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Laura Bynum

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Harper Adams was six years old in 2012 when an act of viral terrorism wiped out one-half of the country's population. Out of the ashes rose a new government, the Confederation of the Willing, dedicated to maintaining order at any cost. The populace is controlled via government-sanctioned sex and drugs, a brutal police force known as the Blue Coats, and a device called the slate, a mandatory implant that monitors every word a person speaks. To utter a Red-Listed, forbidden word is to risk physical punishment or even death.

But there are those who resist. Guided by the fabled "Book of Noah," they are determined to shake the people from their apathy and ignorance, and are prepared to start a war in the name of freedom. The newest member of this resistance is Harper -- a woman driven by memories of a daughter lost, a daughter whose very name was erased by the Red List. And she possesses a power that could make her the underground warriors' ultimate weapon -- or the instrument of their destruction.

In the tradition of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Laura Bynum has written an astonishing debut novel about a chilling, all-too-plausible future in which speech is a weapon and security comes at the highest price of all.

Veracity Details

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Author : Laura Bynum

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From Reader Review Veracity for online ebook

Taracuda says

I did have to laugh that in many ways, this book, read like a liberal's version of Anthem. The forbidden words. The lost knowledge. The dysopian society. The difference is that instead of losing themselves to a communist society, the characters have been swept up by a totalitarian regime by giving up their liberties for protection from a pandemic.

Still, I really loved the characters and watching Harper come to grips with the difference between what seems and what really is.

I did have to suspend my disbelief at times, and I would have actually her to have longer to get her head around all the changes. I would also have liked her to spend more time with Gage before deciding that she loves him; the cynic in me kept thinking she loved what he represented, but hardly knew the man himself. But at the same time, I don't think the book would have been as satisfying if they hadn't fallen for each other.

As with many distopian novels, it reads as something of a warning, especially with how closely it mirrors some of the debates and current events of the early 21st century. It managed not to be heavy-handed with the metaphor, fortunately.

Debbie says

So far I've been a big fan of most of the dystopian books I have read but for me this one was just ok. I can't really put my finger on why. It wasn't bad but it just never picked up. The characters were a little bland to me. We hardly get to see John Gage and Harper together which was a disappointment for me. Probably the most memorable characters were one of the "villains" and Harper's trainer. Other than that what did grab me was when we find out the origin of the pandemic. I have to admit that was not something I was expecting. The one negative for me in this book is it jumps back and forth between the past and present too much. It wouldn't be so bad if one chapter were say 2045 and one 2040 but it would go from something like July 2045 to August 2045 to July 15, 2045. So I found myself having to flip back and forth a lot to try and figure out the time line. Other than that I would rate this as a mediocre dystopian book. There are a lot of other ones I would prefer but if you are lacking in dystopia reading materials you could add this to the pile.

Sarah Sammis says

Veracity takes place in the near future in a dystopian society that becomes frighteningly familiar as the novel progresses. Science fiction is built on a solid foundation of social commentary and the dystopian subgenre holds true to that tradition. By taking the worst pieces of modern society to extremes a novel can provoke discussion on those very flaws. It's not so much about how plausible is the imagined future as how much of ourselves can we see reflected in this society?

The first person heroine, Harper Williams was born the same year my own daughter was. She is just barely old enough to remember life before the Pandemic. At a time when the human mind was opening up to psychic powers (as Harper has), the population was dying off, leaving behind a shattered society that is forced to control the survivors. They do so with an implanted device called a slate.

The novel is told in chunks of time told out of order. It starts in media res with Harper choosing to abandon society and break her slate at the risk of death or worse. It then goes back to different times in Harper's life to explain how she got to where she did. As the present day (2045) plot gets into gear, I wish the flashbacks would stop but they don't completely. Please give the book more than 50 pages. It's worth the initial effort.

A totalitarian society is only as strong as its propaganda machine. Veracity is about getting to the truth behind the recorded history. Veracity is also much more but I don't want to spoil it for you.

You will probably like Veracity if you like:

- * 1984 by George Orwell
 - * Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood
 - * The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
 - * The Postman by David Brin
-

Amanda Makepeace says

Veracity is a chilling, superbly written novel set in a near future America that's lost its freedom of speech. Thousands of words have been red listed--speaking them could sentence you to things far worse than death.

Why chilling? There are a few references in the book to terrorism and civil rights that echo circumstances in the United States right now. Laura Bynum took these realities of life since 9/11 and let them run loose. It's the tug in the back of the mind, the whisper that asks, could this really happen, that makes this a brilliant book. I will be thinking about this story and its characters for weeks to come.

Without giving anything away, I want to add that mothers will experience this book on a different level. Only another mother will understand, because once you have a child I believe the wiring in your brain changes. Something that is dormant your entire life is turned on once your child comes into the world. The main character, Harper Adams, is a mother, and it's this fact that drives the choices she makes.

Veracity isn't a light read. It doesn't have supernatural beings nor the type of humor and action that leaves you reeling with a smile on your face, or maybe a blush. It has something more, it has a soul, it will fill you up, expand your mind and make you a better person.

That's not the way it doesn't have a few OMG! moments.

Kristi (Books and Needlepoint) says

Let me start by saying I loved this book! I read it very quickly and put all other books aside while I was reading this one. (And if you read my blog you will see that I tend to read more than one book at a time. . .) The story was told by Harper and it went back and forth from the 2020's to the present - 2045. The world as we know it is gone. It was wiped out by a Pandemic when Harper was six and she was taken from her parents and placed with a new set. She was told that her parents did not survive. It was at this age that she had her slate put in. The slate recorded everything that she said, did, where she went and kept her from saying any red listed words. All books were destroyed, as well as art. -- Can you imagine living in a world with books?? I love the sentence on the cover of the book - The only thing more dangerous than the spoken word is silence.

From even before the Pandemic Harper knew that she had "gifts". She could see people's auras, sometimes able to tell what they were thinking/feeling based on these colors. She could also travel outside her body. As a senior she is chosen to be a part of the Monitor program -- even though she does what she can to stay out of it. She is groomed over the years to become the Alpha Sentient. From what I can gather, she was over all the Monitors and made the call on whether a red-listed word was used on purpose. (For example - if a baby who was just learning to talk actually said a word when they were babbling. . .) The Blue Coats would carry out the punishment to those who used these words - and these punishments were always harsh.

I sort of felt that Harper was just wandering through life, doing what she was told, but not actually taking control -- until she decides to make a break and leave for the Underground - to try to win back rights, some of which she did not even know existed. Even there she did not have the confidence in herself to think that she could do what it was required of her in order for the Resistance to win. For her daughter though, she knew she had to try.

I was really invested in this character very early on. I cannot tell you why other than she seemed like someone that I would like to know. She had a good heart, even with being able to see other's auras and tried to help when she could.

Brian says

Veracity is a book that should've narrowed its scope. I need to say that first, but before I say anything negative, let me tell you about all the positives.

First, the setting is fantastic. It's another dystopian future (this time the former United States) after a Pandemic that left the Confederation and President in charge. The main means of control comes from the chips implanted in everyone that will electrocute and immediately inform the authorities (Blue Coats) if the person speaks a Red Listed word like "rebellion" or "freedom" and so forth.

The nature of controlling language to control the populace is the central idea of this book and in that regard it works remarkably well. The protagonist, Harper, is simply ignorant of so many words because she's never heard them before. Her learning all these banned words and their meanings is a great way of showing her growth.

Her ability to "sense" people's feelings as a visual spectrum of colors is also a really cool idea, albeit one that I thought was initially superfluous at the beginning. Luckily this is more fleshed out and relative to the plot as I thought I would've preferred it given its own book when I first read about it.

The only real problem I had with the book is that it crammed in unnecessary details that hurt the story on the whole. The two most glaring ones (spoilers) were the "love story" and the traitor. For the former, there is absolutely no chemistry between Harper and Gage. Other than the fact that he is a male character her age...they have nothing in common. This is especially glaring given how many times Harper's mentioned that the Confederation isn't interested in banning all forms of sex, only love. Not that I think she needed a female love interest, but it seemed weird to have such an unnecessary male one if you're going to harp on how homosexual love is taboo but the sex isn't.

Perhaps it was meant to be a set up for a future book, but everything wraps up so tidy at the end, it's a wonder there was need for a rebellion at all. As I'm going along, I'm remembering more things I had issues with but I'll go in order.

The traitor was a waste of space. The identity of the traitor was immediately obvious to anyone. If Harper as the narrator is going into detail about this one character who didn't want to be there keeps acting suspicious...and then is surprised to find out that he/she was the traitor? That's just dumb. This subplot didn't really do anything than waste space and make Harper seem really idiotic. It'd be one thing if a trustworthy (seemingly) character turned out to be a turncoat, but to make the obvious choice for a traitor the traitor? It's pointless.

Another superfluous addition was Harper losing her sense powers for no reason only to magically gain them back in time to fulfill her goal. There was no sense of tension about this because you knew she'd get them back just in the nick of time. It would've been better to show her struggling as she had been already without the unnecessary (tired of that word yet?) addition of her losing her powers for a time.

Also as I said, the book ends very abruptly. After some fighting...the war is over. Now a quick revolution is interesting, but after all the hype that went into setting it up, it seems...fake. I realize Harper was needed to deactivate the main chip controller device, but the reason why Big Brother in 1984 was so menacing was because it was everywhere and undefeatable.

Don't get me wrong; by no means do I desire all dystopian settings to remain bleak and hopeless. I love the triumph and the restoration of freedom. I just like it to be earned, or at least, show some of what the world is like now. There was tons of talk underground of who would take what position, **SHOW THAT**.

The ending with Veracity was obvious and a nice bookend, but it would've been better to show the world, rather than more of Gage's forced romanticism.

2/3s of this book is fantastic. The setting and the concept are great; it just falls apart near the end with mounted weight of unwarranted and unnecessary additions that only fill up a page quota without adding anything to a good story.

Amanda says

Very interesting and scarily realistic premise for a dystopian novel. You can certainly draw parallels to today's society, as we grow increasingly politically correct and, at times, allow the media to "scare" us into believing something. The back of the book contained "Topics of Interest", one of which was security vs. freedom, which is more important, and how would the loss of either one affect us. I think that's the core issue of "Veracity" and something we struggle with today.

My main issue with the book was the skipping back & forth in time, especially in the first half of the book. Usually, I don't mind that sort of thing and I can keep up, but for some reason, I kept getting lost with this one. I had to go back and re-read to figure out where exactly I was in the timeline of things. Also, I found some sections too descriptive and wordy (ironic, considering this book) yet there were characters or situations that I felt weren't fleshed out enough.

Overall, a decent read, especially if you're a fan of dystopian books.

Wendy Hines says

Veracity is set in the future, after the Pandemic has wiped out three fourths of mankind. It's kind of scary

thinking the bird flu and many others has killed so many. Democracy as we know it is gone. Instead, a new form of government is in place, one that has metal slates in-bedded in everyone's neck. The slate tells the government where you are and what you say. If you say one of the red listed words, you are punished swiftly. Either by current through your neck, or more often than not, death.

Harper Adams is a Sentient Monitor; she has some ESP capabilities that the government uses to their advantage. She works hard and swiftly rises within the system to a higher rank than most. She monitors the punishments, making notes if the punishment justifies the crime. But when her best friend is killed, Harper opens her eyes.

The Book of Noah is only referred to. A book that the confederacy swears to the public is just a legend. It doesn't exist. But there are rebels out there who swear it does and want to lead a rebellion against the confederacy. Harper will have to break free of her slate in order to join them. When one morning one of the new red listed words is Harper's daughter's name, she moves into action. But the journey to freedom will come at a cost.

Veracity is a phenomenal read set in the time of 2045. It's chilling, scary, and an absolute page turner. The suspense builds through-out until the novel leaving you breathless. Harper is a fantastic character who learns and grows stronger as the story develops. A great debut novel!

Jill says

I received Veracity as part of Pocket Books Blog Tours. At first I was a bit unsure about the book because I generally shy away from science fiction, but I really enjoyed this novel. It grabbed me right from the beginning and kept me wanting to read more up until the end. It may have appealed to me more because Harper, the main character, was a woman. I think some of the science fiction I have read in the past has had male main characters and I've had a more difficult time getting into them. The book reminded me a bit of The Hunger Games and Catching Fire because the future that is portrayed is so controlled by the government. When I first started the novel the book it reminded me of was The Host by Stephanie Meyer, because of references to the future and a resistance movement.

It is hard to imagine a world without the freedoms that we enjoy today and the arts that we are accustomed to. Starting with the Pandemic in 2012 the government, for the protection of it's citizens, starts monitoring all people with an electronic slate in their necks that records everything that is said by that person. Once again for the "protection" of all words are made Red Listed on a regular basis which means that to speak them will cause the person to be shocked by their slate and may lead to further punishment. Over the course of more than three decades thousands of words are lost as well as art, music, books and entertainment. There is one TV channel that just airs government news, no music, no books except how to manuals, no paper for writing, no movies. For entertainment there are bars and there are government sanctioned prostitutes. People do not choose their careers, the government places them where they believe they will do best. The police force, The Blue Coats, enforce very harsh and cruel punishments for offenses and there are no judges or juries. Worse still, since it has been this way for more than 30 years and many of the original population were killed off during the Pandemic, most people do not have any idea of what they are really missing.

Harper has special skills, she can see auras and travel without her body. She can see inside people and tell if they are sick, know their emotions from their colors and can sense answers to questions posed to them. She is a Monitor and is charged with watching files of people who use red listed words or get into other types of trouble with the government. She is recruited by the resistance to work with them to take down the current government.

Seeing all these people go through to fight for their freedom brought to mind some of my own questions about our current freedom and how much people in general may be taking it for granted. The book got me thinking and made this alternate reality very realistic and believable. I think Laura Bynum did a great job with this novel and I hope to see more books written by her in the future. I am very glad I had the chance to review this novel because on my own I am not sure that I would have come across this one.

David says

Laura Bynum's Veracity was disappointing - I picked it up because of Elizabeth Moon's nice blurb, but it did not justify the expectations. The book reads like a cross between a realistic science fiction story and an allegory - imagine Michael Crichton writing A Handmaid's Tale or 1984, and you're in the right ballpark.

Sadly, Bynum is too reliant on taking the paths others have tread before her in this regard - the totalitarianism depicted is too precise: Orwell and Atwood leave the actual mechanism of action nebulous, and that helps their works remain fresh. Bynum posits a recording device implanted in every person such that all of their words and deeds are recorded, which is sufficiently powerful that it can prevent certain words from being spoken.

The problem is that she starts with this interesting idea as an enabling premise for a totalitarian state, but doesn't actually go far enough with the implications. As an example, it's easy using today's technology to cause muscles to seize up using a simple electric current. So if their technology is so advanced that it can pre-censor words, why would a person be able to leave the permitted areas? Why wouldn't the (presumably) continually-updated location technology just make the person's legs freeze up? The vast quantity of information logged from each individual would swamp any recording technology. This is obvious to anyone who's ever worked with firewall or network management systems - the volume of telemetry data generated is monumental, and those are by systems which are vastly lower resolution than the human brain. I'd have an easier time believing an implant which was autonomous and would alert authorities when it detected than one which is logging everything.

So in short, not recommended.

Stacy says

Hmmm... if it weren't for the writing style this book could have been way better. The premise is very interesting, especially from someone who loves to read. It's a post-apocalyptic book where "Big Brother" dictates what can be said and how to live. The characters are pretty likeable. The writing style is confusing though. The author jumps around a timeline that spans from 2012 to 2045. If she even just jumped to different years I could handle it but one chapter would take place in May 2045 and the next in August 2045 and then back again. Also, the prose can be hard to follow. I frequently found myself rereading sections because I wasn't sure what the author was saying. I am not a mind reader personally and can't always read between the lines when a character is vague. I wasn't disappointed when it ended. Speaking of the ending... it was predictable. Very few surprises in this book. I think this was this author's first novel. I probably wouldn't read another of hers.

Rose says

I feel like this would have been a stronger dystopian novel if it weren't for the special powers - telepathy, seeing auras, etc. That takes it a bit too far out of the realm of believability that is so crucial for a successful dystopia. Maybe the plot wouldn't have worked without it, I didn't read far enough to know for sure.

Benjamin Thomas says

I've unintentionally encountered quite a few post-apocalyptic fiction experiences this year. Perhaps it's due to all the buzz surrounding the 2012/Mayan calendar thing but certainly not all of it. I've read "1984", "A Canticle for Liebowitz", "I am Legend" and "Fahrenheit 451" this year as well as watching the complete "Jeremiah" TV series. I've always been drawn to such work and perhaps it isn't all that surprising that "Veracity", by Laura Bynum also caught my eye.

The book has an intriguing premise: much of the population of the US has been wiped out by a pandemic virus in 2012 and now in 2045, the survivors of that experience live in an extreme government-controlled society, for the citizen's own protection. The protagonist, Harper Adams has a gift in that she can see people's auras and know what they are feeling, including if they are telling the truth or not. She is recruited by a resistance force, organized by people who remember the way things were prior to the pandemic and want to bring back freedoms, democracy, etc. A central theme of the book involves the "Red List", a list of words that are not allowed to be used any more, thus suppressing the population.

This book was OK, but just OK. I liked the theme that language has power and I liked the way that was resolved through the use of "The Book of Noah". The author uses first person present tense, and also skips around in her timeline quite a bit during the first half of the book. That can work well in the hands of an experienced writer but here it seems to make the whole work a bit snobbish, as if the author was trying to make it be more literary. The characters were not well developed, at least not enough so that the reader can grow to really care what happens to them. I also found the later half of the book, the part about the resistance's efforts to take back the government to be hugely simplified. The battle tactics just weren't believable, almost as if there were large parts of the narrative missing. Unfortunately, novels like this will inevitably be compared to 1984 and similar works...certainly a difficult standard to achieve.

Mallory says

I gave this 3 stars though for the most part it felt like 2-2.5. There's a load of timely content in here, but it felt full of incomplete ideas, like it was trying to do too much, and left me with more questions than answers.

Harper Adams is a high-ranking government Monitor in what used to be the United States of America. When we meet her, she's on the run, seeking a resistance movement that's recruited her, driven by loss and disillusionment. Told in a first-person account through flashbacks, it's a cautionary tale (and one very fitting for today's world) about the abuse of power and the lengths we will go to keep ourselves "safe."

There was so much potential for this story - in a way, it would have worked better if it were set up as a trilogy, though I often hate when books are intentionally written that way. In this case though, there was just too much crammed in. I needed more backstory, more perspective. I was left feeling confused about a lot of characters simply because they aren't in the picture long enough. I had trouble getting a grasp on Harper's

psychic abilities and understanding where they came from. I did not get the romance angle at all. That was just weird to me. It's a fine book and a fantastic concept; it ultimately had too many problems for me to embrace it fully.

Favorite quotes: "The trouble comes when we forget we're family! You, me, the people living halfway around the world! The problem is this ridiculous idea that there is an *us* and then an *other*! A *them* to which the rules of humanity don't apply!... There is never a *them*, Harper! There's only *us*! If we could get that learned, we might just figure out how to stop killing ourselves!" - Lazarus

"You find someone in this world who makes you feel right about yourself, you'd better hang on tight. It's not unusual to find the right person, Harper. It's recognizing them before they've already gone that's rare." - Lilly

Bookspread says

Veracity picks up right after the Pandemic, and follows the life of Harper Adams, who was six years old at the time and was a pretty special kid – she could see auras. This gift is greatly coveted in her world, and as soon as she finishes high school she is recruited to become a Sentient Monitor, a special surveyor of all the atrocities that the Blue Coats, the police enforcement body, commit in the name of order. Harper Adams is Special with a big capital S from the beginning, and she knows it, and she resents it in a very broody way. In her world, the Confederation of the Willing, every word is monitored by an implant that twirls around the carotid artery, and speaking a Red Listed word gets you immediate punishment and possibly a complimentary rape courtesy of the Blue Coats. Harper's job is to make sure that the punished are really guilty and not, for instance, an infant learning to speak and uttering random syllables. Then her best friend gets killed in their office and her daughter's name, Veracity, gets Red Listed, and Harper finally blows a fuse and decides to become part of the resistance. The story is told in first person from her point of view, which is very broody, and the plot is extremely reminiscent of 1984 – it could be an upgraded version, with the sentient powers and the improved technology.
