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Emily Bowyer is a normal, confident teenager. But beneath the surface she has a wretched secret. Because, for Emily, life isn't as much fun as it would appear. Her friends are going off her and her parents only seem to care about her troubled brother. Tension, pressure, anxiety, anger and self-hatred - where does it go when no one will listen?

Red Tears Details

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From Reader Review Red Tears for online ebook

The Novel Vault says

Red tears was a relatively short book, so I was able to finish it in a few hours.

I felt a lot for Emily, I understood her problems very much having been there myself a few times, even so this was a hard book to read, I felt quite uncomfortable a few times in this book and was told quite suprised that the author hadn't experienced self harm themselves, but had instead spoken to many teenagers put their experiences,

This book certainly didn't feel like it was written by an 'outsider' as can sometimes happen when the author doesn't have firsthand knowledge of a subject.

Monisha says

This book is painful in the best possible way.

I can honestly say I have never connected so much with a character in a book about self-harm in my life. And as an ex-self-harmer, that says a lot. Normally, authors give characters super tragic backstories in order to "validate" the character's reason for cutting, as if having a super tragic life is the only reason someone turns to self-harm. Some people are perfectionists, some people have a chemical imbalance, some people have anxiety, some people can't handle life, some people just hate themselves. There are a ton of reasons someone could turn to self-harm.

And Joanna Kenrick is clearly well aware of that.

I appreciate the amount of research she has clearly done in writing this book. This was real. And I felt it. I even cried in the middle of reading this. Not because something tragic happened but because I know what Emily is feeling, I know what she's going through, and, damn it, it hurts. I have felt almost every single thing she's felt, I have had the same thoughts, and to see them on paper for once... well, it's hard.

Is literary excellence? No. Was the ending a little rushed? Hell yeah. Are some of the lead-ins for chapters repetitive? Sure. But this book is meant to accurately depict the mind of someone who self-injures. Red Tears wins a ton of points for that.

This is obviously not a representation of what every self-injurer feels and goes through. But for some us, it's pretty damn accurate.

Josephine says

Red Tears by Joanna Kenrick follows a young girl named Emily. She's a great student. She isn't lacking of friends. She has a good family, a good home life. Until school work becomes too much. Her friends begin to isolate her. Her brother develops learning difficulties and then her home life becomes overwhelming, too. Where does she go when she can't take it? When everything around her is noise, motion, anger, anxiety?

LOVE. AT. FIRST. SENTENCE.

Emily Bowyer is a cutter. After she begins she will always be a cutter, there is no cure. There is only control. She is the kind of person that seems as if she has her entire life sorted out. The kind of person that other students envy because she gives off the impression that she is perfect. Underneath all of the layers of Emily Bowyer you will find that she is not perfect, she is tired. She is tired of the pressures of excelling. She is tired of putting people before her. She is tired of *everything*.

"I like - helping people. I like being relied on. Well, I think I do. I just wish - I could rely on someone else sometimes. Not very often. Just sometimes."

The thing is, she has validated reasons to be tired. This book explains in depth the stresses of doing well in school and the pressures of maintaining friendships, so much that even if you've never self-harmed you could relate to this book in multiple areas. I was with Emily all the way, and I honestly wouldn't believe anyone who says that they weren't.

The story was raw and realistic in every form. The crucial, cringe-worthy details were never left out for sake of people keeping down their dinners. It was honest and I think that is an essential element when telling a serious story like Emily's.

Why do I do this? What earthy reason have I to be unhappy with my life? I have a loving family; I am good at my studies. I have a bright future. I have some problems with my friends, but doesn't everyone?

That said, I think it was wise to put a warning at the beginning of the book in case of unsafe triggering due to the book's content. It's really crazy how much power words can have, especially on someone like me. When Emily felt anxious so did I. When she was deep into her addiction I was incredibly triggered, and just wanted to get through those scenes and finish the book so that I could feel better. It made me feel really down at times, but then when she felt happy or something good happened the triggered feelings didn't even feel like they had happened.

Of course everything is not all right at home. But that is only because I am there. When I am at school, everything is not all right here either. It is not the place, I want to tell her. It is the person. It is me. I am what is wrong.

It was strange reading this book, as it was an often occurrence where I related to the character so much that it was as if they had literally gone into my secret diary or something, if I had one. I'm surprised by the lack of recognition it has received since its 2007 release, considering how by the end I felt like I had grown along with Emily, possibly so much that you could say I even bettered as a person.

If you're a self-harmer, or have known a self-harmer especially, then I recommend this book a thousand times. (That is unless you get triggered easily, then you should probably steer clear of this one). *Red Tears* describes the thoughts and intentions behind the average self-harmer perfectly, and therefore by reading it you could educate yourself on those around you and possibly save yourself, or someone else, from negative

behaviours (whether that be the self-harming itself or making someone feel lesser because they are a self-harmer and you don't understand it).

This book has jumped straight up there with *Wintergirls* and *We Need To Talk About Kevin*. That should be reason enough to read it.

Hannah says

This book helped me feel good about myself, it helped explain some of the things going on in my head that I didn't know how to put into words. It gave me hope for the future that I feared I'd lost. The poem was beautiful, and some of the conversations just spoke to me and it was like I was there. I don't know how to describe this book to someone, but if you are a self harmer, it's worth a read. Not necessarily triggering, although there is a warning at the beginning that for some it might be, but for those like me struggling to overcome the addiction, it's a powerful motivator and it leaves you crying and happy at the end.

Enya-Marie says

This is one of those books that's nigh-on impossible to review and I wish I could rate it a solid 3.5 as the 4 star feels undeserving.

In some parts I felt like the author was glamorising mental illness whereas in others, it felt like she was giving a true voice to what it's like being a teenager going through mental illness. During the entire book I felt torn between it being cliché (the misunderstanding parents, the bitchy friends, the ignorant school etc.) and scarily relevant to other experiences I saw growing up.

My main criticism about this book is that it makes recovery look easy and that belittles the entire approach of the book which is to develop compassion and understanding for teenagers going through mental illness. The conversations with the therapist (not a spoiler as it is mentioned in the preface) were accurate to my own experiences of therapy but they were too shallow and too much of a quick fix. In reality, mental illnesses can take years to recover from and it is a difficult process with usually a lot of relapses.

In this book, I think the lack of focus on the difficulty of recovery and the likelihood of relapse is actually dangerous given the books' subject - self-harm and depression.

I also found it very distasteful that the author's advice for anyone experiencing mental illness is to visit her book's website for more information. I feel there should be more practical advice such as speaking to a friend/trusted adult and that there should be information for parents/carers on how to identify mental illness in their children and what to do about it. The one-page endnote does not seem enough given the likelihood of someone reading this book encountering mental illness in their own life or that of their loved ones.

That being said, the book's strength lies in its ability to explain the rationality behind a person going through mental illness. What is a logical thought for someone experiencing depression could seem completely ridiculous to someone outside of the condition and that often leads to dialogue breaking down as it makes accessing help more difficult. I'm sure that this book has helped many young people open up about their problems or at very least, identify that they themselves or someone they know may have a problem and for

that reason, I'm reluctant to say it's not worth reading as there is nothing more precious than saving one person.

However, I think it is worth pointing out that this book is often quite negatively provoking. Through the main character's reasoning about her actions it is quite easy for them to seem reasonable responses to her circumstances and I think, given the book's target audience, this may be harmful on young adults that are particularly impressionable or are having difficulties (hence my wish that there should be a greater attempt to list supportive resources at the end).

It is recommended on the caution that this book shouldn't be read without the opportunity to discuss the issues it raises in a secure and understanding environment and that this book is a lens through which to approach mental illness and **not appropriate without further supplementation/discussion.**

Lucy says

Beautiful book. I related to the character and it made me understand people a bit more. I love the way that this book is written.

About a girl who has a perfect life to begin with but as the story goes on she becomes unhappy and she doesn't know what else to do so she self-harms. Her friends hate her, her family expects her to do perfect at school and she has no-one to talk to.

Her life is one that I don't think people should have. People shouldn't have to be someone they're not, and that is what I've always believed.

Iffath says

Everyone keeps reminding Emily how clever and capable she is, over and over. How she can do this, and she WILL succeed. But as the pressure builds, with piles of homework expected to be completed exceptionally, parents who are constantly nagging at her, and friends who choose not to stand beside her through all of it. Emily doesn't have a clue what to do. She feels herself slowly going mental with all the tension, and the only way to cope comes from cutting herself..using anything she can find..and nobody can know..

" I open the box Inside it is softness and steel. Tissues and blade."

The author has a skill to present us with the different views of self-harming, never once moving off track. I liked how Kenrick intentionally didn't include any 'proper' explanations or answers throughout the book. There is a real effect that any of the events in this novel could happen to anybody, anywhere, which is why it's so believable.

I loved the fact that at the end, there wasn't a fairy-tale 'happily ever after' and it wasn't one of those really sad endings where she does something like kill herself, in the subtlest way, Kenrick has avoided both these ideas and planted a realistic future in our minds, hopeful, while sympathetic.

Red Tears is a gripping, and powerful story, filled with passion, sympathy, and reality. It may be upsetting,

so be warned, to many people, as the detail is quite..explicit and it is possible to *trigger* memories/thoughts, and Kenrick warns that self-harmers should be careful and responsible regarding their own safety, when reading this.

Ringo The Cat says

OK, I guess it's something to get through... the teen self-harming books. I mean, I don't want to belittle self-harmers or anything, but writing a book about a sensitive topic like self-harm is just not an easy thing to do. If you are called Laurie Halse Anderson you can pull it off and you have found a way for your writing to surpass the mere teenage "my life sucks and I have so many issues to deal with and I can't cope so please notice me" complaint fiction. Seriously, I'm not belittling self-harmers, but I'm questioning Joanna Kenrick's ability to stay critical towards her writing subject.

In *Red Tears*, we meet Emily Bowyer, 15 and from a loving family. She has a couple of close friends and is academically successful. So what's the big deal, right? You know, those of any "ordinary" teenager: GCSEs and the stress of it all. She basically has to find a way to balance her friends (they dump her), schoolwork (she can't keep up) and family (the pressure is on!). And she finds a way to deal with all these issues by cutting herself. What follows is apparently an insight into the mind of a self-harmer. The introduction shows that Kenrick did a lot of research about her topic, and apparently much of it in self-harmers' online support groups (you should see some of the rave reviews these teens give the book). Anyway,... Emily's character is intended to be believable ("this is what happens to all of us self-harmers"), but at the same time it should be able to show that this is something that can happen to anyone (careful, Emily was completely 'normal' too!). Kenrick is obviously very sympathetic with her topic and her main character, but for me, this is exactly what makes it all so...well, stereotypical, and samey. For me, this book doesn't stand out from the crowd and there is very little to lift this novel out of the teenage pit of doom and despair.

Why is that? No idea, really. You could say that it's because we basically have only Emily's point of view and she tends to be well, depressed...but then, why is *Speak* such a powerful novel? Here we also only have Melinda's mind and she doesn't even speak! Is it because of the very rushed ending (no, not a happy ending and no, not a sad ending but you know, something in between, as it should be...). We spend 95% of the pages on Emily's self-harm and then the 'solution' the book offers is just too rushed. In a matter of a few pages Emily comes to the insight that yes, it'll be hard to stop cutting but at least after all she's gone through, and with the right guidance, she has it in her to get better... Or is it again because I have so little in common with the topic at hand? Then, why did *Wintergirls* make such an incredible impression on me?

Is *Red Tears* a good book for self-harmers? Hell, what do I know. Kenrick does warn them in the beginning that there are some scenes that might be hard for them to take and that might trigger their errr..urges, so if you're a self-harmer, put away your blades! Is this a good book to get an insight into self-harmers? Probably, I mean, Emily's character is well-developed (oh and Kenrick even makes publicity for teacher packs so it's all very responsible and everything). Is this a good piece of literary fiction? Nah, not so much. The line between 'complaint' fiction and 'critical' fiction really is very fine. At least that is something *Red Tears* proves.

Alisha Hans says

This is a book that I read a good few years ago and has stuck with me ever since its a horrifying book that really makes you think that you have no idea whats going on in someone else head you cant really know

what they are going through unless your them.

This story was captivating and thought provoking but at the same time it was awful and terrifying, to think that at 15 years old you have so much pressure and people who you think you know using you - and to get the blame for everything when this go wrong thats hard.

I had forgot what this book was called even though the story stayed with me.

I hope that to whom ever picks this book up remember that you are never alone that there will always be someone to help you all you have to do is ask. And also its okay to say no to those that demand to much of us.

Alisha x

Irwinquiffin says

This book have such a very deep expression and feelings I almost thought I was actualky Emily. Because all the words explain beautifully and really well I can almost feel all the pain and thoughts that Emily was facing. I never self harm but I could relate to how Emily feels at some point. This story literally touch my heart and breathtaking. I couldn't stop myself from crying while reading it because of how tough Emily's life is. I feel like I want to dive into it and hug her and try to help her feel better. It shows everyone have their own hard time even though their life seems perfect with straight As grades, lots of friends and normal family etc. Everyone have their own story and battle that no one knows but them only. The ending are really realistic even though its not happy ending and not finally live happily ever after. She strengthen herself to fix herself and stand up back on her life to move on to a better life.

Sally says

Wow, so many of the reviews of this were bad but I thought it was a terrific book and Emily was a very believable character. God, I really loathed her mother though. How could she not see that it was her pressure that was driving Emily round the bend?!

Erin Ashley says

Wow. This book was one of those books that disturbed you but you could not put it down. It's amazing how relateable Emily was in the book and I found that a lot of things she felt were things that a lot of teenagers feel at that point in their lives.

The most disturbing parts were obviously when she self-harmed herself and I have to say that I understand now the mind of a 'cutter'. The fact that they can see the pain on themself is what makes it a reality for them. That was a scary thing to learn.

I honestly have to say that I hated how the mother acted to it all, thinking that this was happening to her. That annoyed me the most and not to mention the fact that nobody wanted to try and understand her, they kept telling her that what she was doing was all for attention because she had nothing in life to worry about. There lay a lot of hidden feelings underneath the surface of Emily and not even her friends wanted to take

the time to listen to her. I really despised how they treated her as well, turning their backs on her and then exposing her secret. I wanted to jump right into the book and defend her and listen to her.

I loved her relatability and how much of a good friend she was. The relationship between Emily and her brother was another thing I liked and he was quite smart despite what people actually thought of him.

This book was a terrifying trip into a deadly habit that can infect teens and adults alike, but it is definitely a book worth a read, as long as you don't judge it straight away. Well worth the late night read.

Naomi says

This book was incredible. Emily's journey from a healthy, happy teenager to a depressed, introverted girl was full of emotion and insight. It was a very difficult book to put down as I was eager to find out what happens to her. Parts of the novel were so utterly and surprisingly relatable to my own thoughts and emotions that I felt as though I had written the book myself!

It definitely deserves all five stars for portraying such an honest and heartrending depiction of a young girl who self-harms.

Jordss says

With the content of this book in mind it is certainly disturbing to a certain extent but if you look past that it offers a much deeper insight to the mind of a teenager in this day and age, pressured by everyone around them. Emily represents anyone and how we never know what's going on in that person's life, they may seem to have everything but there is so much more to that person's life than we think. The book gives out a message that needs to be heard by EVERYONE. And it's not just Emily herself who shows the full struggle it's all the other characters in the book, their responses to Emily's self harm, the teachers, her peers, her parents and her brother who add to the emotional story of Emily's battle with depression and self harm and this book was effective in achieving what this book was supposed to achieve and I recommend this to anyone who wants a very relatable character and an insight to what could be going through anybody's mind.

Billie says

This book is about how a normal happy teenage girl's life slowly starts falling apart. It shows the inside of her mind and how she decides to act when something has gone wrong. She starts to suffer from depression and turns to self harming to help her get through the twists and turns of the roller coaster ride that is her life. I love how this book shows the decisions and struggles she has to go through. If anyone in real life went through these issues we would know how to deal with it and help them.
