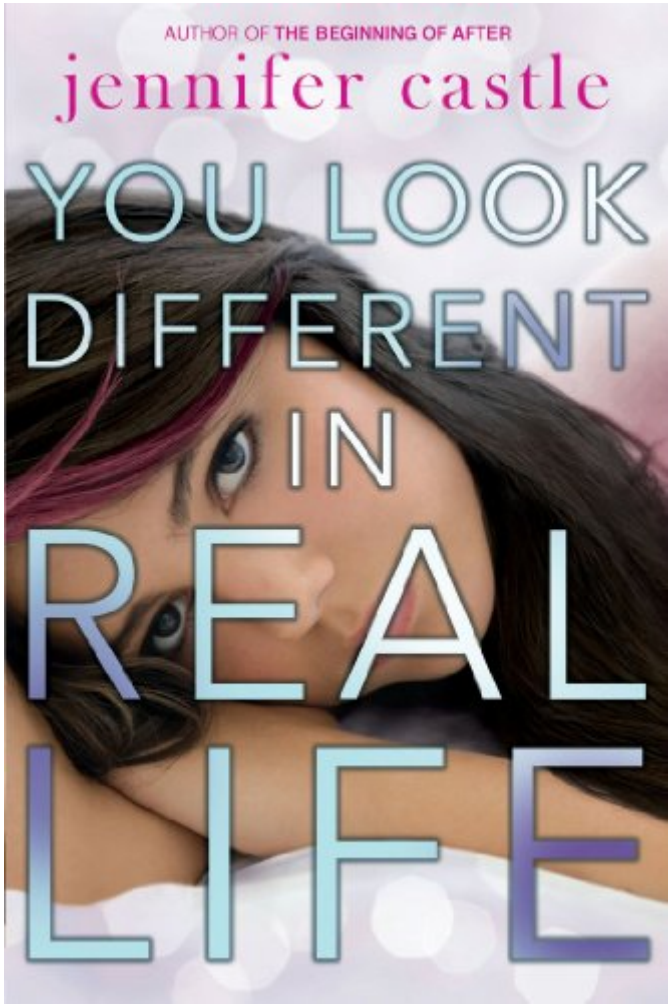
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You Look Different In Real Life



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Synopsis

Readers of John Green, Sarah Dessen, and Laurie Halse Anderson will be touched by the emotional depth and realistic characters of Jennifer Castle’s teen novel You Look Different in Real Life.Justine charmed the nation in a documentary film featuring five kindergartners. Five years later, her edgy sense of humor made her the star of a second movie that caught up with the lives of the same five kids. Now Justine is sixteen, and another sequel is in the works. Justine isn’t ready to have viewers examining her life again. She feels like a disappointment, not at all like the girl everyone fell in love with in the first two movies. But, ready or not, she and the other four teens will soon be in front of the cameras again.Smart, fresh, and funny, You Look Different in Real Life is an affecting novel about life in an age where the lines between what’s personal and what’s public aren’t always clear.

Book Information

File Size: 1525 KB

Print Length: 373 pages

Publisher: HarperTeen (June 4, 2013)

Publication Date: June 4, 2013

Sold by:Ã Â HarperCollins Publishers

Language: English

ASIN: B009NF6EX0

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #406,318 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #28 inÃ Â Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Performing Arts > Television & Radio #50 inÃ Â Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Performing Arts > Film #174 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Literature & Fiction > Art & Music

Customer Reviews

GRADE: B-Justine and four of her classmates are part of a documentary Five At that followed the kids at age 6, 11 and are now shooting the 16-year-olds. The teens have grown apart and

filmmakers want to reestablish their bond. The group includes: Rory, Justine’s former best friend, who has Aspergers, the aloof Keira, golden boy Nate and his former best friend Felix who’s hiding a secret.I had a difficult time warming up to Justine as she continually chose silence over kindness and went against her instincts. Fortunately she grew the most of any character in the story. I thought Rory’s the speed achievements on a road trip were unrealistic. Felix’s "secret" was obvious to me early on. I wanted to know more about Keira, the most interesting character. I read the short story FINDING KEIRA and hoped for more insight into her personality.The first half of the book dragged a bit, but by the second half, I was invested in all five teens and eager to find out what happened. The ending felt predictable and bland.Jennifer Castle has a pleasant writing style and gave Justine an authentic, engaging voice. I like the direction she took Justine’s character.YOU LOOK DIFFERENT IN REAL LIFE is an enjoyable, but ultimately forgettable story.

I thought this was a very well written introduction to the close relationship between teenagers and television. The characters were very convincing; the plot was very compelling; and the book provided me with a fascinating window into teen-age life in suburbia in the 21st century. The book has helped me to get a better understanding of the world in which my grandchildren are living. I liked it so much that I bought a copy for my 16 year old granddaughter.

I really enjoyed the concept behind this novel: a group of (now) adolescent characters involved in a series of "7-up..." style documentaries about their lives. Justine is a sympathetic protagonist--a believable 16-year-old, but complex and perhaps a bit jaded in a way that those of us beyond that stage of life can relate to as well. I found the relationships intriguing, particularly the troubled history of Justine and Rory. Absorbing read.

Why did I read You Look Different in Real Life?When I read the blurb about this book it sounded like something I would love. All of a sudden I thought back to my Freshman Intro to Sociology class and the Frontline video we watched, A Class Divided. This video explored an experiment a teacher conducted within her class the day after the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. She wanted her student to understand discrimination. What was especially cool to me was the fact that it contained a followup 14 years later so you could see where those kids were and what they thought. You should really just go watch it.The blurb for this book excited me so much because I thought that I would finish the book with the same hopeful feeling I had when I watched that special. I thought I would feel incredibly invested in each of the characters and their stories.Was this what I was

expecting?Not so much. I didn’t have the feelings I had been hoping for and while I enjoyed myself I wasn’t really all that invested in the characters. In fact it seemed as if I knew hardly anything about some of the group which is weird since they are all being "filmed" for this movie. Then there was the random romance. I just didn’t really think there was enough of a buildup or really any indication that the romance was there until it randomly happened. I appreciate that this book tried to deal with some hard issues such as accepting one’s sexuality and the autism spectrum, but even those felt a tad PSA-campy to me.What could have made this better?I think it could have been beneficial to have alternating point of views with less characters. I have a feeling that could have made me feel much more invested in the characters and their stories.

Justine is used to people recognizing her, acting like they know here even if they’re strangers. That’s what happens when your childhood is filmed as part of an award-winning documentary.It started when Justine was six. She was filmed with four other students in her kindergarten class. Then again when she turned eleven.Justine is sixteen now and it’s time for Lance and Leslie to come back for another film. But Justine doesn’t want anything to do with it.She can see why Lance and Leslie picked the other kids: quirky Nate, smart Keira, outgoing Felix and Rory who did whatever she wanted. Justine never saw that same spark, that piece of interesting, in herself.Reviewers always call Justine the star, the edgy one. They expect great things from her. But now, at sixteen, Justine feels anything but as she is forced to look not just at her unamazing life but also at the friendships that have shattered since Five at 6 and Five at 11 were filmed.Now that a new film is coming Justine isn’t sure if she should be excited or terrified. This film might be her chance to finally prove that she is as amazing as everyone thinks and maybe even fix some friendships along the way. But it also might not fix anything. It might just confirm Justine’s suspicions that she is anything but film-worthy in You Look Different in Real Life (2013) by Jennifer Castle.Sometimes when you read a book you go in with expectations of the story you will get. And sometimes that expected story is nothing like the story the author has written. Unfortunately that was the case with You Look Different in Real Life. I went in wanting details of the previous documentaries and the current filming. Instead I got cursory flashbacks and vague references to the crew. In the second half of the novel the documentary plot became very secondary to another character’s storyline so that the whole premise began to feel more gimmicky and less vital to the story.You Look Different in Real Life also ends just when things should be getting interesting. Justine has a breakthrough about some aspect of the filming. But we never get to know what it actually is. By the end of the book it felt like Castle was only giving readers half the story as the

documentary was forgotten (having already served its purpose as an inciting incident.)Justine should have been a sympathetic, authentic narrator. She should have had original experiences and a unique take on things thanks to being the subject of a series of documentaries. Instead Justine came across as very one-dimensional and unbearably whiny. While she does have a clear development from beginning to end, her lack of self-esteem and confidence in the beginning was overwhelming to the point that her own self criticisms began to make me feel bad about my own life. That's completely unacceptable.Justine's short-comings are lessened, slightly, thanks to the supporting cast. That is until a lot of them fell into predictable character types with equally unsurprising side stories. There are a lot of near-misses and false starts at the characters try to reconnect and, ultimately, it all just felt very forced.If you want an okay book about a girl coming into her own and discovering her own talents and strengths, You Look Different in Real Life is a decent choice. It doesn't have the best heroine or language (Justine moved with surprising frequency between acting/sounding much younger than sixteen and acting/sounding much older) but all of the elements are there for a quick, fairly fun read. If you want a book that focuses more on the effects of being on film or performing you'll be better served picking up something like Take a Bow by Elizabeth Eulberg.Possible Pairings: Keep Holding On by Susane Colasanti, Take a Bow by Elizabeth Eulberg, Fat Kid Rules the World by K. L. Going, You Don't Know Me by David Klass, Fly on the Wall by E. Lockhart, A Map of the Known World by Lisa Ann Sandell*This book was acquired for review from the publisher at BEA 2013*

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