



## **Freewill**

*Chris Lynch*

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Will knows he is meant to be a pilot. But instead he finds himself with a bunch of kids in wood shop, in a school that's known as *Hopeless High*. Will doesn't know what he's doing there—or maybe he just doesn't want to admit the truth. Once upon a time he made beautiful things like gnomes, whirligigs, and furniture. Now he's driven to create strange wooden totems—and he doesn't know why.

No one knows why local teens are committing suicide, either, one after the other. The deaths all have one thing in common: beautifully carved wooden tributes that appear just after—or just before—the bodies are found. Will's afraid he knows who's responsible for the deaths. And lurking just behind that knowledge is another secret, one so explosive that he might not be able to face it and survive...

Part thriller, part mystery, Chris Lynch's newest book is a rollercoaster ride through a passionate young man's psyche—and an unforgettable emotional journey through grief, guilt, and hope from a writer at the height of his powers.

### About the Author:

Chris Lynch is the author of many highly acclaimed books for young adults, including *Iceman*, *Shadow Boxer*, and *Slot Machine*, all ALA Best Books for Young Adults and ALA Recommended Books for Young Readers. He is also the author of *Extreme Elvin*, the sequel to *Slot Machine*; *Whitechurch*; and most recently, *Gold Dust*.

## Freewill Details

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Author : Chris Lynch

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## From Reader Review **Freewill** for online ebook

### Rhea says

DNF at around 15 pages.

I'm usually a sucker for heavily stylized writing, which is why I'm surprised to say I couldn't get into **Freewill**'s writing at all.

The biggest problem with **Freewill**'s writing is its use of second person. You are a guy named Will, you think and act like Will, you behave like Will, etc. Will is a teen with problems, so he would already be hard to relate to and understand; but now that *you* are Will, it's not just that you need to hold the picture of Will and the plot in your mind, you also need to imagine *being* him, changing your identity and personality so that you're this guy named Will.

But then the way Will fits into the story makes the writing even *harder* to get into; it feels like you're missing something Will knows, which is jarring since, well, *you're Will*. Add to that the fact that everything is distant and nothing immediate and you have no idea what's going on, and the result is, **Freewill** is incredibly hard to get into.

As for the idea of the story, it sounds awesome. Explorations of free will? Great! A second-person narrative to make you feel like you don't have any free will? Interesting idea, but I need to feel INVESTED in the story in some way or other. Not by being dragged around blindly.

I'm sorry to say this, but I won't be finishing **Freewill**.

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### Jason Kurtz says

"Freewill" won a Printz Honor award. I understand why, as it is a fine example of what YA writers are trying to do in the genre of fiction for teens. It is written in second person POV. The double meaning of the title, Will (the main character needs to be 'free' and the concept that he (Will) is not controlling the fate of the people in the novel, they have 'free will' as well. But we in the MFAC writing program cohorts have been talking a lot about plot (this book has a very scant one at that and is much under developed and hole riddled), about timelines and cohesiveness, esp. for teens (this book by and large was one of the most difficult books I have ever read).

Lynch really made me feel like the brain addled character in the novel (interesting to ponder in itself). My lovely wife and I have started discussing how reader response is a extremely valid point of criticism, and we always talk about literary value and personal value (enjoyment, understanding etc.) so this book was difficult to rate for me, because I'd say it has very high literary value, and relatively low personal value. I finished the book unsatisfied, confused, and annoyed. Not the way one wants to feel after reading a YA fiction novel. I would say this book was an honor book because of how it appealed to adults on a literary level.

Overall, I gave it a "medium" rating of three stars. Anyone in a writing program should definitely take a look at "Freewill" but I think it would get a very lukewarm reception from my students. Most teens on Goodreads talk about how they were confused/and or didn't get it.

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### **Alicia Weaver says**

What did I just read? 16 year old Will attends a “special school” where he takes woodshop. He claims he is supposed to be a pilot and is in the wrong school. In shop he makes sculptures that later appear at the sites of suicides though he doesn’t remember putting them there. Throughout the book it is unclear if Will has had a psychotic break and talks to himself and a make believe girl. Or if he has brain damage and does not see reality. Or is he “death.” I left this book feeling perplexed about how it won a Printz honor.

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### **Lillian Nemmers says**

It's a really slow and boring book. It's about a boy who thinks he should be a pilot instead of working in a wood shop. There's a girl that he's like obsessed with and he was following around the grocery store. A bunch of teens start to committee "suicide" but are actually being murdered. Will thinks he knows hows murdering everyone. Also whoever murdering these people are taking wood work from the wood shop and putting them at the site. Will's parents also were killed so he lives with his grandparent's.

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### **Mark Flowers says**

this was . . . good? I think?

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### **Ms. Petrillo says**

To be quite honest, this book moved too slowly for me. At the point where I started to piece facts about Will's life together, I had stopped feeling any sort of sympathy for his character. I just wasn't invested enough to care.

What I learned about myself from this book is that while I love mystery, I need action-packed mysteries. If I pick up a mystery book, I expect to be in the action, piecing things together along with the narrator or protagonist, rather than struggling to catch on to what the protagonist isn't sharing with me. Maybe if I read it at another time in my life I would have appreciated Will's constant brooding, but at this point Will and I simply did not mesh.

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### **Laura says**

I did not get this story. I read the whole thing and was not impressed at all. I didn't like how the story progressed, and I also thought that it was a little dark. The story was told in a really different format, and I thought it was confusing and hard to get used to. I almost couldn't wrap my mind around it. There was some language in it as well, which was annoying. I am really not liking the pattern that is developing around the Printz books I have been reading lately...I don't think that I've read one that I've liked yet. Needless to say, I

would not recommend this book.

\*Taken from my book reviews blog: <http://reviewsatmse.blogspot.com/2009...>

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### **Mel says**

2.5

*Freewill* is a Printz honor and one of those books that you appreciate what the book is trying to do more than enjoy the execution.

Told in the second person, in a sparse and almost repetitive cadence, the story is about Will, who is disconnected from life and whose only outlet seems to be strange woodwork projects that he doesn't even particularly enjoy. When the wood totems show up in a series of suicides, unwanted attention is drawn to him and he must decide if he should speak up or let himself become part of the nothing he feels he has to live for.

I think Lynch made a lot of smart choices in framing. While many people would find the "you" off-putting, it helps reinforce the reader's own questions. However, Will is still so much a nonentity and passive character that he is neither a proper cypher for the reader to insert their own desires into nor interesting enough to carry the story's odd and morbid tone the way the narrators of *Silver Linings Playbook* or *Perks of Being a Wallflower* manage.

The other characters don't work as complex or lively characters either, partially from the remoteness of Will's relationship with them. This leaves most of their discussions feeling like talking points of the plot, anti-suicide PSAs rather than their own motivations.

This novel is not without compelling moments. While the choice to make the prose simple and sparse, Lynch has passages that are vivid. One example that made me take notice was when Will was taking a shower after forgetting clean himself for three days and remarks on the wonderful feeling of scrubbing skin, reminding himself to remember it because it's a nice small pleasure that is easily forgotten.

Unfortunately, the sparseness and the vagueness work against the story more than help it. The mystery of the totems and the suicides are left unresolved or even commented on, as the story winds off into a palatable non-ending where Will finally makes a choice not to be so passive. I do like an open-endedness to my stories, but there's not enough to structure to make the suggestion of possibilities. On the bright side, the story is a brisk novella more than anything else and there are some passages that create a thoughtful starting point for the weighty topic.

And perhaps that is all that *Freewill* wanted to do, was to present the reader with a choice to do so...

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### **AnnaMay Thompson says**

In the book Free Will you have to find out the mystery behind why you can't remember somethings. After a while of looking around asking yourself questions you find out the mystery. I would not recommend this

book to anyone under the age of 12 because there are some bad language. I would recommend this book to young Adults looking for a good mystery to solve. Throughout the book you start to ask yourself a lot of unanswered questions that are later answered.

First off if you do read this book read the back first it gives a uneasy feeling about what's around the corner of the book. But the back also tells you a lot more than you would think. The main character Will is not introduced at least that's what you think. You are Will at least in the book you are Will. You have to free Will from not remembering anything. As you get farther in the book you find out the back of the book. And who it is.

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## **Seth McDiarmid says**

I wanted to read this book because I was intrigued by its cover.

Yup.

There were several things about it that I enjoyed, though not enough to outweigh the incredibly heavy feeling of hopelessness that its narrator injects into every sentence and was left clinging to me like a co-dependent teenage girl. It left me screaming, "what the heck was the point?" I hesitate to buy into the thought that this was the author's intent, but if it was...genius.

I enjoyed the voice a great deal, though not the tone; it was too Poey for my taste. The use of second-person does seem a bit preachy at times but it's fresh enough to keep the reader engaged, a task made easier by its thankfully short length. I think towards the middle I felt bad enough for the narrator, expecting that he suffered from some sort of anxiety or autism or other socio-psychological disorder, to hope that he would change for the better. But by the end of the novel, I hated him. Thank goodness for Angela, whose final appearance in the book summed up my frustrations nicely and granted me at least a small cathartic respite.

The book was saved from a one-star fate by its brief adventure into the moral ground of choice and accountability, which was by far my favorite part. It is a wonderful, albeit much to short, meander into the question of personal agency: will we act or be acted upon? In this, I felt a fleeting moment of synergy with the author.

That said, the book is well-written and the author's skill at exploring the psyche of his narrator is evident. I'd recommend this to anyone looking to experiment with new narrative perspectives or who just gets a jolly kick out of the hopelessly macabre.

Warning:

Language: Thanks for reminding me. Lots of f-bombs. Seemed unnecessary. Bugged me.

Sex: some vague references. not really.

Drugs: again, references. No abuse.

Rock n Roll: I don't remember. I was too depressed.

Violence: A few death scenes after the fact, and a semi-strangling.

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## **Conner says**

This is a short book that can be read in a single sitting, but it can also be pretty emotionally draining. I was a little put-off at first by the odd style of writing; the narrative is done in second person, but I got used to it after a while, and it does well with exhibiting the protagonist's implied schizophrenia. It was unlike any book I have ever read in the way the narrative was presented, the plot is never really explained, the entire narrative takes place in a very surreal way inside the protagonist's head, it's simply put there for you to figure out with a very unique semi-conscious and typically philosophical writing style.

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## **Janie says**

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1. Will is crazy. His dad drove off the road with his stepmother in the car. They both died. It was probably suicide (consequently murder in the case of his stepmother). He lives with his grandparents now. They are into bocci ball and his Grandfather is more put out that the kid is crazy than his grandmother, who is nice.
2. He is in a woodworking class. He makes beautiful wooden furniture (and says that they aren

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## **Stephanie says**

The book *Freewill* by Chris Lynch was about this teenage boy who seems to be a loner with a somewhat traumatic background. He lives with his grandparents and goes to this school for certain kinds of people. Lynch is very vague throughout the book. Although that characteristic makes you want to read on, it gets slightly aggravating because there are so many blanks and question marks throughout the book. Anyway, we go through the thoughts of this kid Will and his desire to be a pilot, even though he's in woodshop. His works have this odd significance in deaths/suicides (still unclear to me). He ends up being worshipped as a goth angel of death.

Overall this book was okay. It was really confusing I think mainly because it was in second person and the author kept trying to keep what was going on a mystery. Even after finishing the book I still don't know what exactly happened or understand what happened. It was a very interesting style but I think it didn't exactly fit the character. The 2nd person style made me think that Will was maybe schizophrenic or something like other books I've read but it seems that he isn't. It may be just me, but this book was very difficult to understand. There's a lot of internal thinking, character action (mainly things that describe body language) but it never really defined exactly what was going on throughout the book. It may of been to allow room for interpretation, but I feel that it was just loosely written.

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## **Amanda says**

Will is a tormented teen dealing with the deaths of his father, stepmother, and several classmates in this obtuse story. I remember hearing people talking about this book when it came out, and figured it was worth a read, since it won a Printz honor, and I've liked his other books. When I finished, I had to look at the reviews

to figure out what the hell anyone liked about it. The PW review summed up my feelings precisely: "this airless novel does not reward the effort required to penetrate it."

I found the second-person narrative to be a bit off-putting in the beginning, but not insurmountable. The main question posed by the novel, can you ever know what's in the mind of another person, is potentially profound, but the probing here is clumsy and unsatisfying. I found myself hoping that he was a serial killer. THAT would have been much more satisfying; a perfect picture of a truly disturbed individual.

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### **Emmy Williams says**

What honestly was this book? More importantly, how did this book win ANY kind of award? These are questions that I found myself asking after I finished this 150 page booklet.

I picked this up on my summer vacation to the beach and i was like 'eh why not' Mainly the Pintz Award and the cover art sold the book to me. I knew that John Green had won a Pintz Award for Finding Alaska, (but SOMEHOW not for The Fault in our stars [WTF]) So I picked this baby up. Note to self: READ PART OF THE BOOK IN BOOK STORE.

The grammar & verbiage in this book is SO WEIRD. This is written in SECOND? person? What? Who does that? Apparently Chris Lynch Does that. Why WHY?! Why doesn't EVERYONE just write in third person? I can't stand First person. Well now, guess what, there's something, worse. SECOND PERSON.

YOU, as in, I, as in Will, is the lead character, is me?...What?

Who was the narrator? Who is...WE? (You'll never find out. EVERRR) Further more, we don't ever get a setting. Never! What? I thought this was dystopian for a while, nope. I think its just every day, normal vocational school setting by just 'a beach'

Kids are dying from Suicide. SPOILER ALERT: We NEVER FIND OUT WHY. What? WHAT!? Everything is just like ok in the end because I think Chris Lynch was just done writing?

Here's what I get. I get that, I, Will, was suffering from depression and he, me, was a little bit crazy. I get that he was also the subject of school pranks. (The person in charge of those pranks? We never find out. NO RESOLUTION EVER!) I also get that he was grieving over his father's death and his mothers death.

I did like Angela as a character. She was straight up. I liked that she wasn't white, though, why do all black characters have to be sporty? Why couldn't she be an artist? or be a baker? Why did she have to be a track star? She was like me, (as in positive no nonsense) but no, I was Will cause this was in WEIRD second person writing style. Angela was great and made this 2 stars verses one star.

Look I expect books to have basic things like the following

Backstory

Setting

Characters

Character development and or arch that goes with a reason behind it

Clear dialogue

Clear writing and grammar

Freewill like did not have a lot of the basic things. Because of that, I was soooo confused so I didn't get the POINT of the book. I feel like the POINT could have been so impactful, but I was being a dummy and confused about who was talking, and where we were, and what the back story was. I couldn't keep up.

I didn't get it. You know why? CAUSE IT'S WRITTEN IN CONFUSING AS HELL SECOND PERSON! I just didn't get this book.

Unfortunately. Now, I'm really going to question this, "The Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature" from now on = /

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