



## Bittersweet Sixteen

*Carrie Doyle Karasyov , Jill Kargman*

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Balloons and streamers? Carvel cake? Those might be standard fair for your average birthday party, but Whitney Blake and Sophie Mitchum are anything but average.

I'm Laura Finnegan – thrift store junkie and scholarship student at Tate, our posh all-girls high school in Manhattan. I'm not like Whit or Soph, but that doesn't stop us from being BFFs. But then they started tuning in to the all-Sweet Sixteen, all-the-time channel. Now tempers are flaring, Prada bags are flying, and guys are being tossed around in vicious tug-of-war battles. Whose Sweet Sixteen will reign supreme?

### Bittersweet Sixteen Details

Date : Published May 1st 2007 by HarperTeen (first published June 27th 2006)

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Author : Carrie Doyle Karasyov , Jill Kargman

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## From Reader Review Bittersweet Sixteen for online ebook

### Christina Brennan says

I chose to read a book called bittersweet sixteen. I chose to read it because it takes place in my favorite city in the world, New York! This book was about girls who go to a private school in Manhattan. Basically they all compete for who can throw the best sweet sixteen party. I felt like I could relate to some of the girls who go to this prep school. Mean girls, uniforms, drama and jealousy all play apart in their every day life and mine. I really enjoyed this book because it was funny, dramatic and over the top. It did not exceed my expectations unfortunately. Although I enjoyed it I thought some parts were a little slow. In todays world we are bombarded with ideas of what we should be and struggle with staying true to ourselves. The main character in this book was challenged by a lot of friend drama and rich girls. Not being a rich girl herself, she really struggled fitting in with the girls at school. She made her clothes to save money and lived on a budget. It seemed like she had a hard time with accepting it and through out the course of the book, it seemed like she wanted to change that. In the book Laura Finnegan says "I don't recall seeing Finnegan, my family name on any publicity traded stocks or published in Forbes or published ever..."(Karasyov 2). In this quote Laura is introducing herself to the readers. She talks about the school and other peoples lives. Laura's live is much less complicated then the other Tate girls. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading a funny, light hearted book that kinda jokes about private schools. If you enjoy hearing about the life in New York City for a rich kid, this book is for you!

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### Lauren says

I couldn't bring myself to read every word of this drivel, but I did give it a thorough skimming. It was cliché and unrealistic. It wasn't even funny. The characters were dumb, entitled, and stagnant; the plot read like a rich clique girl's diary. Overall- there's not much to say about this- it was just boring tweenage chicklit.

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### Abby?Books says

If you understand the bigger picture then you would love the book just like I did ^^

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### cyborgcinderella says

[ TW: ableist language, homophobic language, fatphobia, mentions of disordered eating (hide spoiler)]

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### Anjum Choudhury says

I loved this book as a preteen, and read it on multiple occasions. When I went back to read it as a teenager, I still loved it just out of nostalgia, but it was also just kind of impossible to get through because of the voice. The constant usage of text-talk type stuff... I just can't handle it anymore. I guess it was okay, because this book was written at the peak of kind of usage. Now, though, I couldn't do it. For a 10-13 year old, though,

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this would be a great, typical girly book. So it gets 5 stars from my eleven-year-old self and, let's say, 3 now.

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### **Rebecca Sun says**

Fun, fluffy, light read for a cold day.

Not my type of book.

Like literally it was so freaking unrealistic and cheesy as fuck. Basically a #spoiledwhitegirlfirstworldproblems kind of book. The characters are so fucking boring, spoiled, and plain no substance. Predicted and cliché.

The girls in this book need to be grateful. Parents are NYU professors and bitch still complains about being poor and stuck in third wheel and friend zone.

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### **Plainsboro Public Library says**

When you go to a school full of beautiful, popular, super rich girls, there's no wonder as to why there has to be the perfect Sweet Sixteens for Whitney Blake and Sophie Mitchum. When the dates for their parties end up on the same day, these best friends battle it out for the best party while Laura Finnegan, with her average life, is caught between this bitter war. Friendships are tested, as well as who gets which guy. Laura must satisfy all of her own needs as well as her friends, but can she take all the pressure?

The characters in this book sound like typical cliché rich girls. From the way they talk, to the way they dress. But Laura Finnegan is different. Told from her perspective, we gain insight into what it's like being the odd one out. Her interests are much more fascinating than looking at Prada bags and her sensibility and emotions are much more understanding. In the end, we end up rooting for her and her happy ending.

I would recommend this book to all teens, specifically those who enjoy drama because this book has a lot of it. It is a simple read and the plot is easy to follow along. Bittersweet Sixteen is Carrie Karasyov and Jill Kargman's first book for teens.

~Laura Liao

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### **Deeksha Hegde says**

I can totally get the theme! Half my life has been the same!!

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### **Juliet Small says**

Bittersweet Sixteen Book Review

Throughout Bittersweet Sixteen, by Carrie Karasyov, there were many aspects about the book that I really

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enjoyed. I think that the book was really funny and enjoyable. It was enjoyable to read because there were so many different emotions that were going on throughout the book. Some emotions included sadness, happiness, hilariousness, seriousness, and anger. All of these emotions were spread throughout the book, causing me to enjoy reading it because I could feel all of the string emotions of the characters. Also, I really enjoyed reading this book because it somewhat related to my life as a high schooler. The story had a high school setting, so I could relate to some of the events that happened in the book, such as a crazy homecoming.

Additionally, it was very fun to read this book because it was so descriptive. When I was reading this book, I had a mental movie playing in my head the entire time I read it. I imagined all of the characters, and the places they went to. I enjoy reading books that are this way because I feel like I am there, with the characters, at their high school. I think that this is an important trait for a book to have because it makes it more interesting to read when you can imagine it in your head. This is because, by doing so, the images you create in your mind are personalized by what your mind thinks of them. This makes the book more interesting to read, because you are somewhat customizing it to how you personally view the characters and setting.

One quote that I thought was significant was, "I had changed over the last two months. I had grown stronger and become my own person"(Karasyov 230). This quote shows how Laura, the main character, really changed her thoughts of herself in this book. She realized, after a lot of drama, that she cannot let people control her and just use her as a "party planner." This quote is very meaningful because it teaches the readers to always stick up for themselves, and don't let someone else negatively change you.

This book proves the point that literature helps us to better understand ourselves. In *Bittersweet Sixteen*, Laura finally figured out who she truly was. At the beginning of the book she let her two rich "best friends" walk all over her. She did so many favors for them and she hardly ever realized what she was actually doing. In the end, Laura finally realized that they were just "using" her to help them plan their sweet sixteen birthday parties. Reading this book influences the readers to better understand themselves by teaching the readers to not let people control. By reading this book, the readers can learn that they should stick up for themselves and not let other people control them. Literature majorly helps people understand who they truly are and what is happening around them, especially while reading this book.

I would recommend this book to teenagers. I think that this book should be read by teenagers because it is a mature book that only relates to teenagers in high school. I think that anyone in high school would enjoy reading this book because it is very relatable to this particular age. It is a fun book to read because it is filled with drama and emotions, which is always interesting to read about. I think that it is interesting to read about drama because you never know what is going to happen next, so you just want to keep on reading.

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### **Ella says**

In this exciting novel about the glamor of the upper east side, we follow a scholarship student trying to navigate the birthday extravaganzas. My favorite part was hearing about Laura, the main character, making new outfits on her sewing machine. The climax hit me hard and felt personal and relatable. I was sitting on the edge of my seat the entire time and couldn't put it down. I wish there was a sequel!

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### **Donna R says**

I liked this book because it was a bit different than other books on the topic. There were some nice girls in this story and I appreciated that. Cute ending. A feel good book.

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### **Maryam\_a\_140a513 says**

Fashion, cliques, high school, and boys – your regular chick flick in hardback copy. If you have a real fascination with the drama centered around teenage girls, and not to mention, a real sucker for love in the big city, this is the book for you. However, if you're just looking for an interesting and thought-provoking read, you might be disappointed. Being so well versed with chick flicks and high school drama, I found this book to be highly predictable and extremely stereotypical. Therefore, the book seemed to have lacked originality as I felt I knew what was about to happen before even reading it. On the other hand, I did feel that the characters were diverse and had interesting backgrounds that were further explored, with excellent descriptive writing. You have your typical jock, the boy next door, the queen bee, the new blonde in town, the followers, and of course, the protagonist. In addition to that, I did also enjoy the language in which the book was written, as it is tremendously relatable if you are a teenage girl yourself. All in all, *Bittersweet Sixteen* is definitely deserving of a 3 star rating, at the highest. If it's on your reading list, it can wait.

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### **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Me for [TeensReadToo.com](http://TeensReadToo.com)

Fifteen-year old Laura Finnegan can't quite decide if she's blessed or cursed to be able to attend Tate Academy, the top private all-girls school in New York. Since her parents are both professors at NYU, they definitely can't afford the twenty-thousand dollar a year tuition, so she's there on a scholarship. Laura definitely appreciates the opportunity, but there are times that the over-the-top behavior of her fellow students drives her crazy. Laura's passion is design, and she's a whiz with a sewing machine. Thankfully, her group of closest friends--best friend Whitney, Ava, and Kaitlin--are totally impressed with her fashion sense.

Whitney Blake, Laura's greatest friend, also happens to be the most popular girl at Tate Academy--and one of the richest. They have the perfect type of friendship; Laura never takes advantage of her friend's unlimited spending limit, and Whitney gives her friend the things she'd otherwise never get, like hand-me-down fashion designer clothes, trips with her on family vacations, and a guaranteed spot on the A-list. Things get a little crazy, though, when Sophie Mitchum moves from California to New York.

Sophie and Whitney circle each other like sharks on that first day, both knowing that they hold a special position in Tate Academy's pyramid of popularity. Whitney has always been Queen Bee, and instantly feels threatened by Sophie's sudden intrusion. Sophie held the same title back in California, and is determined not to ruin her chances on popularity at this new school. What follows is a short period of wariness that leads to mutual respect. That is, until Whitney learns that Sophie has scheduled her sweet sixteen blowout party on her birthday. Seems the girls share the same day, and things will never be the same at Tate Academy.

As the girls decide that maybe the situation can be salvaged by holding joint birthday parties (which just happened to be Laura's idea), things go from bad to worse. Laura finds herself in the middle of the mother of all wars when Whitney and Sophie can't work out their differences. Suddenly, designer handbags are flying, students are being used as pawns, boys are in the middle of a tug-of-war, and no one is getting the short end of the stick more than Laura. Whitney, her best friend forever, is causing more pain than a trip to the dentist, and Sophie, her new friend, isn't helping.

BITTERSWEET SIXTEEN is a funny, interesting look into the world of money, power, and popularity of teen girls who have more credit cards than they know what to do with. Definitely an entertaining read, as Laura must find out what having real friends is all about.

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## Greta says

This book did not age well.

On page 136 I skipped to the end to make sure Jake and Laura ended up together, and then found a really fun line on the last page. Laura says she became her own person this year, and then mentions Jake in the next sentence. So she became her own person because of Jake, basically.

Orig. pub in 2006, and BOY does that show.

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## Nancy says

There are a lot of things about books that just really bug me. The first is when you have characters that don't undergo changes throughout the story. Second is when the plot is too scattered and/or boring. Third is when stories begin with: Hi! My name is INSERT NAME, AGE, and LOCATION. (If I wanted to read something like this, I might as well read someone's profile or a name-sticker that's start like that.) Fourth is when the character comes right out and tells you the message of the book and/or what they learned. There's plenty more, but at the present moment, I'm too lazy to report it.

*Bittersweet Sixteen* makes two of those mistakes: number three and four. Let me start with the name. Jumping into a story by directly saying the name of the main character (when written in first person) is just so unimaginative. There are hundreds of ways to introduce your character, and HI, MY NAME IS LAURA, is something that makes me roll my eyes and sigh in frustration. Come on, authors! You can do better than that! Anyone can!

On to number four. This book ended with the main character Laura talking about how she had changed. In fact, the exact words are "I had changed over the last two months. I had grown stronger and become my own person" (Karasyov 230). It just makes me really frustrated. I mean, if it was a good book and the plot was apparent, then I would know right away what kind of changes occurred. You don't need to tell me that directly. As a reader, I'm supposed to infer and conclude! Goodness. But . . . I can see what the authors were trying to do. Except, once again, be creative. Or, if that doesn't work, do the whole message thing towards the end, not at the LAST page. Even fables exceed this expectation, and it makes me wonder how their agent and the editors could've skipped these enormous mistakes.

I have to talk about Laura's voice. A few words on that: put it into diary format. Seriously. Laura is a decent character and she has a very distinguished voice but the way her voice is written annoyed me. She didn't seem real enough. If it was in diary-entries format, I would've liked her friend's conversation better and it would have made better sense. Even though I knew the authors had good language and grammar, the way they wrote it didn't seem to support that point. It just made them sound childish and too unrealistic.

The only good thing I have to say about the book is the subject: sweet sixteen parties. It's not original and a lot of authors had tried the concept but it was interesting at least. I stuck with it simply because I thought the book couldn't get any worse, but I was wrong about that too. Another waste.

