



Popular (Popular, #1)

Gareth Russell

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On the first day of September, 16 year-old Meredith Harper rules over the teen it-crowd of Belfast, Northern Ireland. But beneath the surface, Meredith's complicated web of manipulative lies and self-serving intrigue are slowly beginning to threaten her social position and she finds herself being challenged by handsome Mark Kingston, the only guy in the school who's always hated her.

In a world where nothing stays secret for very long, Meredith and her friends will need all their skills to guess who's in, out, coming out, going up, going down, dating, cheating, lying and trying to cope....

Let the games begin!

Popular (Popular, #1) Details

Date : Published November 30th 2012 by MadeGlobal Publishing/CreateSpace (first published July 7th 2011)

ISBN : 9781481129244

Author : Gareth Russell

Format : Paperback 326 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Popular (Popular, #1) for online ebook

Claire Hennessy says

If Ryan Murphy and Cecily von Ziegesar had a baby, then immersed it thoroughly in the nuances of Belfast life, this would be what you'd get. The novel focuses on the popular crowd and the borderline-sociopathic behaviour used to manipulate situations and to, well, be fabulous. The proportion of zappy, often bitchy one-liners per page is impressive and it also wins bonus points for featuring LGBT characters and acknowledging bisexuality exists. Ooh, and for sneaky historical references (Meredith being compared to Elizabeth I – marvellous).

Serena.. Sery-ously? says

[That would be a 4.5*!]

That was super fun!!

My copy is signed by the talented and super kind Gareth Russell.. Thank you Gareth!! (Oh my Gosh, the paperback is so soft I could pet it all day! Even if.. The girl on the cover is a little bit creepy O.O)

One of my biggest weaknesses is ~~Chuck Bass~~ Gossip Girl.. I really fell hard for it, so when I found out that this book was the bookish version of the show, I really couldn't do nothing but read it :D

What to say? I reeeeeeally enjoyed it! It was so much fun, some characters are as bitchy as my lovely Blair and.. Dialogues are brilliant!!!

I loved the way Meredith, queen of her school, weaves her web of lies, secrets and manipulations.. And everytime she seemed to be too much cruel, she did something to show her (really well hidden) good-heart. I couldn't help but love her!

Mark was a really interesting character and I really hope something will happen in the next volume!

Hannah (Broc's Bookcase) says

If I was asked to describe this book in as few words as possible I think I would go with "Mean Girls / Gossip Girl / The O.C. Mash Up".

This book had me hooked from the start as Belfast became the 'Orange County' of N.Ireland. Its all about glamour, and status and popularity. Not really the first thing that I would think of N.Ireland being like, for me its all beautiful scenery. But it was very refreshing to get away from the American clique type books and have one set in Belfast instead.

So, the characters. Meredith is your typical queen bitch, but 10 times worse. She's one of those characters that you both love and hate. Everyone both loves and fears her, and she is a really manipulative and clever girl who you know you would never want to cross.

"Catherine nodded, but she still wore the sort of shaky half smile that Meredith's victims frequently sported when she delivered words of comfort wrapped in a barbed wire of bitchery."

Her friends in the "clique" are a mixture of pretty, perceptive and just plain dumb girls, with a guy, Cameron, thrown in there too. The whole dynamic of her friends along with the main group of guys works really well and together they end up in some quite funny situations. Although there are a few relationships going on in this story, we don't have a massive romance story line within the book, which was a nice change as we got to focus on the friendships rather than any love stories.

The way Gareth Russell is able to capture the voices of 16 year old girls is very impressive, and at times they seem older than their sixteen years, which is probably correct for the lifestyle they are living as Belfast's most rich and famous. But this world is completely different to my I have read about before, and the rules of popularity differ for these Irish cliques; attending Mass is a chance to hobnob and being on the Lady of Lourdes fundraiser board is a sign of status. The majority of the characters are hideous people who will cause havoc and hurt just to get there on way. However they are written so well, that instead of finding them horrible and annoying they are just pure entertainment.

You can find more of my reviews and initial reactions videos at Broc's Bookcase

Sally says

OMG this book is actually hilarious. When I started reading it, I was messaging with one of my besties at the time and in two hours I think I managed to get through only about 30 pages, half because we were talking already so that slowed me down, and half because I kept having to type up great huge chunks of dialogue! It's seriously laugh-out-loud funny, SO over the top and just brilliant. I'm so in love with the idea of Fabulousness Induced Breakdowns, where you're just so overwhelmed by how absolutely amazing you are that you have a meltdown. OMG that's so us. It was about at the point of the first FIB mention that I actually went onto Book Depository and bought a copy of this so I could lend it to my friend because that seemed saner than typing up the ENTIRE THING. Oh god it's just too funny! The mean girls are SO bitchy and over the top! It's all over hilarious. But I like how there were some more serious issues too, namely Cameron's gayness, so it's not ALL just froth and bubbles and meanness. Just mostly. :P

Lauren - SERIESous Books says

It is important to note, that **I never finished** this book. I think I got to Chapter 4 or so.

Now, the reason I didn't finish this book is because I feel its target audience is for younger teens, not older ones like myself. Therefore, I found it some of the plot a little petty and it just didn't capture my attention. It has nothing to do with the writing style being awful (because it wasn't) it was just because I am not the audience it is written for.

The whole premise itself is like what would happen if **Gossip Girl** and the **Confessions of Georgia Nicolson** series by Louise Rennison had a baby. The need for popularity and social structure is like *Gossip Girl* but the humour very much reminded me of the British humour seen in the Georgia Nicolson series (though this is Irish).

I wished I had read this book when I was younger; I think I would have really liked it.

(Find more book series reviews and book recaps on my blog: <http://seriesousbookreviews.wordpress...>)

Sonia says

I would rate it a 3 because it had some swearing and yeah..... Overall I liked it!

Manu/flatter says

Über den Autor:

Gareth Russell ist selbst unfassbar hinreißend und so etwas wie ein Society-Star. Er ist 23 Jahre alt, in Belfast aufgewachsen und hat vor kurzem sein Studium an der Universität Oxford beendet. Nahezu alles in seinem Buch basiert auf wahren Begebenheiten, die sich während seiner Schulzeit ereignet haben – je verrückter etwas erscheint, desto größer ist die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass es tatsächlich so abgelaufen ist.

Zum Inhalt:

Meredith, Imogen, Kerry und Cameron sind echte Biester. In der Schule ausgesprochen beliebt und als Kinder reicher Eltern haben sie nichts anderes als Intrigen, Mode und Schönheit im Kopf. Sie fühlen sich als die Stars, denen niemand etwas anhaben kann. Oder doch? Imogen ist plötzlich solo, Meredith erfährt eine Niederlage, Kerry bekommt sowie nichts auf die Reihe und Cameron's Leben gerät völlig aus den Fugen.

Meine Meinung:

Bitterböse, reiche Kids für die Sozialverhalten ein Fremdwort ist. Sie sind arrogant, manipulativ und selbstverliebt. Gönnen anderen nicht das kleinste bißchen Glück und denken nur an sich. Die Schlimmste von allen ist Meredith. Sie hält die Clique zusammen und alle tanzen nach ihrer Pfeiffe. Kein einziger Charakter war mir bei dieser Geschichte sympathisch und wenn die Story nahezu komplett auf wahren Begebenheit beruht, ist das mehr als erschreckend. Der Schreibstil ist flüssig und man kommt gut durch, nur habe ich mich beim Lesen die ganze Zeit gefragt: Wo führt die Geschichte hin und was will sie uns sagen?? Gar nichts scheinbar, es ist wie ein kleiner Auszug aus dem Leben superreicher Kids. Ich war schnell genervt von deren Alltag und den Gemeinheiten die sie sich gegenseitig und auch allen anderen Menschen in ihrem Umfeld antun. Sie hatten Freude daran, einem anderen Menschen Leid zuzufügen. Motivation etwas zu lernen oder etwas aus ihrem Leben zu machen haben sie nicht. Ob sie die Schule schaffen interessiert sie nicht, Papas Geld ist ja immer genug da. Das Leben ist für sie eine Party und sie gehen über Leichen. Das zu lesen war stellenweise unfassbar.

Cover:

Das Cover ist mit seinen hellen Farben ein richtiger Eyecatcher.

Fazit:

Selbstverliebte Charaktere, für die es das Wichtigste ist, daß die Haare gut liegen und die Klamotten teuer sind. Der Autor gibt uns einen schockierenden Einblick in das Leben reicher Kids. Wer solche Freunde hat braucht wirklich keine Feinde.

ALPHAreader says

Marissa Cooper reigned supreme at The Harbor School. Constance Billard School in NY is ruled with an iron fist by Blair Waldorf. And Mount Olivet Grammar School in Ireland's Belfast has its own Queenly sovereign in Meredith Harper.

Sixteen-year-old Meredith is popular and beautiful, her father is one of the richest men in Ireland and she is the sole heir to his fortune. Mount Olivet is her court, and Meredith enjoys supremacy along with her minions; Cameron Matthews, Kerry Davison Imogen Dawson and (barely tolerated) Catherine O'Rourke.

But Meredith's reign is coming under threat and hitting bumpy roads. American import and Zac Efron-lookalike, Blake Hartman, is the new kid on campus and he has got Meredith's bestie, Cameron, all riled up. Imogen is two-timing her boyfriend, Stewart, with an Immaculate Heart hottie that could end in romantic disaster. Catherine's boyfriend desperation is reaching sickeningly annoying levels and Kerry has got it into her curly little head that she should take Meredith's spot as Queen supreme.

But that's nothing compared to the new levels of aggravation that Meredith's arch-nemesis, Mark Kingston, is igniting in her soul.

'Popular' is the first book in a contemporary Irish YA series from Gareth Russell.

'Popular' is Ireland like you've never read it before. Forget leprechauns, IRA and Billy Elliot. Gareth Russell is writing Irish teen supremacy and documenting Belfast's shiny clique underbelly.

I'll admit it; I had a very different idea of Ireland before I started reading 'Popular'. I thought it was all ruined castles, sectarian graffiti and quaint little pubs. The same way I'm sure many people think of Australia as all red deserts and hopping kangaroos, I had a stereotyped idea of Ireland and didn't really know what sort of interesting shenanigans their teens could get into. . . . oh, was I in for a surprise!

Belfast is a veritable Laguna Beach or New York City, as Russell illustrates and educates. Meredith and her popular posse are all rich little darlings whose parents make up the Belfast elite. They wear Louboutin on their feet, Calvin Klein to school sporting carnivals and Oscar De La Renta to Our Lady of Lourdes fundraisers. They live their lives according to the rules of the Sex and the City boxset, and appear in the Ulster Tatler society pages. Like teens the world over, they obsess over US television and try to live up to the fast lives of fictional American teenagers;

'I never really liked Blake anyway,' Imogen said thoughtfully. 'Too much of a Nate Archibald for my tastes and I'm a Chuck Bass kind of girl.'

'Thank God for Gossip Girl,' said Cameron. 'We haven't had anything to morally affirm us since Sex and the City.'

I loved reading about the life and times of Irish teens. I especially loved the fact that Russell's teenagers are neither middle-class 'Skins' or spray-tanned O.C. bitches. Russell's Mount Olivet teens are in a world all their own. There are very different rules of popularity for Irish cliques; attending Mass is a chance to hobnob and being on the Lady of Lourdes fundraiser board is a sign of status. I love, love, loved the fact that 'Popular' is about Irish teen cliques – not the typical (and done-to-death) American 'Mean Girls' variety. Yes, the characters reference Sex and the City and Gossip Girl, but their lives are decidedly Irish, right down to their religious-laden quips;

'What are your plans for revision, Imogen?' asked Cameron, taking another drink of Diet Coke.
'Saint Jude,' she replied. 'Well, I mean, it's sort of staggered really. I'll start off with Saint Giuseppe and Saint Thomas Aquinas, but I think in the end it's all going to come down to Saint Jude.'
'Oh, he's very good,' said Meredith.

Decipher: Saint Jude is the patron saint of lost causes.

Russell's characters are also delicious dastardly darlings. These teenagers are the richest of the rich, getting their own spreads in the Ulster Tattler and residing in Belfast mansions to rival even the cliff-side residences of Orange County. Fair warning, few characters in 'Popular' are redeemable or even likable. Meredith is an Ice Queen who rules by iron fist and double-dealings. Imogen is a pretty girl who knows it, and Kerry is wholly concerned with usurping her best frenemy. These characters are horrendous . . . but Russell writes them with so much panache and 'OH-MY-GOD!' antics that they bypass annoying and head straight into horribly entertaining. Like a car crash you can't look away from, the characters in 'Popular' are often times so depraved and annoying that they're entertainingly fabulous.

Although, there are one or two characters who have kind souls beneath their tough underbelly. Cameron, for instance, is battling his own sexuality when the 'High School Musical' lookalike student, Blake, sends his heart fluttering. A good deal of the book concerns Cameron coming to terms with what everyone else has always assumed.

I also loved 'Popular' for all the little United Kingdom pop culture references that kept me chuckling along the way (especially when some of my favourite TV shows and movies were mentioned *cough* Marie Antoinette *cough*!);

Moving on quickly, Catherine continued to defend the evening. 'It'll be fun, guys, seriously. Let's just forget the drama for one evening.'
'Blasphemy,' hissed Kerry.
'The only thing we forget are morals and the basic rules of mathematics,' snapped Imogen. 'How dare you condemn us to an evening with Belfast's answer to the Inbetweeners!'

You can tell that 'Popular' is just the beginning – the veritable tip of the Mount Olivet iceberg. I can't wait to read Gareth Russell's second instalment in this fabulous new series – when Cameron confronts uncomfortable truths, Mark Kingston confesses his true feelings for a certain Ice Queen and Meredith decides how to pull her friend's strings like the puppet master she is. Fantastic!

Mel says

As a daily reader of the author's blog, I mostly read this because I wanted to support him and his work. I honestly didn't expect to enjoy this very much because from the synopsis I was afraid I wouldn't be able to relate to the characters since I like to think of myself as not being nearly as shallow as them. Boy was I wrong! I *loved* this book and had a hard time putting it down to do things like eat and go to work!

This book is a great (and FUN) read for anyone who likes clothes, pop culture, history, and/or just wants to remember that high school really was a petty and groupish as they remembered. I cannot wait to get my hands on the sequel!

Kirsty Bicknell says

My 4 star rating for Gareth Russell's 'Popular' is really a 4.5 stars, and SO close to being a 5! The reason I didn't give it the full works was Meredith! To be stereotypical I am surprised at how well she is represented by a male author. Her portrayal is so bold and honest, and I have not come across someone who is such an obvious bitch in recent books I have read, without any redeeming qualities.

Although Meredith would like to be considered the Queen in 'Popular' she is just one of a chorus of characters and they are the main reason why this book is so successful. Gareth Russell remembers to include his reader in their backstory; the group language and the characters' secrets. As the reader learns more about each person as we read the story the character grows more vivid and Gareth Russell actually encourages his reader to be judgemental about the group and their actions.

I really enjoyed the fact that 'Popular' was set in Northern Ireland, rather than in America, like so many of the other YA/NA books I read. Although the themes are often universal the change was more apparent in the speech and activities of the characters.

Gareth Russell's story is not just a superficial tale of school, bitchiness and parties. He has ensured that the plot is far deeper and involved to allow the reader to connect with events and emotions. 'Popular' deals with the difficulties of being homosexual; cheating within a relationship and finding out about unfaithful parents amongst other issues.

I have already downloaded Popular's sequel, as the star is my favourite character Cameron, and I can't wait to read it! My suggestion is that you may want to do the same after you have read 'Popular'.

Joffrey Gilmore says

Klare Kaufempfehlung für Leute, die auch gerne mal ein bitchy Buch lesen ;)

Carly says

We don't live in happiest of times at the moment, do we? We're in the middle of a recession, the news is all doom and gloom and, as I'm writing this review, it's pissing it down with rain. Sometimes we all need a book to dive into that takes us away from the stresses and strains of every day life. If you're looking for that book then look no further because Popular is the perfect antidote to all of your worries.

Popular will have you laughing from page one and keep you thoroughly entertained until the end of the story. I devoured this book in a few sittings while me and my boyfriend were in the middle of redecorating - I'd had

to pack all of my books away while we painted but I grabbed Popular at the last minute, knowing I'd want to read something that would help me chill out after a horrendous day filled with masking tape and matte magnolia.

As you might have guessed from the title and blurb, Popular resolves around Meredith Harper and her friends - the most popular group in their school. They're all rich, gorgeous and completely self-centered but in the most entertaining possible way. Sure, you'll want to hate Meredith for being a bitch or Imogen for having no morals but then you'll stumble across one of their hilarious one liners and you won't be able to resist their charms, I promise. Plus, every single one of the popular crowd goes through a journey throughout Popular that means they're a little more rounded and maybe even a little bit nicer than when their story started. As for me, well, I have a huge soft spot for a lovable bitch so I fell in love with Meredith et al within the first few pages.

Although Popular is a light hearted story it does deal with some teen issues, mostly centered about relationships. I don't want to post any spoilers but I was so impressed with how Russell wrote the situation Cameron found himself in. I find a lot of YA books that deal with similar themes can be a little intense and super serious at all times, which I don't think makes them as accessible as their writers think. Russell struck the perfect balance, mixing sensitivity with humour and I loved it.

The dialogue and humour between the characters is definitely Popular's strength. There is quite a large cast involved but I got to know everybody very quickly and never found myself getting confused with who's who. Each character is so memorable that you won't have any problem forgetting them between reading sessions. Russell really delivers some golden one liners; I have a system where I fold down the corner of a page if there's a quote I want to remember - I don't think I've ever folded down so many pages in my life!

If I haven't already convinced you to pick up a copy of Popular then I just want to share a few of my favourite lines with you, which I'm sure will make up your mind:

- (Meredith Harper, on blowjobs): 'Look! I'm not going to do that for the very same reason I don't baby-sit - if it spits up, it's not coming anywhere near my face.' (Page 194)

- 'Just look at him. He's run so far back into the closet that he's practically having tea in Narnia with Mr Tumnus.' (Page 200)

- 'Never have I ever, um, shoplifted,' said Blake. Catherine, Kerry and Stewart drank. Kerry, who was already quite drunk by this stage, threw her head melodramatically into her hands. 'It was a pick 'n' mix,' she confessed. 'I was seven. I wanted a Milk Dud. I've never told anyone that before.' (Page 216)

- 'What a fascinating story,' said Meredith sarcastically. 'Can I please record it and use it as my ring-tone?' (Page 218)

- 'Oh my God,' muttered Meredith, 'what's that smell? Ah yes, the cloying stench of desperation...'
'Really?' said Imogen. 'Is that what that is? I always get it so confused with bullshit.'
'I know, they're very similar, aren't they?' (Page 274)

I could go on, really. I love the style of writing in Popular. It's sharp, hilarious and always right on the money. The guys are gorgeous, the girls are beautiful and the drama is top notch. You really couldn't ask for more from a contemporary YA. Absolutely spot on.

Forever Young Adult says

Graded By: Alix

Cover Story: Kindle It

BFF Charm: Nay, Eventually, and BURN IN HELL

Swoonworthy Scale: 0

Talky Talk: Gossip Girl

Bonus Factors: Diversity

Relationship Status: Frenemies

Read the full book report [here](#).

Valerie Christie says

I really enjoyed this book - living in Belfast it was lovely to read about places that I knew and had been to, there is a real sense of place in the book which is great. The characters were appealing and even though their lives are really privileged they have to deal with real issues - particularly the sexuality of two of the characters which I felt was dealt with in a really positive way throughout the book. Popular is a good read - I would describe it like a Belfast version of 'Gossip Girl' and is perfect comfort food for the brain!

Alix West says

No.
