



## Am I Normal Yet?

*Holly Bourne*

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## **Am I Normal Yet?** Holly Bourne

All Evie wants is to be normal. She's almost off her meds and at a new college where no one knows her as the girl-who-went-crazy. She's even going to parties and making friends. There's only one thing left to tick off her list...

But relationships are messy – especially relationships with teenage guys. They can make any girl feel like they're going mad. And if Evie can't even tell her new friends Amber and Lottie the truth about herself, how will she cope when she falls in love?

## **Am I Normal Yet? Details**

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# From Reader Review Am I Normal Yet? for online ebook

## Sophie says

I know I'm a little late to the Holly Bourne party, and I'm sorry about that. After reading spectacular book, I definitely need more of her books! I definitely need to support more UKYA authors, and Holly is perfect for this.

In *Am I Normal Yet?*, Evie is about to start college. After just scrapping by with a few GCSEs, she feels as if now is the right time to reduce her medication for her OCD, and try to be 'normal'. She has a plan: not let anyone know she was the 'girl who went crazy', make friends, and maybe get a boyfriend? As her dosage slowly get lower and lower, she is confronted with the need to tell her friends about her history, and how to overcoming the urges and anxiety that is returning.

To me, *Am I Normal Yet?* covers the issue of mental health, and what being a teenager in modern Britain is like, to a T. Now, I've never had any interaction with OCD, so please correct me if I offend anyone - I really don't mean to. I just feel like the way Holly treated Evie's OCD was done perfectly. It wasn't hushed up like it was a bad thing; rather, it was explained in a clear way, and shown that while it can be painful and heartbreaking to sufferers and their families, there are various methods to deal with it. Just because you may suffer from OCD, anxiety, etc., does not mean you are crazy. There is such a stigma around the topic of mental health, and I think if more people read books like this (or like *Every Last Word*, which I reviewed last week) there would be a greater understanding on these topics.

Also, on the subject of stigmas, Holly is not an author to shy away from controversial subjects. I can count on one hand, if I think really hard, the amount of books I've read that discuss periods, and I mean actually discuss, not just gloss over them, or make them into jokes about PMSing or whatnot. As someone who has periods, like half the population of the whole world, they shouldn't be hidden away and made a 'controversial' subject. To be honest, none of us would be here without periods, just saying. If you think about it like that, shouldn't more be done to make them more 'normal'.

Another thing, there is no such thing as 'normal'. 'Normal' is an ideal, and one person's normal, will not be another's. We should just get rid of this word, while we're on. Today's world wants to make everything all idealised, and perfect. Reality check, nothing is perfect. Everything and everyone has something about them that makes them unique, and that's amazing. That's what makes us, us.

Anywho, I've ranted enough. I adored the friendship between Evie, Amber, and Lottie! They're the type of friend group I wish I had grouping up (and still do, to be honest). They talked about real stuff, not just the stereotypical 'girly' gossip, etc. It was a true feminist group, and should be shown to everyone out there - old, young; male, female - to show just what feminism is.

Yeah, there were boys in the book, and a little romance, but Evie's entire world didn't just change when a lad started liking her. Her whole world didn't suddenly shift off it's axis, and now revolve around him. She stayed true to herself, and I loved that, because I loved everything about Evie!

I feel like this review has been a bit full on, sorry (not sorry). However, it needed to be said, and you need to read this book! I wish I had this book when I was a teenager (even though it wasn't written, but whatever). This is, quite simply, perfection, even if I have qualms about that word. It's a book that transcends all ages, and should automatically be given to all teenagers as a book to show that life as a teenager isn't great, but

there are ways to deal with that. I'm doing to jumping right into book 2, *How Hard Can Love Be?*, as soon as I get a chance.

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### Stacey (prettybooks) says

*Am I Normal Yet?* is a much loved UKYA novel that had been on my TBR since last summer. I heard such good things about it from the Twittiverse and couldn't wait to get stuck in (I'd already bought the companion sequel, *How Hard Can Love Be?* ).

I knew that *Am I Normal Yet?* was a story of teenage friendship, feminism, and mental health, so it was my first choice book to give out on World Book Night on April 23rd. I left copies on coffee shop tables and at bus stops for teenagers around my local community to pick up.

I read *Am I Normal Yet?* months after selecting it for World Book Night. After picking it up, I raced through the story and looked forward to sharing it with other people. I loved Holly Bourne's lively Spinster Club – Evie, Amber and Lottie, three friends facing the tough world of being a teenage girl. *Am I Normal Yet?* is Evie's story. She's off to a new college after having a breakdown at her previous school due to her troubling OCD and anxiety. But she's better now, right? Normal? She's going to parties, taking less medication, and not washing her hands *all* the time... but life is complicated and recovery isn't easy.

*Am I Normal Yet?* will be a welcome addition to any teenage (or not-so-teenage) girl's bookshelves. If you feel at home on Twitter, the girls' discussions on feminism may feel like conversations you've joined in with before. But if you're a teenager who doesn't have a group like this to turn to, it may be your first introduction. *Am I Normal Yet?* is tactfully told through Evie as she navigates the world of friends, boys, and school. We discover how difficult it is to tell what someone's going through, even if you're best friends with them, by following Evie's Recovery Diary entries and trips to therapy - we're with Evie the whole way and Holly Bourne shows us exactly what it's like inside her head.

*Am I Normal Yet?* is a fresh young adult contemporary story that packs so many important things into one book. But it's also about the fun friendship between the girls – and I'm ready for Amber's story!

*I also reviewed this book over on Pretty Books.*

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### Aj the Ravenous Reader says

***“Everyone’s on the cliff edge of normal. Everyone finds life an utter nightmare sometimes, and there’s no “normal” way of dealing with it. There’s only what’s normal to you.”***

I may be overreacting but *Am I Normal Yet* may be one of the best YA contemporaries I’ve read to date. It’s extremely hilarious (been laughing since page one), but also heart-rending, truly very eye opening as it involves feminism in its rawest, most genuine sense and a closer, more sensitive look at mental illnesses (like OCD).

Just a glimpse on its refreshing and on the spot approach on mental illnesses:

*“Mental illnesses have gone too far the other way. Because now mental health disorders have gone “mainstream”. And for all the good it’s brought people like me who have been given therapy and stuff, there’s a lot of bad it’s brought too. Because now people use the phrase OCD to describe minor personality quirks .*

*“Oooh, I like my pens in a line, I’m so OCD.  
NO YOU’RE FUCKING NOT!*

*Oh my God, I was so nervous about that presentation. I literally had a panic attack.  
NO YOU FUCKING DIDN’T!*

*I’m so hormonal today. I just feel totally bipolar.  
SHUT UP, YOU IGNORANT BUMFACE!”*

It’s utterly relatable with the wonderful story of true friendship and most importantly, it is adorably British! What’s not to love? Lol! It’s like finding the perfect best friend in a book! I totally recommend it. (obviously). Also, it turns out, Holly Bourne wrote these books as a trilogy on feminism called “The Spinster Club” series with the three best friends as heroines and with each girl having her own story. How extremely cool is that? I hope to find the next book really soon.

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## **Toyni Erica says**

How can I not give this book 5 stars? This book is cute, scary, childish and even more scary because its so realistic. I can really recognize myself in this book, and that doesn't happen a lot.

Just have to say that this book can be a trigger for people struggling with different mental issues, specially OCD ofc.

But I think maybe it's a good book for most people to read, maybe to understand a bit more. Maybe to se what it's like to be the 'mental' person.

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## **Marta Álvarez says**

Tiene un estilo ligero y con humor, y quizás por eso choca cuando la autora se pone seria hablando de feminismo y de enfermedades mentales. La evolución del grupo de amigas (respecto a lo primero) y de Evie (respecto a lo segundo) es notable. Al principio creí que estaba tratando ambas causas de manera superficial (y haciéndoles un flaco favor a ambas), pero no. Lo que hace es que sus personajes cometan errores, y que aprendan de ellos. No empiezan (ni terminan, ya de paso) haciéndolo todo bien o tomando siempre las decisiones correctas. Pero después se dan cuenta y se muestra que ciertas actitudes eran erróneas. En fin, protagonistas que la cagan y dejan que las traten mal, pero que luego no se tragan la justificación del tío de turno. No se romantiza que te desplantan porque luego sean cuquis contigo. «Pues lo normal», pensaréis. Pero tristemente, no.

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## **BrokenTune says**

It's YA and I got given the book by a friend who had copies for World Book Night 2016.

Otherwise, I would not have picked it up, because...YA.

If I had read this when I was 15, I would have enjoyed this much more, but as I haven't the book fell a bit flat for me.

The intention of the book is great, tho: To give readers an insight into how OCD and general anxiety disorder can affect people. It's not something that I as a 15-year-old would have been that familiar with, other than by way of crude jokes. And this is the point of the book - to get people think about the jokes and flippant remarks that are based on mental health issues.

From that aspect, I really appreciated the book, too.

Where it fell flat for me was in the writing - it was so full of cliches that made it seem quite ironic that the books attempts to look behind the common misconceptions - and cliches - surrounding mental health issues.

And of course the precocious little sister character, just seemed a thinly veiled psychology lecture...

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## **Trish at Between My Lines says**

This review was originally posted on [Between My Lines]

Wow! Am I Normal Yet by Holly Bourne slammed me to the ground with all the feels. It broke my heart, made me roar with laughter, made me determined to fight more about feminist issues and most of all enlightened me about OCD.

### **First Line of Am I Normal Yet by Holly Bourne**

"It started with a house party."

### **5 Things I Love in Am I Normal Yet by Holly Bourne**

#### **1. The Jarring Descent in to relapse**

When we meet Evie first, she is in recovery from a breakdown caused by her OCD and Generalised Anxiety Disorder. Evie is adorable but walking in her shoes is exhausting. She worries about all the usual teenage dramas but she also worries about her rituals and being normal. At times these overlap a lot and it's

impossible to see where the line ends between teenage worries and her illness. Watching her descent back into crisis was so distressing but very honest and realistic.

"Okay, so I was stressing. And obsessing. 'Obstressing' times a million."

## **2. The Friendships**

The girls are amazing! Evie, Amber and Lottie form a gang called the The Spinster Club to help figure out how to be a feminist. They aim to stay true to themselves, and not lose their personality or their friends while trying to impress guys, and at the same time not being ball breakers! It was such a fun theme but also very powerful and inspiring.

## **3. The relationships**

Evie's relationships won't have you dreaming of happily-ever-afters or swooning dizzily about the guys in her life. But they are far more realistic than any others that I have read about in YA fiction. Huge bonus marks here not over romanticising teenage love affairs, but at the same time capturing the giddy moments.

## **4. The Bechdel Test**

While reading, I was thinking that this book aces the Bechdel test (girls talking about things other than boys). So I was amused and delighted to see that it was also IN the book as a topic of conversation.

## **5. The Quirky Format**

We see Evie's recovery diary. She describes good thoughts and bad thoughts as they burst into her day. We get to nosy at text messages and watch Evie compile lots of lists. All things I ADORE in books, so these were another huge highlight for me.

Overall I'm in love with this book and it tipped my TBR over the edge, as I now need to read all the Holly Bourne books. The great news is that this is the first book in a series. Each one focusing on a different member of The Spinster Club and I can't wait to read on.

## **Who should read Am I Normal Yet by Holly Bourne?**

I highly recommend this to you if you love YA contemporary books that move from light moments to dark moments with ease, and if you want to read an authentic portrayal of OCD and Anxiety (as experienced by Evie, I know everyone has their own journey). Or if you want to read a book with a great feminist message at its core. Similarly fans of OCD Love Story by Corey Ann Haydu and Only Ever Yours by Louise O'Neill should appreciate this one.

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**ambsreads says**

**DNF @ 5%**

I made a promise earlier this year that if a book made an epilepsy joke I would immediately DNF it. Epilepsy jokes *aren't* funny. Do you know what it's like to wonder if your mum will wake up with brain damage? If she will even remember you? If she will even wake up? My single mother was diagnosed with grand mal seizures almost five years ago. I was 14 at the time. I was a baby. I had to call an ambulance and talk to a paramedic while helping my mum. This wasn't her first seizure (that had been when I was 10), but it was the one that started the beginning of her epilepsy.

This book mocked epilepsy.

*"How do you get it?"*

*Ethan put his phone back in his pocket. "It's usually a side effect of an operation to cure epilepsy."*

*I let out a big, real, sigh of relief. "Oh, good. I'm past the age where you develop epilepsy."*

*Ethan burst out laughing again, just as our teacher arrived and shushed him."*

You may be past the age where one can develop juvenile epilepsy, but one is never able to not develop epilepsy. A domestic violence situation is what triggered my mums and many football players have developed it after hitting their head on the field. I will not be continuing this book for the sheer naivety of this. It wasn't necessary. It's not funny. Having your mum not remember who you are isn't funny.

On top of this, this book is prized for its mental health rep. However, in this first part of the book the main character and a boy named Ethan, not sure if he's the love interest, have mocked "out there" illnesses **twice**. I'm barely into this book and it's attacking people with mental health issues that aren't common.

I may read book two, but I can not be someone who supports a mocking of epilepsy after what I have been through. I'm honestly sitting here crying over what I have read, I am so enraged at the disrespect. I feel I would have enjoyed this book too if it had not been for this horrid comment and the hypocrisy on what makes a valid mental illness.

**You can't be a book on mental health and mock other illnesses.**

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**Hazel (Stay Bookish) says**

So eye-opening about OCD! And I loooooove the feminism. There were moments that made me laugh way loud and made me punch-the-wall angry and just heartachingly sad. Am I Normal Yet was a great read. Full review tk.

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**Clara says**

*"Everyone's on the cliff edge of normal. Everyone finds life an utter nightmare sometimes, and there's no 'normal' way of dealing with it... There is no normal, Evelyn."*



I started this book for two reasons, one being that Holly Bourne will be attending YALC 2018 in London, where I am going in a few weeks, and the other being my friend Roxanne who told me to do so. And so I did.

I didn't know anything about it, expect that this book is well loved in our community and that it talks about mental health. It's the kind of book you see everywhere and know about without even picking it up. I was glad to start it knowing nothing, as it was a bigger surprise.

I related to our main character, Evie, immediately. I too suffer from OCDs and anxiety, and I learned somehow so much more about the two of it. I have been diagnosed with OCDs only recently so it felt good to read about it: It made me feel less alone and way more understood. And for that I'm very thankful.

Now, even though this book is important and has a great representation when it comes to OCDs and anxiety, it still has some issues and not a lot of people have been talking about it, even though I read tons of reviews before starting writing mine. That's why I separated this review in two parts: what I loved and what bugged me off.

### **What I loved**

Obviously, I loved Evie. She is far from perfect but I related to her so, so much. I have been through what she's facing in this book and I know how hard it is to accept that you are relapsing, that you are sick and that you need help, no matter how normal you want to be and try to be. No matter what, Evie was strong, nice and she inspired to keep getting better, but also to keep doing better. Thanks to her and to this book, I am starting to understand that no one is "normal", that I'm not different in that way and that you should always be nice and care about your friends and family – they care more than you think.

In the end, none of the characters were perfect but they were perfect teenagers and made mistakes everyone does at their age. It felt so good to read about teenagers actually acting like some, and not trying to be all grown up. Holly Bourne is really good when it comes to writing through the eyes of a 16 years old, and I'm really glad for that. I'm also very happy with the anxiety and OCDs representation, which I found to be perfect and I never read a review saying the contrary. Plus, Evie talked a lot about all the stigma around mental health and all I could do was scream "HELL YES" while reading it.

This book is really important as it talks about very important subjects that should be discussed more in the YA literature. It was a very quick and funny read, despite it being serious. It really is a good way to talk about mental health to a younger audience.

### **What bugged me off**

Now, as I said, this book wasn't perfect. Before starting to point out what I noticed, I would like to say that a reader who has a mom suffering from epilepsy really disliked one of the comments made in this book about it. I can't talk more about it as I know nothing on this subject, but I still think that it's important to point it out.

This book is all about feminism and 16 years old cisgender girls realizing that the society isn't that perfect for them. Most of the time, they were talking about really important subjects and were making some very good points. I already knew most of it but it's still necessary to discuss about it all in literature, especially in YA. However, they made some comments that made me cringe a lot. It is important to note that all the characters are white and straight. As they kept talking about feminism, it has been said a lot that only women

had their periods and that it's what makes them women. By saying that, it excludes transgender and non-binary people. Because yes, some men have their periods and they should be recognized as well. Plus, they often make each other feel bad for talking about men, as if dating one was against feminism. I really disliked that. I'm a feminist but I'm also a romantic and I love to talk about men. I would love to date one and if all I see suddenly is him, so be it. That doesn't mean I don't respect myself or women in general. It was really hard to agree to everything when they kept excluding people from their feminism.

*Am I Normal Yet?* is a very good book and I loved it. I loved seeing myself represented and it will definitely help me when it comes to my anxiety and OCDs. However, I wish the feminism talked about in this book was intersectional and didn't exclude anyone, nor made anyone feel bad for talking about men. Yes, women are more than just lovers, mothers or wives, but it doesn't give anyone the right to shade someone else for liking another person or even dating. Judging is never the key, and your feminism should always include everyone in it.

Now, despite everything, I just can't wait to pick up the sequel and I already know that I'll binge read this series. Oops.

*"Bad stuff happens, people are mean, there are no steps you can take that ensure the world leaves you alone. All you can do is try not to be one of those people who contributes to the bad."*

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## **Warda says**

Reread. As epic and as wonderful as the first read.

Original review:

I want to hug this book!

It. Was. So. Good. I cried, dammit. And I never cry when it comes to books!

So, it deals with a 16 year old girl who suffers from severe OCD. And going into this, I was slightly ignorant on the topic being an actual serious mental health disorder and more aware of the stereotypical definition of OCD and how it's used playfully in everyday language.

I loved the insight Holly Bourne gave into the mind of someone who has OCD, exploring all the ways it can affect someone's life. At times, it made it uncomfortable to read certain passages, because of how hard hitting and raw it was. But I loved that! It was educational, refreshing and honest.

The characters all felt very real! The family dynamics, the side characters were all well developed and I loved the main protagonist. She went through such amazing growth!

Holly Bourne did an excellent job of creating a character who is dealing with OCD, whilst desperately trying to live a normal, teenage life. Of inspiring empathy into the reader, celebrating differences and just accepting

people as they are. Flaws and all.

There was no cliched 'happy ending' or love making it all better in the end. It was about her accepting and finding herself first. There were strong elements of feminism and its theories in this book and I love how Holly Bourne infused that in.

It's such an important book for young girls to read, though everyone can take something away from it, and I'm so glad that there's going to be more books! I need it!

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## **Emer says**

Wow.

Sometimes there are books that come along and shake you to your core. This is one such book. My friend Gabby has talked about how great this book is for as long as I've known her here on Goodreads but she's got the dodgiest taste in books ever!!! Sorry Gabby but you do and I say this with love... But then I read one of her other favs over the summer and subsequently I rated it highly so that got me thinking that maybe she wasn't completely delusional ??

ANYWAY!!

Then I discovered my friend Sam loved this book too...

Then Nkisha...

And so I finally bit the bullet and here I am.

And SHOOK is what I am!!!

This book is EVERYTHING a contemporary YA should be. It's funny, it's honest. It's utterly heart wrenching, it's scary. It is an utter triumph.

I honestly don't know how to review this book. The depiction of Evie's OCD is nothing short of terrifying brilliance. I guess this book should come with a massive trigger warning for anyone with OCD but I can only begin to imagine how it could help someone with OCD too. It is a book that has the power to dispel any stigma that still surrounds mental illness. Honestly I think this should be required reading in schools everywhere because of its educational value. Not only does it educate about mental health but it has the most powerful feminist message. A message of equality. Of friendship. Of respecting one's self. A message that we are each created equal no matter our gender, our background etc.

There's a section in Chapter 9 where Evie discusses *what really pisses her off about people and mental health problems*. It is one of the best passages of writing I have had the pleasure to read. I literally punched the air as I was reading it. It's so simple yet so powerful. And so bloody accurate!!! In it Evie compares the every day usage of mental health problems to describe regular behaviours and how frustrating that is for her as a person with legitimate life altering mental health issues.

*"People use the phrase OCD to describe minor personality quirks. "Oooh, I like my pens in a line, I'm so OCD."*

*NO YOU'RE FUCKING NOT.*

*"Oh my God, I was so nervous about that presentation, I literally had a panic attack."*

*NO YOU FUCKING DIDN'T.*

*"I'm so hormonal today. I just feel totally bipolar."*

*SHUT UP, YOU IGNORANT BUMFACE.*

*Told you I got angry.*

*These words – words like OCD and bipolar – are not words to use lightly. And yet now they're everywhere. There are TV programmes that actually pun on them. People smile and use them, proud of themselves for learning them, like they should get a sticker or something. Not realising that if those words are said to you by a medical health professional, as a diagnosis of something you'll probably have for ever, they're words you don't appreciate being misused every single day by someone who likes to keep their house quite clean."*

And then to put it into perspective Evie goes on to compare the usage of these terms to how it would be if we used terms surrounding physical illnesses in a similar fashion.

*"People actually die of bipolar, you know? They jump in front of trains and tip down bottles of paracetamol and leave letters behind to their devastated families because their bullying brains just won't let them be for five minutes and they can't bear to live with that any more.*

*People also die of cancer.*

*You don't hear people going around saying: "Oh my God, my headache is so, like, tumoury today."*

*Yet it's apparently okay to make light of the language of people's internal hell. And it makes me hate people because I really don't think they get it."*

I don't know about you. But to me this simple passage was phenomenally moving. The juxtaposition of delivering such a serious message in such a humorous and irreverential manner is actually a snapshot of how this whole novel is plotted. The book is hilarious one second, and then thought provoking and gut wrenching the next. It's a smart book laden with snappy banter and tremendous heart.

But the real core of this book is the positive depiction of female friendship. It's not always a perfect friendship. As in life nothing can ever be perfect so therefore the characters are still beautifully human and therefore beautifully flawed but it's a searingly honest depiction of love for your female best friends. And what's even more wonderful are the conversations these friends have with each other about what it means to be a female in today's society.

*"It's the language all of us use when we talk about girls. It's so screwed up. Like, there are all these horrid words for being girls with no male equivalent – like 'slut' or 'psycho girlfriend'. Like Tim saying 'being tied down' implies we're a burden, that we, as a species, tie boys down and take away their freedom. Why do they get freedom and we don't? Why does everyone assume boys want freedom and girls want to be attached to someone?" I took another square of chocolate and it helped my dulling hangover. "Think about it," I continued. "When boys get older, if they don't find someone they get called bachelors. We get called spinsters. There isn't a word that means male spinster. Just like there isn't a word for a guy who sleeps around – whereas there are TONS for girls. The English language itself is sexist – it reinforces these overgeneralised, screwed-up notions about how boys and girls are allowed to be"*

Incredibly thought provoking for anyone of any age but especially important for teenagers who are just beginning to blossom into adulthood.

I urge any fan of YA novels to read this book. Its ballsy brilliance will definitely force its way into your heart

and change your outlook on the struggles of living with a mental health problem for the better, as well as explaining the truest meaning of feminism and how to respect and accept yourself for who you are. It's a book that is fun to read, will make you laugh out loud and then cry with heartache and all the while packing a powerful message about self-acceptance.

Simply one of the best young adult books I have ever had the privilege and pleasure to read.

And I guess I begrudgingly have to admit that maybe Gabby's taste in books isn't always so dodgy after all....

#### **Four stars**

Buddy read / Discussions with

Aimee

Gabby

Mirjam

Nkisha

Sam

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#### **Jiana says**

That was really good!

*"Because now people use the phrase OCD to describe minor personality quirks. "Oooh, I like my pens in a line, I'm so OCD."*

***NO YOU'RE FUCKING NOT.***

*"Oh my God, I was so nervous about that presentation, I literally had a panic attack."*

***NO YOU FUCKING DIDN'T.***

*"I'm so hormonal today. I just feel totally bipolar."*

***SHUT UP, YOU IGNORANT BUMFACE."***

When I first picked up this book I thought it was going to be a fluffy and quirky read. Well, it is and it isn't at the same time. It deals with serious and real issues (mental illness and feminism, mainly) while managing to add humor and comedy to it.

#### **The book had the perfect balance of seriousness and fun.**

It deals with OCD and generalized anxiety, to begin with. And for someone who has generalized anxiety, I was able to fully relate to Evie, the MC, and I can definitely say that it was portrayed correctly. As for OCD, I won't state an opinion simply because I don't have much knowledge of it besides the generally known concepts of it. However, I do think Holly Bourne managed to explain it properly and shed enough light on it.

In addition to that, this book deals with concepts of feminism which I think were great as well and handled right. Holly Bourne spoke of subjects which people usually shy away from, i.e. menstruation and so forth. Also, the concept of feminism today has sadly taken a turn to the worse with some people and I do think this book clearly explained what feminism is: equality to both sexes.

*"Everyone's on the cliff edge of normal. Everyone finds life an utter nightmare sometimes, and there's no 'normal' way of dealing with it... There is no normal, Evelyn."*

The characters were so fun and *realistic*. Evie's best friends, Amber and Lottie are great characters and I loved the interactions between these three. They have a great friendship. They discuss everything together, from gossip to actual deep things. **That is the girl friendship I want to see more of!**

I can't wait to pick up the next book!

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## Alice Cai says

4.25\*

The ending was really good up until the epilogue. That ruined it a bit. A lot of the side characters are really underdeveloped. They all seem to have their own issues, but they are never really explored since this is the main character's Evie's story so by the end I'm like ARE THEY OK?

The main character Evie has OCD. She just wants to be normal. She goes to college (16 years old, UK system) and meets 2 new friends Lottie and Amber. They form the spinster club in which they discuss feminism.

So this book is pretty different from the mental health contemporaries I had read previously because it's split evenly between a story about romance/boy troubles and Evie's OCD. They are intertwined together and combined with a message on feminism.

This story missed the mark for me a bit because of too many side characters and it was just too meta. Too ironic. The characters know that they shouldn't be obsessing over boys so much, but they do anyway. I mean they literally discuss in the narrative that they should not be doing this while complaining boys are trash. The humor I think is known as "British humor" and it's kinda close to my type of humor, but not really. The humor added a very distinct tone to this story that I've never seen in any other book. I did get a very interesting message out of this story.

The way the feminist aspects are presented are very realistic and typical to real life. How many times have I seen people complain about problematic stuff and abusive guys and then obsess over another slightly toxic guy. THAT'S THIS BOOK. People are contradictory about their ideas all the time, but honestly it's not that big of a deal. People are messy and no one is truly normal.

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## Jessica (Jess Hearts Books) says

Every so often a book comes along that feels like it was written especially for you, *Am I Normal Yet?* was one of those books for me. Holly Bourne tackles the big issues that teenage girls face daily: feminism, mental health, friendship and boy drama and shows how these themes are intertwined and affect one another making life as a teenage girl treacherous to navigate.

The book follows Evie's story as she tries to live a normal life, something that is fundamentally difficult with OCD rituals controlling her. I developed OCD in my teens and although it manifested itself in a different form to Evie's I found myself nodding along as I recognized the anxiety and intrusive thoughts that Evie had as being similar to my own. Holly Bourne handles OCD compassionately and realistically as we see how the

condition affects Evie's life.

Along with her OCD, Evie is trying to manage the growing distance between herself and her best friend Jane now that Jane has a new boyfriend, as well as dealing with her own boy problems as she dips her toes back into the pool of dating. At college Evie meets two girls, Amber and Lottie, who quickly become new friends as they bond over heartbreak and feminism.

The way that Holly Bourne worked feminism into her story was really well done. Rather than telling the reader about feminism she showed how feminism was relevant to the numerous situations the characters found themselves in making it accessible and relatable to young girls. I loved how Evie and her friends were just getting started on their journey into feminism and so they were each at different stages and continued to learn as they went along.

For me, *Am I Normal Yet?* is Holly Bourne's best book to date. At last a YA book has come along that challenges the mixed messages that modern society sends out to girls and introduces young openly feminist characters who I'm sure will become heroes to teen girls everywhere. *Am I Normal Yet?* is a must read for anyone who recognises just how tough being a girl really is.

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## Shaikha says

After reading *Am I Normal Yet*, the first thing that came to my mind was: **"I have to get the second book ASAP!!!♥?♥?♥?"**

The Spinster Club is a feminist series, but it also focuses on other important aspects such as mental health awareness.

The main protagonist, Evie, is a teenage girl suffering from mental illnesses, **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** and **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**. She was tired of getting called the "crazy girl" back in high school, so now that she's going to college, she wants to live a normal life and hide her OCD from the friends she'll soon meet.

Considering the sensitive topics that are addressed in this book, which also turned some events into serious situations, Holly Bourne still managed to add fun and humor into the story, overall. I did not once get bored in any way, I just kept going and wanting more. Holly's writing is very easy to absorb, It really feels like I'm inside the head of Evie. She managed to pull me in, when Evie is experiencing panic-attacks, it's as if I am also experiencing the same thing in the real world. Which is the best thing about this book, **it is realistic!**

## Let's talk about OCD.

You've probably heard a lot of people saying stuff like *"I'm feeling OCD."* Or in the cases of bookworms, when we own a book series that are not in the same height or format, we get anxious. I am guilty of that! I sometimes use that expression, or rather, I sometimes *misuse the term*.

The thing here in *Am I Normal Yet* is that it's "one of the most serious" cases of OCD. The real thing. This book is an eye-opener about OCD. Many people use the term OCD as a mean of expression, when they feel like, or when they see people arranging, or organizing things – a stereotype about OCD. People often think that individuals suffering from this disorder are just those being extremely neat, or organized. Which can be the case, but there's certainly more than just being a neat freak.

[image error]

Reading in Evie's voice made me realize how hard it is to suffer from a mental illness. Not just OCD, but all kinds of mental health disorders – anxiety, depression, etc. Your own mind is eating you. You are fighting against yourself.

This book means a lot to me, I didn't expect myself to love it so much. I think people should read this book to further understand mental health disorders. Or at least, read more books that talk about issues like this – to be aware of what's going on inside the head of an individual suffering from these kinds of mental disorders.

If you are looking for a book that empowers women, and talks about relevant and important topics in life, this is the perfect book to pick.

Holly Bourne deserves an award for her amazing portrayal of what a real OCD is. Read this book now! ??

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### **April (Aprilius Maximus) says**

How do I even begin to talk about a book that means the absolute world to me?

I think I'm going to have to do a whole video on this book and my relationship to it because this book is just so, so important to me. <3

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### **Maddie (Heart Full Of Books) says**

Love. Love. LOVE! Words can't describe how much I enjoyed this book. The friendship, the feminism and the insightful look into what fellow girls go through on a daily basis was excellent. With all the boys, the drama and the mental health issues, Evie had a lot to handle and I felt like I was right there with her. If you haven't yet, go and read it immediately and let the girl power overwhelm you!

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### **Chelsea (chelseadolling reads) says**

This was so great. The perfect amount of fun and seriousness and I loved it so much. Can't wait to carry on and see what the future holds for the Spinsters!

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### **Louise O'Neill says**

This book is really important for two reasons.

1. The insight it gives the reader into the mind of someone suffering from OCD.
2. The constant references to and exploration of feminist ideas and theories.

Besides the fact that it's important and deals with serious issues, it's well written with fully realised characters you really care about.

I wish I had read this book when I was 15. Highly recommended



