of the book. Sure, "it's just fiction," but I'd like to give this book more credit than that. You quote *Walden* that much, you kind of better be prepared to defend your choices.

This review originally published on Pink Me: <http://pinkme.typepad.com>

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## **Morgan F says**

I've been waiting to read *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* for four years, ever since I happened upon it while browsing in B&N. I bypassed it, but every time I saw that novel from then on I would say to myself "I'm going to read you one day" (I said it in a Southern accent too, but that's irrelevant). Well, I finally did. All that hype, four years worth, and I am not disappointed in the least, as a matter of fact.

Jenna Fox is a 17-year old girl who has just woken up after an 18 month coma. She doesn't remember anything, not her parents, herself, even some simple words are completely foreign to her. It's not long before Jenna starts putting together the pieces of what happened to her during her lost year and a half, and what she reassembles makes her question if she really *is* Jenna Fox at all.

I loved this book. It's speculative and self-reflective, and although the "mystery" of the story isn't too difficult to piece together, the book focuses more on the questions that arise from the conclusion. Don't let the presence of scientific elements discourage you from reading it, the technicality of it is soft, and serves only as backgrounds for the moral questions of the story.

Jenna is good protagonist. Never stereotypical, never one-dimensional, she is actually curious, intelligent, and emotional. I could both relate to and understand her emotions, even though her situation was so far from anything in my own life. Some times she understands more than the reader, and sometimes the reader understands more than her. It's a nice balance, and the writing, lyrical and circular, complements her voice perfectly. I loved Jenna and I loved the writing. Although I didn't quite feel for them as completely, Jenna's parents and grandmother also had a spark that made them breathe off the page. They weren't perfect beings, but they were human beings.

This novel truly made me think. It provided not with blind entertainment but with earnest questions. My favorite line from the book: *"These thoughts are mine alone and no one else's. They exist no where else in the universe but within me."* How do you go about thinking about that? I'll be considering that for days...

The reasons why this novel did not receive five stars? Well, there were a few. The weakest parts for me is when I felt Pearson was trying to hard to conventionalize the novel. Like the romance between Jenna and Ethan. The book would have been better without it, but Pearson probably added it in an attempt to draw in readers who are all about the "hawt guys" and "twu luv". Another unnecessary addition was Dane. He was added just to provide an antagonist and a definite bad guy. The novel didn't need an antagonist. The doubt alone in Jenna's mind was conflict enough. Also, the epilogue was sucky and I felt it undermined the message of the story. I turned what I *thought* was the last page all content and dazed, but then I noticed the 260 years later.....grrrr. So that's it? Every thing is happy? They get to live forever with no consequences? Isn't the whole point of the book is that there ARE CONSEQUENCES???

Anyway, this was a great book, somewhere in between Unwind and Never Let Me Go in terms of bio-ethical speculative fiction. It doesn't have the action-y, more commercialized vibe of Unwind, yet it isn't quite as introspective and thoughtful as Never Let Me go. It's somewhere in the middle.

Overall, awesome-sauce.

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## **Robert says**

To say Jenna Fox is different might be the understatement of the year. She has five times the brain capacity of every other human being on the planet; she can quote entire passages of Thoreau without even blinking an eyelash; and her limbs move a bit out of sync with reality. But like every other teenager known to man, all she wants to do is fit in and to live a normal life.

To say THE ADORATION OF JENNA FOX isn't your typical novel doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of where this novel actually takes the reader. It bounces back and forth between the present and the videotapes of the past, moving out of sync and not really linear; it doesn't have chapters so much as it has sections or breaks; and it combines genres making classification a difficult task to say the least.

But I like different about as much as teenagers like fitting in, and I found this novel to be a surprisingly pleasurable read. The voice certainly enraptured me and managed to capture my attention from the get-go, as

I started out of the gate at a trot and kept up the pace all the way to the end. As for the end, it wasn't what I expected, and I certainly won't spoil it for you here, but I will say it fit rather well with the rest of this adorable, enjoyable read.

Cross-posted at Robert's Reads

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## Lora says

*"The accident was over a year ago. I've been awake for two weeks. Over a year has vanished. I've gone from sixteen to seventeen. A second woman has been elected president. A twelfth planet has been named in the solar system. The last wild polar bear has died. Headline news that couldn't stir me. I slept through it all."*

Seventeen-year-old Jenna Fox can't remember who she is. For the last year and a half she's been in a perpetual state of vegetation, and upon waking she can remember nothing from her former life. The memory of her family, friends, and even simple words like "curious" has vanished. But even as bits and pieces of her memory begin to resurface, with the help of home videos and much encouragement from her parents, Jenna can't keep from feeling like something is wrong; with her, what her parents are telling her, and with this life she's being told is her own.

Set in the not-so-distant future, *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* will entertain and shock its readers with suspense, romance, and evolutionary science.

This is one of those books that is very hard to discuss without being spoilery, but I will endeavor to do so.

For Jenna Fox, there a lot of things that don't add up. Like how a video of her from seven years ago showing a scar on her chin doesn't compute with the unmarred flesh there now, how her parents keep evading her questions, and how she can't remember anything about the accident that lead to her coma.

And her parents' irrational limitations are suffocating. Even when Jenna starts to get her footing, she's not allowed to leave the house, not allowed to go to school. . . . How is Jenna supposed to get back her life when her parents won't let her? They keep telling her it's for the best, but Jenna knows something off.

I kept trying to guess at what direction Pearson was taking this story, and how science would fit into it all. I didn't even come close. The eventual revelation of why Jenna can't remember her life before the coma and why she feels so misplaced is as shocking as it is intriguing.

The romance element is light, but very effective. It takes back burner to the main plot (as it should IMO), but it plays an essential role in the story. Jenna feels lost and confused, and Ethan helps her feel centered and less afraid.

If you think you don't like science fiction, you should try this book. Sci-fi is not even my third choice when browsing genres at the library, but I can honestly say that this book has awakened a strong interest in the genre for me. And on that note, if you read this review and happen to have any sci-fi recommendations, or you know of any books similar to this, be they YA or adult, please send them my way.

**Note: Although my opinion on this book still stands, I have changed my rating for it, because the two sequels to this book aren't to my liking. Originally rated 4 stars, now is 3.5 with a round down of 3.**

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## **Penny says**

Actual Rating 2.5 stars

I get why this book is liked by so many people.

Personally, I didn't connect to it or the characters. It is an interesting premise but I need stories that are preferably packed with drama, conflicts and emotions.

The issues explored here, the ethics and morals of what makes a human, are interesting, but too light. These topics are reflected in a superficial way, that although might be ideal for teenagers, it left me wanting, incomplete. I would have enjoyed the story more with a deeper examination and discernment of these hypothesis. After all, the robot/human postulate is not a new idea, and we have seen plenty of theories and interpretations with much deliberation and greater argumentation.

To conclude, I'll just surmise it by saying that although Jenna's reflections have potential, the final feeling of the story is insufficient if you are an adult reader, so to properly enjoy it it would be best to be a young reader.

P.S.: The audiobook narrator is very good.

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## **Shannon (Giraffe Days) says**

Jenna is the miracle child, her parents' angel, the perfect child who excels while inside she silently protests, only to show minor rebellions at sixteen. After a horrific accident and a year in a coma, Jenna wakes in an old house in another state, with no memory of herself or what happened. She recovers quickly, but wonders endlessly about who she is. There is only her mother and her grandmother, Lily, in the big old house that they moved to from Boston, and Lily doesn't seem to like her at all. She speaks of Jenna like she's another person, somewhere else.

As Jenna navigates her way through the act of living, watching old movies of Jenna growing up while snippets of memory slowly surface, her questions only grow. Why can't she walk properly, why don't her hands interlace? Why is the scar under her chin missing? Why is her mother so frightened, so controlling? Why must she hide from the world?

The truth is staggering and frightening: her entire body is synthetic, and only ten per cent of her brain is from the pre-accident Jenna. She a lab project of her father's, a billionaire doctor who invented Bio Gel, in which organs can be housed indefinitely if kept at the right temperature. Too cold and Jenna will expire. Kept at a moderate temperature, and she could live hundreds of years, never visibly ageing. The implications are profound. Is she the real Jenna? Is ten per cent enough? Was she ever enough for her parents? Is it even ethical for her to be alive? And what makes Jenna dangerous is the fact that she's illegal, and shouldn't even exist.

The book is set sometime in the not-too-distant future. There are several important issues raised by this book, ethical issues that are worth debating and have no conclusive answer. Questions such as: if you have the means to prolong someone's life, should you? Is it right to live beyond what nature decreed? Should people have access to medical technology that will keep them alive simply because the technology exists and you



can afford it? And, what makes us human? How much is enough?

Told in Jenna's voice, it is very interesting to see the world through her eyes as she learns to decipher people's expressions, to think beyond her own needs, to realise what's missing as much as what's there - things that make us human, perhaps. In the era of cloning debates, *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* is highly pertinent. Aside from the issues it explores and the questions it raises, though, is the simple way it is written. The evolution of Jenna from non-entity to an individual, unique being is a joy to read. Pearson has managed admirably a very ambitious task, and quite subtly too. Even all the questions didn't annoy me, because they were necessary questions and necessary to understand Jenna.

It's also perfect that this book is written for Young Adults, because it's very much the age where we ponder our subjectivity, wonder why we were born inside *this* body, with *this* mind and all that comes with it, what makes us unique and so on. Not that we necessarily stop, but perhaps after a while we take it for granted.

It also explores the problematic issue of parental love, of pleasing loving parents at the expense of yourself, of striving to be perfect for them, and living simply because they couldn't let you go. The title of the book speaks to this. Granted, it's an extreme case, but it certainly pervades society no matter how it is expressed. Jenna's parents couldn't let her go, their miracle child, and they made her more perfect than she was before. She's a more acceptable height now that she's two inches shorter. Her scar has gone. Her skin is flawless. It speaks to the ethical issue of Designer Babies, embryos that can be made to grow into more athletic people, or smarter or more beautiful. I remember it was big in the news a few years ago, mostly in the US.

After a slow start (where it helped that I knew more than Jenna did, though it's not the best way to read this book I think), the story gets really interesting. Although you could say the author has an agenda, but like in McNaughton's *The Secret Under My Skin*, it is smoothly integrated into the story, it gives structure and meaning to the story, and it doesn't necessarily tell you what to think.

Which brings me to my main complaint: the ending. I thought that, after setting up such an explosive premise, the ending was abrupt and disappointing. Pearson could have done so much more with it, and the epilogue *does* lean towards an answer to the ethical questions mentioned above, without properly examining it. It also didn't really make sense, and contradicted itself in what it was saying and how. It's hard to explain without giving it away, but it was as if Jenna got to a point where not just her body but her mind stopped changing and developing. The epilogue was badly written, sudden, and spoiled all the lovely speculation up to that point by presenting an easy resolution. A shame, after such a promising book, to end it that way.

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## Heidi The Hippie Reader says

*The Adoration of Jenna Fox* fits nicely into a science fiction/medical category that includes films like *Gattaca* or books like *Starters*. As medicine advances, ethical questions begin to develop about treatment, life and death and humanity needs to answer them. But, one thing that remains the same throughout all of these technical changes, is the power of the love that parents have for their child.

Even now, people sign do not resuscitate orders so that medicine won't keep them in a vegetative state for indeterminate periods of time. The occurrence of near-death experiences has exploded since CPR and other life-saving techniques have developed.

Imagine sometime in the near future, when bio-implants can be used to stop or even reverse internal damage.

What if we figure out how to turn the aging gene off? How then will we handle death with dignity? Or will we even be able to accept death at all?

I listened to an interview with the author in which she said that she wrote this book because her own teenager was diagnosed with cancer. She went through the terror and did whatever was necessary to save her child. Along the way, she ran into parents whose children were terminally ill but had no viable treatment options. Pearson realized how lucky she and her daughter were and it sparked her imagination.

It's a worthy a question: how far would you go to save someone you love? I recommend this book to anyone who wants to consider the possible answer.

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### **Sara (sarawithoutanH) says**

I listened to this on audio and I really tried to like it but I was literally DYING during the last two hours. I don't know if I've ever wanted an audiobook to end so badly.

I thought Jenna was an absurdly annoying character and I saw the twist coming a mile away. Mary E. Pearson is a fantastic author (I really enjoyed *Kiss of Deception*) but not even her writing could save this book. I didn't care for a single character in this book. The love interest was boring. The antagonist was... well, I couldn't even really tell who the antagonist was. Jenna's parents were the woosooooorst. I hated them so so so much. I wanted her to disown them so bad. I know I was supposed to feel bad for them but I was just like

There was literally no plot to this book. Jenna figures out the big secret and then spends the rest of the book wandering around, asking herself about the meaning of life. When the book ended I was like... really???? Is that it?????

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### **Tatiana says**

I confess, my reason for reading this novel was not very noble. When I added *The Unbecoming of Mara Dyer* to my TBR, a couple of astute friends informed me that this book's synopsis sounded strikingly similar to that of *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*. Naturally, I couldn't stay away from a possible rip-off controversy (I already have *The Hunger Games/Battle Royale*, *The Giver/Matched*, *Twilight/Hush*, *Hush/Evermore* "research" covered.) The jury is still out on *The Unbecoming of Mara Dyer*, but I found that *A Long, Long Sleep* had a fairly strong resemblance to *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*.

Both set in a vaguely defined future, both involve teen girls who upon waking up after a long period of unconsciousness have to piece their pasts together, both have dangerously overbearing parents as major story

players.

But I liked *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* more. It is a very self-reflective story that examines medical ethics, free will and what it means to be human.

Jenna's "secret" is easy enough to uncover, but the sophisticated moral questions raised in this book kept me glued to it until the very end.

Introspective and thought-provoking.

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## **Molly says**

I kept hearing about this book (it was just optioned for a movie, I believe?) and everyone said "the less you know about it coming to it, the better." So I won't say much here. Except that I'm seriously impressed at Mary Pearson's ability to go from writing a contemporary first novel like *A ROOM ON LORELEI STREET* to writing something so very different as this is.

Did I love reading it? No. Did I find it compelling? Yes. The most accurate reading experience I can compare it to is reading Susan Beth Pfeffer's *LIFE AS WE KNEW IT*. It didn't have quite the same level of "I can't look away even though this completely terrifies me," feel as *LAWKI*, but it was that same being impressed/horrified that an author could conceive of such a scarily different, utterly possible, future.

One of Pearson's strengths is her ability to create sympathetic characters. Sci-fi isn't really my thing, but I cared enough about the character to keep following her through the story, so that says a lot.

All in all, thought-provoking.

P.S. Editorial nitpick: I wish the definitions of words as chapter openings would've been removed. I think they were unnecessary, belonged to an earlier draft, and found them totally unbelievable considering how much else Jenna DID know. Every single time, I found myself pulled out of the story being mad at the device of them. So not successful, in my mind.

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## **Ari says**

I love to read good books.  
This is one of them.

I was a bit suspicious about it after seeing that the reviews were not that great, so I was a bit afraid to read it..  
I love surprises too.

If you want a lot of action, this is not a book for you.  
If you want something really funny, this is not a book for you.  
If you want a 'teen-love story' this is not a book for you.

If you want something about future and technology and stuff like that.. well, you got it, this is not for you either.

This is a book about being human, about being alive, about second chances, about how precious the memories are, about life, about "how far will a parent go for a child"..

I loved to see how the memories came back to Jenna, I loved to see her realize the truth, and even if it is written in a strange/different style I loved that too about it.

I liked Jenna (mostly). I liked the fact that her thoughts came in bits, short propositions sometimes not related one with another. I liked Lily. I liked Ethan and I loved the fact that it was not that kind of "I see you I am madly in love with you" story or that "I am a teenager in love so I only think about that boy" story either. And I liked the ending, even if I think that it was a bit too fast compared to everything else in this book.

The only think that I missed (and wanted so badly in the end) was some sense of responsibility from Jenna's part. I wished for her to understand that it was not all about her feelings (they made her think she was the center of the world so she acted like that and made some bad judgements), I wanted her to realize that all those people (starting with her parents) risked everything for her and she was about to make them lose it all. (view spoiler) Some part of me wanted her to know this, to care more about the others..

But all in one - I loved this book.

*This review can be found at [ReadingAfterMidnight.com](http://ReadingAfterMidnight.com)*

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## **Shannon (leaninglights) says**

I really enjoyed this book. It's thought-provoking yet simple and straight to the point. Just read the synopsis for book 2 and ahh, I can't wait to read it. I only docked it to 4-stars because the pacing was a bit slow in the middle. Otherwise, a great read I recommend!

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## **★ Jess says**

This started off very well: Unique, fascinating characters. A wonderful premise and a heavy feeling of mystery and suspicion. However, as the book went on-I lost all interest. The plot went down hill, I couldnt care for the characters, and decided I was just not interested in the situation anymore. A wonderful premise, but disappointing book.

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## **Trin says**

Teenage Jenna wakes up after an accident with no memory of who she is—though she knows all of Thoreau's *Walden* by heart. As quickly becomes apparent, what's going on is far more complex than a case of simple old amnesia! Jenna's slow investigation into what really happened to her ensues.

I was disappointed by this. I said "slow investigation" above because I found the pacing almost glacial: the narrative slinks along, gradually uncovering twists that utterly failed to surprise me. It doesn't help that the first person POV was entirely affectless; I understand that this may have been partially intentional and dictated by the plot, but I found it very dull to read. Jenna might have amnesia, but I felt like I had *déjà vu*: I've just read too many other similar stories. This one needed to have something to distinguish itself, to make it stand out, but aside from some mildly interesting ideas about future issues with science and technology, there just wasn't anything new here. I appreciate that Pearson was trying to convey some real ideas about what it means to be human, but her characters were too two-dimensional for her message to have any effect on me. And I really, really hated the trite epilogue—it seemed very fake, and cheapened the sense of realism that the rest of the narrative was at least striving for.

[Insert painfully obvious joke about not adoring Jenna Fox at all here]

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## **Neal Shusterman says**

Really liked it. My kind of book. Posed so many questions on what it means to be alive, the nature of consciousness, and the choices we make for our children, right and wrong, good and bad...

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## **Maggie Stiefvater says**

I can't say much about this book without being spoilery. I do have to say that because the plot relies so much on secrecy, I would've never picked it up based on the cryptic jacket flap -- I didn't touch it until I had heard so many recommendations I couldn't take it.

I can say this: The characterization is wonderful and consistent, the characters are likable, and the plot was surprising. Even as I guessed at the "twists" might be through the book, I was never quite right and even when I was close, the author's telling was so fresh and honest that it read as true surprise.

Highly recommend.

\*\*\*wondering why all my reviews are five stars? Because I'm only reviewing my favorite books -- not every book I read. Consider a novel's presence on my Goodreads bookshelf as a hearty endorsement. I can't believe I just said "hearty." It sounds like a stew.\*\*\*\*

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## **Lightreads says**

Huh, interesting. This book is the short first person narrative of a teenaged girl, told in a string of tiny

sections, sometimes just a sentence or two, as she and the reader piece together her memory after waking from an accident. Justine Larbalestier's *Liar* is the short first person narrative of a teenaged girl, told in a string of tiny sections, sometimes just a sentence or two, as she deliberately obscures the truth and jerks the reader around. And yet *Jenna Fox* was the book I found artificial, over-constructed, manipulative.

I dunno, it's an issue book, and it's subtle like a blow to the head. I wanted to like it more than I did, because there's actually a lot of nice things going on here with a mother-daughter relationship, and even some gestures towards a nuanced treatment of the "issues." But this is a book about science, and the people caught bleeding on its edge, and it got really far up my nose in the way discussions about "what it truly means to be human" always do. Because these narratives about how far science should or shouldn't go are, when you scrape away everything else, just shittily disguised exercises in . . . body xenophobia. I mean look, these are books about reconstructed bodies and reconstituted physical and neurological lives, and they're all, "but what if I'm not huuuuuuman anymore, weep wail." It's disability anxiety dressed up pretty. Altered body anxiety. All dependent on this notion of human as something narrow and prescriptive that you obviously should worry about losing if you ever, gasp, get hurt and need medical intervention. Wait . . . hang on . . .

I had a revelation, though. There was an author interview at the end of my audiobook in which Pearson sort of casually defined what ethics means to her. And apparently what ethics means to her is how we feel about things. Seriously, she thinks ethics is what we "feel is right."

And I was like, *holy shit, that's what people think!* It just made sense out of a decade of my life! My God!

Look, okay. Ethics isn't about how we feeeeeeel. You know why? Because we feeeeeeel like assholes. We feel subconscious but measurable anxiety at the presence of people with darker skin than us; we feel in unarticulated but measurable ways that people always have a right to speak up for themselves unless they happen to be women; we feel in subtle but measurable ways that disabled people are upsetting to look at and should just go away. We are racists, we are sexists, we are deeply ablest – we are *assholes*. So the notion that we can just look into our feelings and find some clean, instinctive, right, ethical answer is utter nonsense. Ethics isn't what you feel in your heart, and anyone who says so is giving themselves permission to be an asshole.

Which explains everything about this book. Because it is *all* about how people feel in their hearts – about how they are ablest assholes who ignore things like, um, consent – and not at *all* about ethics.

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## Desperado says

There are not enough words to describe how much I loved this novel. When I read the synopsis, I thought it would be like *Skinned*. They're both about teenage girls living in a Dystopian world who had "accidents". But this was so much more. Maybe it's because this book isn't part of a trilogy & I know that every word that's written will be the last. I won't hear more about the characters when I close this book. It will be done. Finished. I felt so much empathy for Jenna, stuck in a body she didn't know how to use. There's been a lot of emphasis on other people's emotions in this novel & Jenna almost always felt like an outcast. Of course she did. She had to learn how to live again, how to even feel emotions & what those emotions meant. And what's so wonderful is that she became *more*. She became a Jenna Fox that Jenna Fox would never have even dreamed of being before the accident. She became a better Jenna Fox. She lost so much but gained herself in the bargain. Overall, this is a novel about what a parent will do to save their child & the repercussions of that

action. I was very sad to see this story end. But as Jenna said, Everyone has to die eventually.

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