



Stella

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Stella Hamilton and Caitlin Clark are two sixth form students at a very exclusive mixed fee-paying school, Temperley High. Caitlin is a recent arrival from the USA. She has left her family behind.

Stella has an older sister who attended Temperley High and a younger sister destined to do so. Stella is intelligent and attractive: she regards the school as her personal domain and doesn't allow herself to be distracted by anything as trivial as getting educated. She runs a gang of girls known as The Stars. Her sister ran a similar outfit in her time.

Caitlin Clark comes from a well-educated middle class American family. Her mother is a university lecturer in science. She has a younger brother named Charlie, aged eight, for whom she cared before she left the USA. She faces an uphill struggle to get herself accepted at the new school.

In this fictional school the Head Girl and Head Boy are elected by the pupils. At one stage it looks as if Stella is the odds-on favourite for top girl. But then Caitlin enters the fray with a manifesto promising fundamental change to the social structure of the school. How ready are these privileged young people for a cultural revolution? How far will either of the candidates stretch the moral code in the quest for votes? (The answer is as far as it takes to win.)

Eve has set out to create a modern social satire, identifying the passions and rivalries that are commonplace in a secondary school (more among the girls?) and amplifying them to an alarming level. Because her work is a social satire, she seeks deliberate links to the works of Charles Dickens. Occasionally these links work well to heighten the drama. But on other occasions they seem to be too contrived, blunting the edge of a truly modern conflict.

Commendably enough, this book is a virtually adult-free zone. There are only a handful of scenes where an adult is present and for all the impact they have these adults might as well be absent. This book will appeal to young female readers who find themselves involved in cliques at school, though quite frankly I do not see it having much appeal to a wider readership.

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