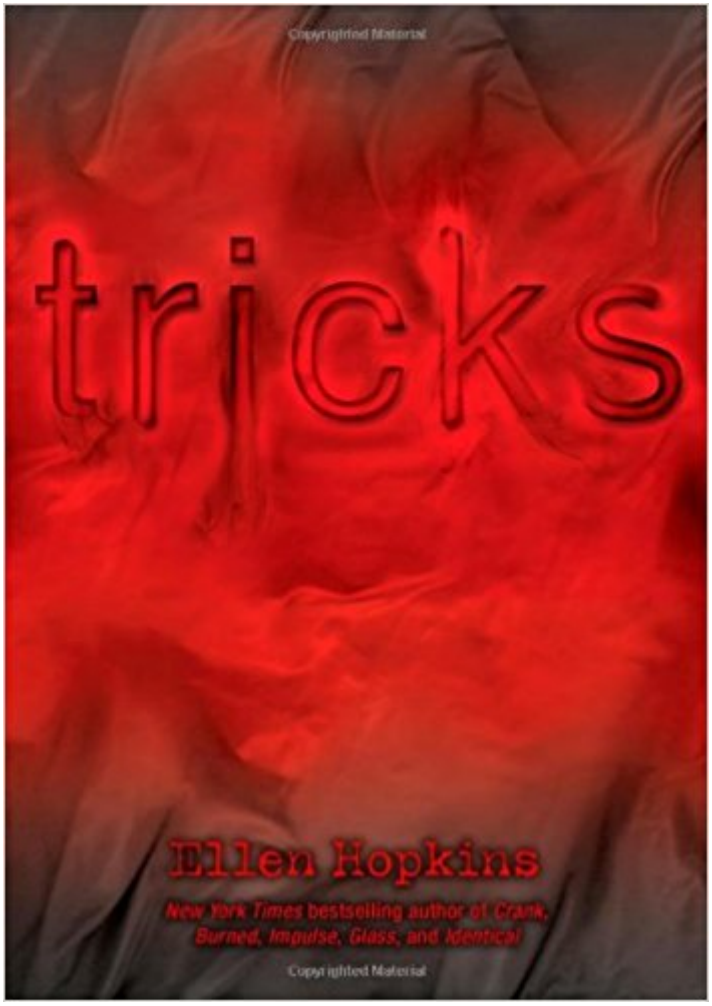
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# Tricks




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## Synopsis

Five troubled teenagers fall into prostitution as they search for freedom, safety, community, family, and love in this #1 New York Times bestselling novel from Ellen Hopkins."When all choice is taken from you, life becomes a game of survival."  Five teenagers from different parts of the country. Three girls. Two guys. Four straight. One gay. Some rich. Some poor. Some from great families. Some with no one at all. All living their lives as best they can, but all searching...for freedom, safety, community, family, love. What they don’t expect, though, is all that can happen when those powerful little words "I love you" are said for all the wrong reasons.  Five moving stories remain separate at first, then interweave to tell a larger, powerful story -- a story about making choices, taking leaps of faith, falling down, and growing up. A story about kids figuring out what sex and love are all about, at all costs, while asking themselves, "Can I ever feel okay about myself?"  A brilliant achievement from New York Times best-selling author Ellen Hopkins -- who has been called "the bestselling living poet in the country" by mediabistro.com -- Tricks is a book that turns you on and repels you at the same time. Just like so much of life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 UpÃ¢â ¬â •Five teens desperately seek to find their way through the darkness in Hopkins’s latest epic novel in verse. Eden flees an evangelical household; Cody blocks out a family illness with gambling and sex; Whitney gives up her body in exchange for the love she finds so elusive; Seth struggles to define himself as a homosexual; and Ginger comes to terms with an awful truth

about her neglectful mother. Burden after burden piles on the teens' shoulders until they resort to the unthinkable in order to survive. As they near rock bottom, their narratives begin to intersect. It is only when their paths converge that a glimmer of redemption appears out of the hopelessness. From the punch delivered by the title, to the teens' raw voices, to the visual impact of the free verse, Hopkins once again produces a graphic, intense tale that will speak to mature teens.Ã¢â ¬â •Jill Heritage Maza, Greenwich High School, CT END

Ã¢â ¬Å“Each story is unique...while readers may connect with some characters more than others, they will long remember each painful story.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Publishers Weekly)

I applaud Ellen Hopkins for writing about such things that most people would be scared to even talk about. I love her for not only this, but her poetry style writing which is very unique in the YA genre. With that said, I have very mixed feelings about this book in particular. As many times as I found myself enjoying it, there was always a "but." For example, I liked how Hopkins really went into detail about the actual act of having sex (be it for love or money), but I thought that the proportion of sex description versus the emotional description was way out of whack. I would have appreciated a lot more of the internal conflict even though I did like how Hopkins had the guts to write very gritty/dirty things. I liked how the readers got to follow the five main characters all the way from the beginning, but by the end I was begging for it to be over because I was super bored. I was never attached to any of the characters because they had very little development, but in turn I think that the connection is not needed to stills be able to understand the awfulness of prostitution. All in all, I think this book had very good intentions, but was poorly executed compared to a lot of Hopkins' other books.

Ellen HopkinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s young adult novel Tricks tells the heart-breaking stories of five very lost and lonely teenagers dealing with issues far beyond their years. The five characters, Eden, Seth, Cody, Ginger and Whitney come from different, but still flawed backgrounds and end up on the streets of Las Vegas, craving either money, heroin, love, or most of all, hope. The novel focuses heavily on the impact of mistakes; how one bad choice, often made out of necessity or fear, can gradually turn into an entirely new and undesired lifestyle. EdenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s religious and unaccepting family ships her off to Tears of Zion to attempt to cleanse her of her adolescent ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“mistakesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•, but do not realize that this irrational decision will directly turn their daughter into a prostitute, using her body for the resources she has been deprived of.

Without any family, money, or real-life skills, Seth begins his journey looking for love and affection, but winds up settling for a life as ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“arm candyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• for rich, older man that see him as nothing else. CodyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s selfish adolescent desires -- to get girls, to get high, or to make a few dollars -- quickly get pushed aside when his family falls apart after the death of his step-father. Desperate, Cody turns to gambling and prostitution to make ends meet, but loses himself in the process. Ginger runs from her broken home to free herself from the grips of her absentee prostitute mother, but winds up ironically following directly in her footsteps. And finally Whitney, desperate for love after feeling rejection from both her family and romantic partners, naively turns to an older man with plans to play her into being one of his prostitutes until she has nothing left. None of these choices are made overnight, but the more that these characters dip their feet into this desolate and dangerous new lifestyle, the more they become engulfed in it, as if they were sinking in quicksand.The quick but poetic verse style of the book makes it both readable and addicting -- as you quickly flip through the pages to try to find a solution for one of the characters, anotherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life begins to completely unfold. Although each character begins their section with a brief but relevant poem, the writing style is still simple and easy to follow. Despite being a story about adolescence, the characters in this novel are forced to grow up at an unfair and rapid pace, and any innocence in their life is quickly shattered as they make life-threatening choices as a means for survival. On a surface level, most teens can relate -- feeling lonely, desperate for love, somehow feeling wronged by someone they were supposed to rely on. Although Tricks includes disturbing and mature content that many teens will never deal with, it is still a story that deals with simultaneous adolescence and struggle, which is someone that anyone can relate to.

Tricks by Ellen Hopkins is a multiple perspective prose novel targeting hard topics such as teenage prostitution, drug use, and the negative consequences of trusting in the wrong person. Five teenagers rise as the protagonists, all from different parts of the country and different situations. Some explore their sexuality, while some are straight, and some gay. The socioeconomic ladder is also represented, with some of the teenagers being from affluent families and some being the all too common family that has to move back in with the again grandparents to be able to survive. The protagonists are Ginger, Cody, Seth, Eden, and Whitney and all of their stories share in common the age old search for freedom, trust, identity, and even love. However, this novel is not a happy go lucky fairy tale but rather the opposite. The tense and dark story lines highlight just what can happen when people are manipulated with false pretenses, whether they be false pretenses of love, trust, or even faith. This novel is about how far down a person can be thrown, and about the glimmers of

hope that arise as the protagonists drag themselves back up into the sunlight.Though I appreciated the unique way the story was told, especially as it allowed the novel to become more accessible to teenage readers due to the quick reading time, the prose structure at the novel unfortunately felt forced for the majority of the novel, with only some pages throughout that really benefitted from the ability to say two things at once, such as on the intro to point of view changes, where the left out words to the right combine into a sentence that enhances the sectionÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s reading. The prose at times can be beautifully crafted, but more often than not the prose merely works as functional, and not as moving.The actual narrative structure of the novel could also have been a bit better, as the many points of view and the quickly switching narratives at times left me, the reader, more than a bit confused. In the beginning, because of the shortness of each characterÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s section and the five points of view, I found it very difficult to differentiate between the characters, and I also found it very difficult to identity with the characters and to see them as well rounded. However, after the first one hundred pages or so, the novel took a turn for the better and picked up steam just as all the protagonists were really starting to unravel. The last one hundred or so pages of the novel were amazing. They were gritty, dark, and real in a way that seemed to make the narratives leap from the page and come to life in front of you, and the ending of the Tricks was all that you could potentially want in a novel with a theme as dark and real as teenage prostitution, as it left you feeling as unsure about your emotions and the life paths of the characters as those very own characters may have been feeling. The ending places you in a sense of loss and anguish, and shows you how different people can end up with different endings to their lives, even if they all fell or were dragged down to the same dark place.My qualms with the style of the novel aside, I very much enjoyed reading this text as I felt it did an excellent job as portraying a multitude of characters to offer some options of whom a reader could identity with. Though the choices may seem a bit archetypal at times (i.e. the gay farm boy or the rich girl who does not think her mother loves her) I believe it is more important to care about the diversity given in the text, which then can lead to excellent discussions on trust, sex, sexuality, family, love, etc. I also really enjoyed the fact that Hopkins wrote this book about an increasingly prevalent social issue in the modern day, and that she did so without sugar coating it, because the teens that this is happening to do not have their reality sugar coated, either. The dark subject matter is at times written with the gritty callousness of a journalist, especially when it comes to the sordid details of what the protagonists are going through, from being forced to take drugs and make porn, to having to become a stripper or a prostitute for money to help family, or to help you get away from family. All in all, I peg this novel as very important the read, as far as social issues go, and educating the younger

generations about what is happening in the world, to people their age, that just might be living next door.I would recommend an age of 14+ for this novel due to the graphic and violent scenes depicted, as well as scenes of sexual nature, child abuse, rape, drug use, and all around the seedier aspects of life.

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