



## Dear Opl

*Shelley Sackier*

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## Dear Opl Shelley Sackier

After two years of hiding beneath a sugar-laden junk food diet meant to soothe the bitter loss of her dad, thirteen-year old Opl Oppenheimer is told she's gained so much weight she's pre-diabetic and now must start weighing far more than she ever bargained for.

There are three things that keep Opl busy during her eighth grade days: fighting the new “mock meat and healthy colon” cafeteria cooks, attempting to crush a celebrity chef’s reputation because he slings mud on any food that tastes good, and finding a pair of jeans that still fit. What she doesn’t count on is needing time to win back her best friend, illegally employing a penniless ex-rodeo clown, and solving the problems of teenagers who write in for advice on her blog. Finding room to fit everything in is proving as impossible as following her mom’s ridiculous diets. Only now, Opl has no choice. It’s do or die. How Opl determines what it is she's truly hungering for and how to fill herself and her world is the heart of this timely, contemporary novel.

## Dear Opl Details

Date : Published August 2015 by Sourcebooks

ISBN : 9781492608592

Author : Shelley Sackier

Format : Hardcover 170 pages

Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade, Young Adult, Realistic Fiction

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## From Reader Review Dear Opl for online ebook

### karmaforlifechick says

sitename] <http://www.karmaforlifechick.com> <http://www.karmaforlifechick.com/spot...> *Excerpt from Dear Opl*

First blog entry:

My name is Opl, I'm thirteen years old, and this is my blog. My mom wants it to be a food journal. A log of chow. But I can't see that being a good idea at all. Then it would just be a catalogue of crimes. My grandfather says I should use it to write about things that make me angry. He says it'll be more interesting than listing everything I eat. It's true. Anything would be more interesting than that. And because I know my mom will never read this, I might as well unbolt the floodgates.

Number one. No more Tylenol syrup. It's now pills. That sucks.

Number two. Kids who don't wash their hands after they go to the bathroom. I see it all the time and it's disgusting. Everything you touch in school has already been touched by somebody else who didn't wash their hands. It is the world's most super-gross thing. Except for seeing grown-ups kiss. That's grosser.

Number three. Getting in trouble for falling asleep in my boring history class. Pinching doesn't work. Wiggling gets me snapped at. And you can't listen to our teacher's voice. It's a soft, buzzy drone. Within thirty seconds, it feels like my brain is being sucked out of my skull. My eyes spin around to the back of my head just before my chin slides off my hand. Last week I had to walk around looking only to the left for two days because I wrenched a neck muscle.

Finally, I'd like to complain about our school's new lunch menu rule as of today. Last year my lunch was perfect. Monday through Friday at exactly 11:50, my grade went to the cafeteria. My plate held a double cheeseburger with ketchup, mustard, and extra mayo—pickle on the side. I also had cheese fries with extra cheese—except on Fridays, it was chili fries. And finally, I adored my jug of chocolate milk. I loved that lunch. I needed that lunch. And now someone has taken away the chocolate milk and replaced it with plain.

PLAIN!

I asked one of the lunch ladies if there was more in the back, but she just shook her white-netted hair at me.

“Well, where's the strawberry milk?”

She pressed her lips together.

“Did the milkman run out? Why are we short?” I wanted to bang my tray on the counter. This needed fixing. And fast.

Another woman leaned over the cash register and barked, “New state policy. No. Flavored. Milks.”

“What?” I actually thought my shoulders were going to fall down to where my elbows hung. I was that disappointed. I'd been hearing the annoying buzz about some schools around us making changes like this. But not my school. My school was fine the way it was.

Tomorrow I'll bring in a container of Hershey's syrup and store it in my locker until lunchtime. "Never mind," I told the lunch ladies. "Today I'll have a blue Gatorade."

I can think of a bunch of other stuff I'm all huffy about these days, but it's getting late. I'm not sure how I feel about this bloggy thing, mostly because Mom has high hopes pinned on its big ole donkey butt. It's no different than the rest of my silly diaries. Except now my bellyaching is electronic.

Later gator,

Opl

### ***Rafflecopter Giveaway***

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### ***About the Author***

**Shelley Sackier** is an author and blogger who writes about the everyday ordinary grand slams and gruesome snafus in completing the Herculean task of raising two healthy human beings. Ultimately she hopes to impart the necessary knowledge of how to balance their checkbooks and pay their taxes. Here greatest hope is to discover that parallel universes are a reality, and that somewhere she is living a life where her children have agreed to occasionally make eye contact with her. They live in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.

You can read more of her work, illustrated by Robin Gott, at [Peakperspective.com](http://Peakperspective.com)

### **Social Networking Links:**

Website: <http://peakperspective.com/tag/shelley-sackier/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/@ShelleySackier/>

This review was originally posted on Karma for Life!

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### **Rachel says**

I received this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Opal is a preteen girl struggling with her weight. She starts spelling her name "Opl" to shrink her name since she cannot seem to shrink her body. Opal uses food to mask her feelings. Her father died and her mother is

busy trying to start a new business. Her mother is concerned with Opal's weight, but in all the wrong ways. She buys her diet foods, and skinny jeans, leaves her not-so-encouraging notes in the pantry, and encourages her to start a blog about her journey. Even the school cafeteria is transforming their lunches into healthier options. Opal is not at all pleased and starts the blog. The snarkiness in her blog posts are hilarious. Her blog becomes an overnight success and Opal begins to gain a little self confidence. In the meantime, Opal upsets her best friend Summer because of her negativity toward Alfie Adam, the "nude chef" who is leading the charge towards the lunch changes. In an effort to improve her health and win back her best friend, Opal starts cooking and making healthier food choices. Her transformation is not only on the outside, but also on the inside, as she makes friends with a homeless man and offers him work in exchange for her food in order to help her mother with the new business. Opal's transformation eventually brings about change for her whole family. Her mother sees the error of her ways when dealing with Opal and it is all very touching. Hence, the tears.

I loved so much about this book. I love that it addresses food issues, emotional eating, and the hard transition to making healthier choices. Opal's attitude was exactly as you expect any person making these changes, but her snarkiness in it all made it entertaining. The book wasn't preachy but young people could learn a lot from Opal's journey. Opal's mother had the best of intentions, but it didn't come across that way to Opal. While I bring a mother's perspective to my reading, it was also very clear to see Opal's side as well. As my children get older, it will be important to remember how my words will affect them, good intentions or not.

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## Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

Opl (her mother wants her to lose weight, so trimming 25% of the letters from her name is a start) is angry at her mother for harping about her weight, as well as for being so busy with her library job and the new bookstore she is trying to start. When her mother suggests that Opl start a blog, she does, only to find that her best friend tells so many people that eventually there are almost 4,000 followers to the blog in just two months. Opl is sad that her father died of cancer, and is irritated a bit by her younger brother, who wants to wear only Halloween costumes meant for girls, and her grandfather, who has moved in with the family. She's angry at the school for changing the lunches and making them healthier, following the advice of a English television chef whom she at first detests, but then invites to her mother's store opening. There is also a homeless man who gets in Opl's way at first, but whom she hires to help fix up her mother's store. Opl does overcome some of her emotional issues and starts to realize that her mother is so concerned because Opl is pre-diabetic, and the family comes to a bit more of an understanding by the end of the book.

Strengths: This had some good moments, with the explanation of emotional eating, the portrayal of how different people handle grief without harping on it overly much, and the description of a healthier school cafeteria program. Books featuring disordered eating are always popular in the middle school.

Weaknesses: Students today don't read blogs, much less write them-- it's all about Instagram and Snapchat at this second in time. (Writing this in April to appear in August... maybe they are on to the next thing already!)

I have been blogging for 8 years and don't have 300 followers, so maybe I'm just bitter, but it seemed unrealistic, as did Opl employing the homeless man and giving him the key to her mother's store.

What I really think: I may end up buying this, but I wanted to slap Opl throughout most of the book. Hard. Whiny, nasty, unpleasant even to her friends, and not at all concerned about her weight in any kind of constructive way... wow. No, eating properly isn't necessarily fun, and yes, Oreos are much tastier than the high fiber protein cereal I eat for breakfast that my daughters say looks like hamster food, but staying thin and healthy helps prevent all manner of ill health, so is worth the effort. Fat shaming is rude, but I would have liked this to be a more helpful book.

## Lindsey says

Oh man, I had so many problems with this book that I'm honestly having trouble deciding where to start. I can't recall a time in recent memory when I've had a more visceral reaction to a book than I did to this one. I'll start with the obvious, I guess, which was the poor character development. For starters, there is no way that the child narrating this novel was 13. Nine or ten, maybe, but not 13. I was stunned to find out that Ms. Sackier actually has children, and that those children are close in age to this narrator, because her characterization of kids that age is so wildly inaccurate that I wondered if she had ever even met a 13-year-old girl. I did give her somewhat of a pass on that issue, though, because this book is clearly meant for middle aged readers and not young adults. However, it rankled and I spent most of the book rolling my eyes at the idiot who has reached the age of 13 without knowing what uncooked rice looks like or expecting a world famous chef from a different country to show up to the grand opening of her mother's bookstore. (Unrelated side note, people keep referring to Opal and her peers as being "middle schoolers" but that is not correct. They are junior high students. Middle school is typically fourth through sixth grade. It's a small thing but growing up in a family of educators makes me nit-picky about details.)

The issue that had me seeing red was all the lip service paid to positive body image in the marketing. I am overweight and have been most of my life. I have also been an athlete most of my life. Despite the fact that I got more exercise than most kids my age I was always chubby. I also tend to develop muscle very easily. Add to that the fact that I'm 4'11" and you get the picture. Basically, my body is different. All of our bodies are different. We burn calories differently, we take on and carry weight differently, some of us build muscle quickly, some of us can't burn fat quickly. It took me a long time to accept that my body would never look a certain way, and it took me a long time to realize that it was okay that I looked different. I've put on more weight as I've gotten older thanks to a chronic illness that requires high-dose long-term steroids. I also have lung damage and can't exercise the way I'd like. But I eat well. I cook. I eat fruits and vegetables and good fats and sugar and dairy. I move when I can. Except for my chronic illness my body is a perfect specimen of health. I should know because my doctor runs various tests every few weeks to make sure things are working the way they are supposed to. But you would never know the state of my internal health from looking at my outside. And that is what the body positivity movement is all about. My problem in the context of this book is that, while the author tries to make the point that the concern is about Opal's health (because she's eating too much sugar and not exercising), the action of the story contradicts that. It isn't just about her health. It's about whether her physical appearance conforms with what the author believes to be the outward manifestation of "healthy." Opal is only allowed to really start feeling confidence in herself once she can, in her words, touch her sides and "feel bones." The message that sends is that it's more about her outward appearance than her health.

This book isn't a novel. It's a manifesto. I despise when an author disguises a preachy philosophy as fiction. People do often make poor choices when eating (and feeding their children), and most families would certainly benefit from cooking with fresh ingredients rather than having frozen dinners every night. But there's nothing wrong with sugar in moderation. There's nothing wrong with pizza in moderation. And while the author is so busy making the point that only vegetables fresh from your garden will do, she's missing the real problem in her story. Opal is not a kid who has had one too many Twinkies and is in need of fat camp. Opal is a kid who has been through a traumatic loss and is developing an eating disorder as a result. The kid needs counseling (as does her clearly traumatized little brother), not a diet. There are benefits in healthy eating and exercise but there are some things that cannot be cured in that way. I'm a child welfare attorney, and if one of my kids was acting the way these two were after a traumatic loss they would be in counseling immediately.

Body image and the body positivity movement are a very important part of my life. It's something I concern myself with daily, something I read about daily, and something I deal with daily. Health is important to me. So is making sure that women understand that internal health does not look the same on everyone. Toss in the fact that child welfare is my business and that I see a lot of traumatized children and you have a lethal combination when it comes to a book like this. I'm sure I'm being harder on it than I would be if those things weren't a big part of my life but if you're going to breach the subject make sure you do it accurately. In the end it comes down to execution. There are so many positive messages this author could have sent but she missed the mark all the way around.

I received an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Dana says**

This is a cute story about 13 year old Opal, who eats too much sweets while mourning her father who passed away two years ago. When she is told that she is pre-diabetic and will have to change her diet, she is forced to change her eating habits. Inspired by her mother's suggestion to start a blog, Opal becomes "Dear Opl", and blogs about her experiences in going to Yoga classes and changing her diet with the help of her G-pa and a British foodie who has a blog and cook books about healthy eating. Her blog is funny and popular and Opal makes friends and helps several people and loses some weight along the way. I received this book free to review from Netgalley.

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### **Yapha says**

As someone who has struggled with my weight all my life, starting at around the same time as Opal, I found her transformation not particularly realistic. I realize that her weight gain had more to do with what was happening in her family than with genetics, but the solution didn't ring true for me. I also didn't like the idea of her being told to air her personal problems on a blog. It goes against most of the Internet safety we teach middle schoolers today. I enjoyed her snarky commentary throughout, however.

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### **Diane says**

"I hope you'll learn to be an open book. All your insides is what truly matters. That's where the stories wait. In the underneath."

Opal misses her father terribly, not that she would tell anyone. Not only was he a wonderful man, but when he was around, his mother was very different. Now, the only thing that her mother seems to see about Opal is that she needs to lose weight. Does she even care how Opal feels? "That's how I felt: easy to break on the outside, heavy and dark on the inside." Does she understand that Opal doesn't eat because she's hungry. "Not only did I gulp down a lot of food, but I swallowed stuff I wanted to say." Can't she see that food is a substitute for Opal? "This was not just a food, it was a feeling." No, she only sees that Opal has gained weight.

The one thing that her mother does suggest that Opal decides to do is to start a blog. Her mother wants her to blog about the food she's eating, but Opal uses it to vent some of her feelings that she can't get rid of any other way. And her best friend, Summer, thinks it's brilliant and passes the URL along to her address book.

Does Opal want to be heard? It seems like the more weight she has gained, the less talking she wants to do. But this is different. She's anonymous and it does seem to make her feel better.

Meanwhile, at school, things in the cafeteria are changing, thanks to some nut named Alfie Adams. Summer thinks he's fab and says he's a big deal in England, having changed how English schools run their cafeterias. But Opal thinks he's a nut job and writes a scathing post about him on her blog. Summer is angry at her judgmental behavior and stops hanging out with Opal. So, as an apology, Opal begins cooking recipes from Adams' cookbook and things in her life start to turn around. And it's not just Opal's life that begins to improve. Ollie, her younger brother, is going through a phase where he wears a different costume every day - usually one traditionally for girls: a nurse, Hermione, a witch, etc. All he'll say is it's for Mom. Opal's mother is so tired because she's trying to open a bookstore and can't afford help. When Opal and G'pa start making healthy meals, it seems to bring the family together as they haven't been for months.

Opal really blossoms, thinking more about others and not so much about herself and her problems. She's even getting a bit of a following on her blog, which becomes more of an advice column. Though not everything is perfect in her life, she has started on the path to a healthier and happier life. The book has great voice! Opal is a character that middle school girls should get to know. She's funny and flawed. Summer is a strong friend who isn't afraid to tell Opal the truth. "You told me some things that look perfect on the outside could turn out nasty on the inside. Isn't it the same for people?" The healthy approach to food is a good message that young girls need to hear and the author does it without sounding preachy. A solid addition to the collection.

Themes: family, friendship, healthy choices, grief and healing

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## Leah says

Dear Opl is one of those books that's been sitting on my Kindle for ages. Absolutely ages. I don't know what possessed me to finally read it - the fact I am once again on a weight loss journey that more often than not resembles a roller-coaster? Because I wanted a real book about what it's like to be fat, without magically losing weight? Whatever it was, I decided to give Dear Opl a read, and I just completely related to Opl like I haven't related to a character in a while. It's a bit odd to me that I relate to a thirteen-year-old, but finding fat girls in books is scarce. There's *Dumplin'* by Julie Murphy (which I actually didn't like as much as I wanted to). But they're hard to come by. Opl, however, is me. Emotional eating? Check. Lying about what you've ate? Check. Eating for eating's sake? CHECK.

What I liked about Opl is that she doesn't necessarily hate herself because she's fat (or bigger) - it's her mom and her doctor and everyone trying to make her fit into "skinny jeans" but Opl isn't unhappy about her weight. I liked that she made the decision to try and eat better, for her health. But she slipped up. And that happens. You can't just click your fingers and never again crave a chocolate bar. You can't think you'll never fall off the wagon, because you do and I just, I got it. I may be double Opl's age but I knew exactly how she was feeling - it's so, so hard to lose weight. There isn't a fairy godmother standing in the background, with a wand. It doesn't just melt away, despite what magazines and celebrities would like you to think. And I loved her idea of using her blog to keep herself occupied, instead of having it as a food diary, she used it to just vent, instead of eating her feelings.

Probably the only thing that bummed me out is that Opl's grief (or any of the family's grief, actually) isn't dealt with. Opl mentions a few times she never used to be big, until her dad died. And I kinda felt like there needed to be a discussion with the whole family about how it had effected them - Opl's eating, Ollie's dressing up in costumes, Opl's mom punishing herself with work and opening her book store. I felt like it

was an elephant in the room that needed dealing with. But otherwise I really enjoyed the book and I soon found myself halfway through and I didn't want to put it down. This was such a sweet, spot-on read. I've never related more to a character, and I just wanted to squish Opl in a hug.

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### **Claire says**

Dear Opl is an ambitious novel narrated by angry thirteen year old Opal who is struggling.

Dad has left, Mom is overworked, younger brother Ollie wears women's costumes every- single- day, (super creative ones) G'pa has moved in to help and is slowly crafting his place in the household.

What Opl describes is a family in pain. Dad did not leave, he died. Opal's snarky humor and compulsive chocolate habit is her way of stuffing grief and loss out of sight and out of mind. Ollie's dress up is not gender bending, it is a carefully crafted strategy for Mom. G'pa watches all this and waits for the best moment to carefully slip in a bit of his well-earned wisdom.

Even though Mom is swamped she is doing her best to nudge Opal from sweats into skinny jeans. She benignly ignores Ollie's efforts. When Opl's eating sends her blood sugar perilously close to a diabetic diagnosis, changes are out of Opl's hands. At the same time Opl's snark finally goes over the top and alienates her best and only friend. Alone and hungry Opl has time and space to make the changes she needs to inside and out.

Addressing pathetic American fast food/junk food habits, bullying, coming to terms with loss, family dynamic, the dinner table, self-image, snap judgements, surface judgements, friendship, homeless vets, yoga, and what bookstores bring to a community Shelley Sackier and her awesome editors have written a story to please kids and adults.

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### **Jean Johnson says**

I didn't expect to like this book as much as I did. I think it's completely common for parents to not realize how bad packaged food is for their kids. Just because the packaging says its nutritious doesn't mean it is. Opals voice is fantastic, she's hilarious and really doesn't want to change but finally realizes it will make her feel better...and it does! So good!!

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### **Ariel Hudnall says**

A great slice of life tale for MG and beyond It's been a while since I've devoured a book as sweet and sticky as Dear Opl. Shelley Sackier's breakout novel is charming and sophisticated, written to be both entertaining and educational.

Opal is thirteen years old, and life simply isn't going well for her. Her father has passed away from cancer, her younger brother is dressing up in girls clothing, and her mother is simply... absent. With nothing but sugar to offer sweetness in her life, Opal fills the holes in her heart with Hershey's, bonbons, and bright jellybeans. Of course, gorging herself on sweets isn't without its consequences: Opal has gained some weight – a lot of weight, actually – and now, the only thing people seem to see when they look at her is her double

chins.

I found this book an absolute pleasure. Opal is a witty, flawed main character with plenty of depth. I felt the narrative was genuine, without contrived reactions or conflicts meant to up the stakes artificially (minus one of the events at the end of the book, which felt a bit underplayed, but I think for the audience this book is meant for, it won't be an issue). I loved G-Pa, and Ollie, and Opal's friend, Summer. The book takes real issues, offers its readers opportunities to think about obesity, and the solutions to that... but most of all, its undercurrent of not being fearful of change is what makes Dear Opl a real gem. My only gripes are really not applicable to a book for this age group, but they include a feeling that some character arcs were somewhat rushed to completion, and that I would have liked to have had a lot more time with each of the different elements of the book. To that end, the book is left rather open, so maybe we'll have a chance to see Opal and her friends in another book soon!

I'd recommend this book to any middle grade or young adult reader looking for a book with lots of laughs, and not laden with romance. And, if you're not satisfied with only the humor inside the book, I suggest checking out [peakperspective.com](http://peakperspective.com), the blog home of Shelley Sackier.

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### **Ambri Refer says**

Funny, sweet, and touching are the three words I'd use to describe this gem. From reconciling friendships to dealing with grief, to learning how to cook Opal deals with the hardships of life with humor and an interest in learning. On the surface she appears to be self absorbed, but we find a different story when she strikes up a relationship with a man that needs work. Definitely recommend to everyone!

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### **Emily says**

{Given as an e-ARC via Netgalley} See the review on my blog here: <http://forthebookish.com/dear-opl-by-...>

Dear Opl completely knocked my socks off. The book is, as Shelley Sackier describes, "a humorous look at grief, obesity, and diabetes." It really is exactly that. I was pleasantly surprised at Opl's witty, sarcastic humor on some heavy topics. The book addressed many things, yet kept me laughing out loud!

There were two things that bothered me about the book, so I'll start with those, so that we can end on a good note. =)

1: In the beginning of the book, Opl really bothered me. She showed no interest in shedding her weight, even when she got the news that she was pre-diabetic, and was completely rude to her one good friend. While she was hilarious, and I did love the humorous insight to the issues the book addresses (grief, obesity, friendship, diabetes), at times her humor came off as sarcastic and whiny. She could also be ignorant, and there were parts of the book that made her sound dumb.

2: Opl's little brother, Ollie, confused me. Opl doesn't completely pay attention to her brother, but does mention the fact that he's always dressed up in some costume or another: Lady Gaga, Mrs. Clause, ER nurse. This wasn't explained at all, and I wasn't sure to make of it since it didn't seem to have to do with the story at all. At the end of the book, this is explained, and it made perfect sense. But for most of the book, Ollie sort of

had me scratching my head. He was just sort of there, but unexplained.

Not too many low points, but they did turn me off. Now, let's move onto the pro's!

1: Just like another book I've recently read, Finding Ruby Starling, I loved Dear Opl's positive view of the internet. It was neat, reading about a thirteen-year-old girl who blogs, in a book! (Of course, I could relate to Opl on that note!) Opl's friends and family encouraged her to blog, and I loved seeing how blogging became an outlet to Opl, a safe place where she could share her thoughts and get feedback from others.

2: Opl craves food. All the time. So much, this book is one of the few that's made me SERIOUSLY HUNGRY! I loved the character development in Dear Opl, and Opl's food cravings played a big role in that. As she decides to eat healthier and become more active, this slowly fades away, yet the focus on what Opl is really hungering is perfectly written and addressed, and I loved that.

3: Alfie Adam. Mr. Adam is the British chef determined to change the way people eat, one country at a time. (He plays a real-life Jamie Oliver in the book.) Opl's opinions on "The Grunch" (Grinch + Lunch) had me rolling my eyes and laughing all at once. I remember watching Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution with my family when it was on TV. Watching some of the kids in the schools absolutely refuse to try any new healthy food, even after seeing how the junk food they eat is processed, had me dropping my jaw - completely grossed out! I couldn't even begin to understand those kids. (My family and I can go on sugar spikes, but for the most part, our pantry is full of organic cereals and whatnot.) So now I got to read from the perspective of one! I loved it.

4: So many topics, all in one book. Just to name a few: Obesity. Diabetes. (Health, in general.) Loss. Grief. Seventh-grade friendships. Bullies. Acceptance. Family. And a lot more. They all touched on each other, and everything wrapped up to blend one story together. No loose threads were left hanging.

All-in-all, Dear Opl was a fantastic read, and I think I'll buy the book once it comes out, since I enjoyed it so much!

3 stars! (A few main flaws, but overall enjoyable!)

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## Kimberly says

Dear Opl is such a delightful book. Opal is 13 and her life has not been super, as of late. She is dealing with the death of her father, a mother who is not on the scene and so much more, so she turns to sweets. It doesn't matter the type of candy, she turns to it. This, of course, means that she gains weight. What happens next will help any middle-school age teen see options to dealing with difficulty issues.

The characters in this book are so colorful and are made to appeal to the audience. I could see many of the students I taught of this age enjoying this book immensely.

I was given this book by NetGalley and SOURCEBOOKS Jabberwocky in exchange for my honest review.

## Gaele says

Opal is 13, with several challenges in her life: her father 'went away' two years ago, she can't wear skinny jeans, her brother is forever dressing up in women's clothes and her grandfather has moved in, making a crowded space even more so. Add to that, Opal's favorite snack, chocolate, may just be the next forbidden item as she just got back from the doctor's office with a warning about being pre-diabetic, and a list of foods and changes she needs to make. Life just isn't fair.

Deeper in, we see Opal dealing with the struggles of making healthy choices and her retreat to emotional eating to stuff down her grief. For her father isn't 'away', he died, and she's at a loss of how to grieve. While her mother shows some wonderful characteristics: supportive as to food choices available in the house, benignly allowing her brother to express himself in less than traditional ways, suggesting that Opal use a blog to get her feelings out and sort through them, her mother's fear for her daughter is shown in words and comments that are harsh and sharp, snarky moments that shame Opal, even though it is very clear that her intentions are to help.

Dear Opl is born, and Opal finds a small following with people who are looking to her for advice and help, even as her best friend and she have some serious issues. Struggling with change, growing up, learning to make choices that are healthy and even recognizing the underlying issues behind her own emotional eating choices are highlights of this story. Solidly presenting the issues from Opal's perspective, and seeing the changes in her behavior and personality as the changes she needs to make become choices for her healthier and happier life, rather than a punishment.

A nice mix of issues presented in a way that is engaging and not preachy, with messages that will linger long after the last page is read.

I received an eArc copy of the title from the publisher via NetGalley for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

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