



Mary Modern

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Lucy Morrigan, a young genetic researcher, lives with her boyfriend, Gray, and an odd collection of tenants in her crumbling family mansion. Surrounded by four generations of clothes, photographs, furniture, and other remnants of past lives, Lucy and Gray's home life is strangely out of touch with the modern world—except for Lucy's high-tech lab in the basement.

Frustrated by her unsuccessful attempts to attain motherhood or tenure, Lucy takes drastic measures to achieve both. Using a bloodstained scrap of an apron found in the attic, Lucy successfully clones her grandmother Mary. But rather than conjuring a new baby, Lucy brings to life a twenty-two-year-old Mary, who is confused and disoriented when she finds herself trapped in the strangest sort of déjà vu: alive in a home that is no longer her own, surrounded by reminders of a life she has already lived but doesn't remember.

A remarkable debut novel, *Mary Modern* turns an unflinching eye on the joyous, heartbreaking, and utterly unexpected consequences of human desire.

From the Hardcover edition.

Mary Modern Details

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From Reader Review Mary Modern for online ebook

Stacey (wanderlustforwords) says

I enjoyed this tale that was part historical fiction, part scifi, part contemporary novel. The writing is simple but effective. The novel is centered around Lucy Morigan, a scientific researcher at her local North Eastern US University. Lucy follows a long line of scientists in her family, the secrets of which are hinted throughout but confirmed at the end of the book. Lucy makes a crazy decision to clone her grandmother to be her child when after many failed attempts she can't become pregnant. Unfortunately, it doesn't work out the way she wanted - I don't want to include spoilers - and her actions cause a snowball of legal, moral, historical and personal problems.

There were a couple of parts I found were a bit far fetched and I started to think, "oh boy here we go, the story is going south." But it didn't, they were a mere blip. Camille DeAngelis alters the rules of genetic cloning for the purpose of her story, but in the afterword she explains her reasoning and explains the reality of cloning.

I was intrigued by how and why Camille created her novel; based on a photo of her great grandparents and how she would love to clone them so she could meet them. Cloning is a controversial topic in our time, and it isn't going away. Although demonized for being used for the production of designer babies. However, it can also be used to cure diseases and save lives. Regardless of where you stand on the subject, Mary Modern is an interesting book that I was still thinking of several days after I finished.

Jaymie says

I actually did not finish this book but after 160 pages or so I just figured there were better books on my list than this. I really wanted to like it. The idea was interesting. A scientist clones her dead grandmother who comes to life as a 20 year old. I guess this is the reason I don't read science fiction. I just could not get over the fact that it was so improbable. And the characters who roomed with the main character were just creepy and unbelievable. I would never have let them live in my house.

Jenny says

This book is quite bizarre. It's also surprising, suspenseful, enchanting, and entertaining. It's really hard to categorize, but it definitely has some science fiction elements with a little love thrown in for good measure.

My only complaint: Deangelis breaks up the story into short one page chapters that start with a time and place. This is rather annoying because the story doesn't really flow all that well, but I guess that's the appeal. All of the chunks eventually piece together to form an unusual story about the repercussions of cloning.

Trin says

In which there is time travel via cloning, basically. This starts out slow; I didn't really get into it until Mary is (re)born. Then Lucy, Mary's granddaughter whose biogenetics research has given her life, is moved more

into the background—a relief, as she’s a rather unsympathetic character. Also, Grey, Lucy’s long-suffering boyfriend, finally comes alive. I loved Grey and Mary’s complex interactions, and while the novel’s final “twist” is—intentionally?—telegraphed from the very beginning, I enjoyed how the story played out.

Celia says

This was a very strange and interesting book. Quite different from some of the other choices of our bookclub, this novel had a lot of creepy ideas, like cloning your grandmother and dealing with her as a young woman. I thought the writing was sometime over the top, and she used the novel as a vehicle for spouting her political views, which sometimes got in the way of the narrative. Somebody didn't do a good job in editing this, but all in all, a very different story.

Alisa Kester says

I had high hopes for this one, because I liked a different book by the author, and I LOVED the premise for this one. It sounded so perfect for me.

And it did start out perfect, because I do like how this author writes. She opens with the most lovely description of a house - and it could be my dream house. Unfortunately, she then peoples it with the most annoying, trivial lot of characters I've ever read grouped into one book. I hated everyone. (And it didn't help that she used them as mouthpieces to promote her views on politics, religion, and political-correctness. It's fine if characters have a different viewpoint than mine - but not when it's clear the *only* reason those little spews pop-up is just so the author can 'educate' her audience. No thanks.)

Bobbi says

I really liked the concept of this book - cloning a dead relative, but I think I would have written it differently. It needed more motive, characterization, and better dialog. I knew that the story would come full circle somehow, so the ending wasn't that much of a surprise. I did feel that it needed more of a climax though. I think what I enjoyed the most about the book was the setting, an old, decrepit house with dusty relics of past generations and secret passageways.

Kristin says

The premise of this book was extremely entertaining, but I was distracted by the heavy anti-religion, anti-Bush, anti-conservative, anti-anything against cloning language. The story would have flowed much more smoothly if it weren't for the jarring rants against the government; I think the book would have been much better as just a story, not an attempt at politically bashing the other side of the debate. I liked the story itself, and thought that the characters were fairly well-developed. There were so many story lines that were left unfinished or unexplained, but I suppose that was the purpose. Everything about cloning is a mystery.

Cathy says

Well done! I was intrigued by the premise of the novel, and not sure what to expect from other reviews. But I was very satisfied. The book tackles not only biology and ethical issues, but politics, history, family, belonging, and the list goes on. It could be construed as a "mishmash" of styles and tones, but I found the mixture to be brilliantly and carefully executed. There are parts that could be slightly horror-style (see the comparisons to Frankenstein); some are distinctly quirky and just an odd twist on reality -- surreal, in fact. Some passages are straightforward in their analysis of human nature and feelings. I saw what I might term the main "twist" coming, but I was still very curious as to how it happened. I love books and movies that get me thinking about logistics -- puzzling through the plot. This one did it. It all fits and leads to an interesting conclusion. Thought-provoking on many levels, and just a satisfying page-turner.

karen says

my emotional development stopped at the "tell me a story" phase, and that's all i expect from a book. i don't need it to change my life, i don't need it to answer every one of my questions, i don't need it to teach me about any historical atrocity.

this is not a perfect book, but it is a deeply entertaining book. it's true that the characters are largely unlikable, but that's also true of Wuthering Heights and Jude the Obscure, two of my all-time favorites. if it's the idea of cloning that is upsetting the more delicately religious/political folks, just power through - pretend it's like a unicorn in a fantasy novel or the spontaneous combustion in Bleak House - it is something that is happening just to drive plot - it isn't reeeeeall!! it is just genuine fun in the vein of liz jensen or when jonathan coe is being funny.

do.

Betsy says

This modern day version of Frankenstein was a page-turner- the concept of bringing one's own grandmother back into a future that completely bewilders her was well-written. Ultimately I found the book possibly a bit wordier than it needed to be but still interesting. I felt I got to know the character of Gray, Lucy's boyfriend and Mary, her grandmother better than I did Lucy, herself. Her motivations were not entirely clear unless it was just a compulsion to see if she could actually clone someone...

Josephine (Jo) says

I had to do something that I hate and that is to abandon a book half way through. I just could not get on with this one at all. The story was an excellent concept and it had potential to be really entertaining but for me it just didn't seem to be credible enough.

I think because we are actually so near managing to clone the human body it is no longer in realms of science

fiction. There is maybe some mad scientist out there who is illegally doing so at this very moment so that half of the story is not all that farfetched. The other half however is too way out to make any sense, the items hidden away in the basement that belonged to Lucy's father and grandfather are antiquated and almost silly in their antiquity and come far too close to Frankenstein's laboratory to be plausible in this century. I found the idea of the whole pregnancy a little bit gross.

It is probably due to my limited imagination that I find it impossible to go with this idea but I was just not enjoying the book and had to give it up.

Miriam says

The only thing I liked in this book was the description of the house the characters lived in. Otherwise I thought they were all unlikeable and found their relationships, feelings, posited intellectual brilliance etc completely unbelievable.

Christine says

I wanted to love this book. The concept was great - a biologist who can't conceive clones her grandmother, who suddenly turns into a 20 year old woman with vague memories of who she was.

Then I started reading. The book is written in present tense. And is completely non-sequitor. Conversations don't flow naturally, and when they do, I have no idea what they're talking about. The author obviously knows a lot about art history and history in general, but since none of it was actually relevant to the story, parts felt more like a lecture between two people that are far smarter than me than a conversation between two lovers. Rather than being drawn in, I just felt really dumb.

I stuck with it for a while, hoping that I would get used to her style, but then events that would normally be considered plot were just tossed in as gossip from random characters, and I gave up. I tossed it onto the backseat of the car and decided to just enjoy the 5 hour drive back to Maryland rather than force myself to work through this book.

Lisa says

This is really like one and a half star -worthy. The premise was so interesting: a biogenetic researcher who finds out she can't have children clones her own grandmother from blood she finds on an apron in the house her family has lived in for four generations. The grandmother is "born" at age 22, with all her memories intact up to that time.

But the plot gets convoluted, and the characters become whiny and annoying at best. The choppy writing and constant moving through time leaves the reader confused. This book did not live up to its promise
