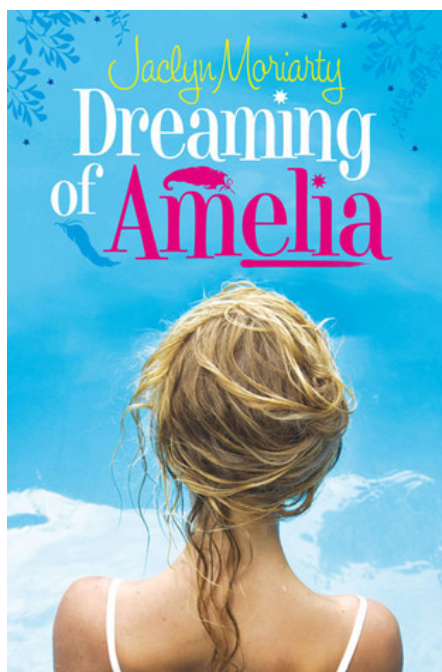




Dreaming of Amelia

Jaclyn Moriarty

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Dreaming of Amelia Jaclyn Moriarty

Amelia & Riley have transferred to Ashbury for their final year of school, & everyone is obsessed with them. Glamorous, talented & totally devoted to one another, the two of them drift through school in their own world. But there's more to the couple than meets the eye - they have secrets. But, some secrets are dangerous to share.

Dreaming of Amelia Details

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Author : Jaclyn Moriarty

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From Reader Review Dreaming of Amelia for online ebook

Nomes says

Every time I've read Jaclyn Moriarty's books, I think: Oooh, this book is just so delicious that I can't imagine she's ever going to think up such awesomely wonderful sentences again. But I keep getting proven wrong. Dreaming of Amelia took me longer to read because I kept pausing to re-read sentences, they just feel so good in my brain :) However, I am determined to maintain my fan-girl tendencies and try to bring you a dignified review. Some info about the book:

The story's told in a series of student's HSC exam responses (written essays of the gothic - but comedic - nature), blog posts (with oh-so-awesome comments), memos, emails and meeting agenda sheets, from multiple POV's: students from Ashbury High and staff as well.

And, because Jaclyn is obviously a genius, she presents them all in a sometimes chronological time line, other times not and other times overlapping so you end up with a layered and slightly chaotic telling of the events. Each layer adds intrigue and a different POV that swivels the story around slightly. So... it is unlike any other YA book out there, really. It's like Jaclyn just invented her own thing and I can't really compare it to anything else I've read. Because the structure is so different to many books, you just have to sink into to it and settle in for the ride.

The main thing you need to know about this book is that it is Funny.

Also, whimsical.

Expect to feel good. And smile a lot.

And if you're a laugh-out-loud-while-reading kinda person, you will be laughing out loud, loudly.

Plus, I kind of ached in some of the more poignant moments.

Sometimes, it gets a little bit crazy. But I like that.

And, for me, I just adore the characters.

...and, I'm starting to wonder if they aren't real people, roaming around Castle Hill.

I particularly loved re-visiting Em and Lyd and Cassie (of The year of Secret Assignments, who also cameo in Bindy MacKenzie), they are some of my fave YA characters ever. And, Seb. Sigh. Riley's not bad either, I definitely feel the love there.

And och, aye, Toby's Irish history and convict storyline was grand, to be sure (okay, so that sounds lame from me, but from Toby, you will feel the Irish love).

Other random things to love:

there's an axe murderer

there's a mental asylum of the old fashioned kind

everyone's going crazy about Riley and Amelia and the mystery and wonder of them...

there's ghostly activity at Ashbury High

there's love and broken hearts and kisses in a classroom
the staff at the school are just as gloriously entertaining as the students
you will learn about black holes. I know!
there's parties and secrets and nostalgic moments that made me feel nostalgic too

Overall though, I am in awe of the lovely chaotic storyline and the weaving of it all together and the beautiful, mysterious climax - how does Jaclyn do that? She's a genius and I don't think her style can be mimicked - it's so deliciously unique.

I keep this one near my bedside, so I can randomly flick through it and re-read passages. It's very therapeutic :)

And, if you've never read Jaclyn Moriarty -- Go here right now and scroll down and click on the link to read the first pages...and you will fall under her spell. Haha :) No, seriously, you will.

It is the fourth in a series, but also a stand alone. However, if you were to read one before this, read *The Year of Secret Assignments* (Finding Cassie Crazy). Which you should read asap if you've never had The Jaclyn Moriarty Experience.

Michelle says

Riley and Amelia have been a couple since they were fourteen years old. They are mysterious and beautiful and immediately cause a stir upon their arrival as Year 12 scholarship students at the exclusive private school in Castle Hill, Australia, Ashbury High. No one seems to know anything about these two, but everyone is noticing them and wants to be noticed *by* them. Even best friends Emily, Lydia, and Cassie. Emily, resident Drama Queen, quickly becomes obsessed with all things Riley and Amelia - her blog entries, even her answers to test questions focus on her observations of the pair (even if she sometimes confuses the definitions of words):

"When I say they were "always together" I don't mean in the way of other couples.

Those couples who walk around making gurgling noises into the sides of each other's necks?

No.

Those couples are as disgusting as a gothic sewerage system.

Riley and Amelia had rhythm that matched and yet they were separate. Like bicycle wheels.

Sometimes they spoke and it's true that their voices were murmurs. But not the too-much-cheap-chocolate-weird-feeling-in-my-chin murmur of those *other* couples. It was more like the way my parents talked this one time when we went camping. It was late, and my brother and I were in our sleeping bags in the tent, and we could hear Mum and Dad by the campfire. Their low voices talked about strange, important things, and I couldn't really catch what they were saying. But it seemed to me to be all about how their kids were kind of stupid, but funny.

That's the kind of murmuring Riley and Amelia shared."

Enigmatic and Unknown to Emily and her friends, Riley and Amelia seem to float above all their regular high school drama. Although, like in the finest gothic novels, there occurs within the hallowed halls of Ashbury High more excitement and drama than just the arrival of two unexpected (albeit spectacular) teens. With their final, end of high school, career-deciding, HSC exams just around the corner; Emily is sure a ghost is haunting Ashbury High, Lydia is holding onto an alienating, destructive secret, and the lovable Toby cannot seem to talk about anything but Irish convicts and black holes. And that's not even mentioning the ghost that is haunting Riley and Amelia.

The Ghosts of Ashbury High is unlike any other novel I have ever read. It's a ghost story. It's about growing up. It's a Gothic novel. It's about judgment and prejudices. It's a historical novel. It's about friends. It's about finishing high school. Furthermore, it's HILARIOUS, yet also dark and filled with heavy secrets. Jaclyn Moriarty effortlessly floats back and forth from the perspective of multiple characters through the medium of homework assignments, meeting minutes, blog entries, letters, and even exam answers on gothic literature. You would think this arrangement would be confusing or irritating to read, but really, just the opposite occurs. The quirky format allows the multi-faceted and multi-layered secrets of the students of Ashbury High to reveal themselves bit by bit; forming an interconnected web so stunning and complex, I was utterly entranced with every one of its hefty 480 pages. Every single character leaps off the page, fully-formed and independent. I cannot tell you how Ms. Moriarty has managed it, but I am in awe. If this is what I can expect from her other novels, I'll be picking those up without hesitation. Especially as I am happy to report that I currently have a copy of *The Year of Secret Assignments* sitting pretty on my shelf. Guess what I'll be reading next?

Ellis says

[MY OTPS HAVE ALL BEEN SAVED. HALLELUJAH. (hide spoiler)]

oliviasbooks says

All three books by Jaclyn Moriarty that I have read until now were a good mixture of a lot of fun and humor (often kindled by the changing perspectives), good, good writing (Mrs. Moriarty really makes me believe different persons must have composed the different points of view instead of just her), close observation and some tragedy. In *Amelia* the tragedy ingredient came in larger portions into the mix. I would label the book as "sad but not hopeless". Also a lot of mystery was stirred in, since, as the title "*The Ghosts of Ashbury High*" suggests, we have been dealt a ghost-themed story.

I truly liked the book and its messages and its way of tying up all loose ends (even that of Toby's father and Toby's relationship to his mother - I was contented) and I was looking forward to picking up the book again each day after work, but I have to admit I liked *The Year Of Secret Assignments* and *Feeling Sorry for Celia* more. Both I plan to reread in the distant - or even nearer - future - if only to enjoy some of those hyperhilarious letters pinned to the fridge or the strange conversations Lydia had with that creative-writing-tutorial-notebook. As "*Amelia*" is concerned, I believe reading once is sufficient for me - without implying I had anything but a swell time with this story. Maybe part of the feeling derives from the fact that all mysteries are now revealed to me and finding out about them has been half the thrill. I don't know.

Janina says

Another winner from Moriarty!

Seriously, I love the Ashbury series. It has these quirky – but not too quirky – characters and just the right mix of humour, family issues, friendship, romance and suspense. While I would say that I liked Feeling Sorry For Celia and Finding Cassie Crazy a tiny bit better, **Dreaming of Amelia** brought back some of my favourite characters (Lydia and Seb!), but also introduced new ones I grew to love.

It is a big book (over 500 pages) and slightly different in style from the first two (haven't read Bindy yet), but I didn't feel like it was too long or drawn out. Sure, at first, all those pages of high school students' attempts at writing gothic fiction seemed a bit too much, but I soon got into the story and the pages just flew by. I laughed out loud at Em's extensive use of exclamation marks, her recurring weather descriptions and her tendency to mix up words of foreign origin (my favourite: *incontinence* instead of *inconsistence*). And even though I didn't particularly care for the storyline following Tom, an Irish convict settling in Australia in the 1800, he played his part in the conclusion and I don't think he should have been left out.

What I love so much about Moriarty's books: By telling her stories in the form of letters, emails, notes, essays, protocols, newspaper articles, ... she gives her readers the chance to discover things for themselves without telling them what happens, but *showing* them instead. I love finding out for myself what might have happened if something is only hinted at, described by one of her characters but you are not entirely sure what exactly has been going on ... For me, her books are a little bit like those detective books I used to have when I was younger, where you were supposed to find out who the murderer is along with the hero or the heroine of the story.

#3 Aussie YA Challenge 2011

Brittany says

I admit, I really though Jaclyn Moriarty had lost her stride with this one. The entire "ghost" plotline just didn't appeal to me and I didn't think it was a good device for telling the story of the final year at Ashbury. Thankfully, the last fourth of the book completely made up for any misgivings I may have had and we were able to say good-bye to the students of Ashbury justly. I wish there was a secret fifth book detailing everyone's first year at university and through a wild twist of fate Emily and Bindy end up as roommates.

K says

It didn't seem so at first, but this was a worthwhile read. (Of course it was going to be, Jaclyn Moriarty is one of my to-buy authors. I wasn't too worried.)

The beginning was a bit disheartening. I didn't feel drawn into the story until after the 100 page mark. The series once again takes a new route, this time one with ghosts. It's the final year for the Ashbury students and their HSC English exams and assignments on gothic fiction make up almost the entirety of the book. Emily's back with a bubbly take on her world, as are prone-to-fictionalization Lydia and slacker Toby. Newcomers

this year are Riley and Amelia, mysterious scholarship students not keen on discussing their pasts. There's a lot of fragmented storytelling and half truths. I even thought, "Poor Toby, his is a filler story,"—interesting and informative, but it didn't seem relevant. Then, with their second assignment, they were sharing more personal parts of their year and it was more of the story I was expecting.

And then the satisfying conclusion. I love the way these separate stories unfold, collide, veer off into different paths, and finally come to rest in an incredibly detailed picture. And along the way I form opinions that I'm ashamed of later, I get blindsided by something I would swear was not on the horizon minutes before. I get absorbed in the story. These books might seem juvenile at first glance, but the characters have depth and struggles beyond their high school personas. This one slogged along (sometimes confusingly) in places and the ending was a few correspondences too long, but I was still sad to see it end.

Tatiana says

I have a strange relationship with Jaclyn Moriarty. I like her books, but I think they are full of a special (maybe Australian?) weirdness. The Ghosts of Ashbury High is no exception.

This book is the 4th about Ashbury High (the other 3 are in chronological order: Feeling Sorry for Celia: A Novel, The Year Of Secret Assignments and The Murder Of Bindy Mackenzie), but it's not a series, each book can be read independently, even though the cast of characters is pretty much the same.

At the center of the story are two new scholarship Ashbury students - Riley and Amelia. They are mysterious - they have been together since they were 14, they are talented, they have dark past. Everyone in the school (especially Emily) is obsessed about them and wants to know what hides behind their distant facades.

As always, Jaclyn Moriarty offers a fresh approach to story telling. Her previous books were written in the form of letters, notes, memos. This time the majority of the book is written in the form of the writing assignments for Gothic Fiction class. Therefore from the very beginning you have to be cautious to take everything the students say with a grain of salt, because, after all, they all are writing gothic fiction stories. This part of the novel is often bizarre (I find ALL Moriarty's books seem bizarre when you start reading them) and quirky and weird, humorous in a way I sometimes don't get, but beneath all this strangeness are great, real, sometimes heartbreaking stories of passion, despair, loss, friendship, and love.

Moriarty's remarkable ability to write several distinct "voices" deserves special recognition.

In spite of the slow and weird start, I enjoyed this book immensely, especially the latter part. Jaclyn Moriarty remains one of my favorite YA writers.

Hannah says

This is the book I will hand to people who think that YA can't be complex.

Munema says

I cannot praise this book enough. Jaclyn Moriarty has once again proven herself to be clever, AMAZING,

awesome, a wonderful writer, and extremely creative. I mean, COME ON, who else could write a book like this and pull it off too?

Because it was pulled off brilliantly. I mean, at first, I was getting sort of bored (mainly of Tom Kincaid) and the randomness of it all. Plus, I kept on wondering how someone could write so much on their HSC Exam. Seriously.

But once I got over that, and the book got terribly interesting when the Scholarship Committee kicked in, it was just as amazing as every other book she's written. It was random, but not TOO random, hilarious at parts (thank you, Emily, for adding comic value), and the characters were so realistic and believable, in spite of their...oddness.

Amelia and Riley were a bit....uh....have I said 'odd', already? Amelia was explained very well at the end, but their whole Ashbury-thing was a bit shaky. I mean, seriously?

But then again, I could believe it thanks to Jaclyn Moriarty's awesomeness.

LAST BIT: DON'T READ THIS IF YOU HAVEN'T READ "The Year of the Secret Assignments" first. It'll just spoil it for you.

SPOILERSSSSS

I've got a question, for anyone willing to answer:

WAS Lydia's Ghost real? I seriously couldn't tell.

Kara Cardwell says

Okay, I admit it. That at the beginning of the book when nothing seemed to be connecting, I was concerned that I wouldn't like this 480 pg book. When I love a book, I welcome 400 and 500 pages, but since it started slow for me, I started to dread the pages of Ashbury High.

I'm so glad I stuck to it! If I hadn't, I wouldn't have been able to tell you how wonderful this story was. I've never read anything like it. It was so creative, I'm even subconsciously (partly) writing this review the way some of her characters wrote their story. You'll understand what I mean if you get this book (when you get this book). Most of the characters were enjoyable in their own way. With a book this big I feel like I personally know them. People like Em gave me humor and thoughts of the future, while Riley and others gave me poetic words to help me imagine their world. One of my favorite characters beside the two mentioned above was Toby, with his history of Australia (hilarious) and Ireland, as well as his discussion of shadows and black holes. His parts about Tom? Ummm, not so much!

Sometimes the characters were sarcastic, while at other times they were unknowingly laugh out loud funny. And the Gothic tale, not what I expected at all! It felt like a book version of Clue, but with ghost! I accused many people before the end of the book! I got it totally wrong, since I gave up near the end and claimed to myself that the butler did it (which is weird because there was no butler, and they weren't trying to solve a

murder case!). The relationships in this book discussed and dealt with multiple topics like love, fear of the future, and being afraid to face yourself (or being afraid to face your problems). This book was unique and enjoyable! Now that I've finished this book, the 1st thing I'm going to do is -- well not the first thing cause it's four in the morning, but maybe the 5th or 6th thing I'll do today is go online and purchase a copy of The Year of Secret Assignments!

Daniela (Lightweaver) says

Wowwwwwwwww excuse me while i gather up all the pieces of my heart and sob like a baby. I cant give this anything less than 5 stars. It has everything you could ever want from a book.

Agn? says

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Although Jaclyn Moriarty's young adult novel "The Ghosts of Ashbury High" is the fourth installment in the Ashbury/Brookfield series, it also works great as a stand-alone. In the final year of high school, Amelia and Riley, a mysterious couple, transfer to Ashbury High and soon become an obsession of their curious classmates: Who are they? Where are they from? What do they want? But Amelia and Riley is not the only mystery at Ashbury High this year. Emily, a girl from the popular best friend trio, is convinced that the Art Rooms are haunted, while another student, Toby, is fascinated by a ghost from the past: the letters of an Irish convict who was banished to Australia in 1800s. Gossip, romance, mystery, history, Higher School Certificate (HSC) exams... The final year at Ashbury High is everything but boring.

THUMBS UP:

1) *Exceptionally executed multiple viewpoint approach.*

The whole book is written in the format of essays, exams, emails, blogs, letters, meeting minutes and interview transcripts. Such a format is not only unusual and very engaging but also well-thought-out and skillfully presented. In addition, everything is written by multiple people, each of whom has a very distinctive voice and provides a unique angle to the same story. Well done!

2) *Mysterious, unexpected and neatly wrapped up.*

Since a majority of the story is told through students' memoirs with gothic fiction elements (HSC English exam question), the vibe is ghostly and mysterious. To be honest, at first I felt perplexed: the book just seemed so... weird. Soon enough, however, things started looking more earthly and also quite interesting. Yet the best part was a completely unexpected, well-thought-out and fulfilling (but still slightly strange) ending. One can argue that the end was a little bit "too neat" as EVERY single mystery was revealed and explained and EVERYTHING turned out to be related, but in this case I did not see it as a flaw. I actually liked it.

3) *Light and witty with a hint of seriousness.*

Some characters in "The Ghosts of Ashbury High" are lovable and amusing, some are mysterious and intimidating, some are silly and even annoying, but they also are realistic, complex, memorable and, above all, relatable. The narrative is lively and hilarious so that all 500 pages fly by unnoticed (or most of them do);

however, by the end of the book you realize that the author not only entertains but also probes quite a few serious issues that reach way beyond high school life.

COULD BE BETTER:

1) *Lengthy.*

In addition to quite a weird and slow beginning, some later parts feel a little bit prolonged too. Even though in retrospective everything seems relevant and important, certain passages can be quite discouraging. For example, I wasn't very fond of Irish convict's letters but I LOVED the rest of Toby's narrative, especially his retelling of Australian and Irish history - hilarious yet so educational! Plus, the ending makes it all worth it (though again, it might be a few correspondences too long).

2) *Format credibility.*

Although the idea of a story told in a form of gothic memoirs written during HSC English exam sounds unique and appealing, it is very unlikely that 4-hour exam essays would be THAT long or that students would write in such an informal style. But, honestly, it's just nit-picking.

VERDICT: 4 out of 5

"The Ghosts of Ashbury High" is an all-in-one multiple viewpoint young adult novel: light and funny, mysterious and serious, well-thought-out and equally well-written... It's the first Moriarty's book I've ever read but definitely not the last.

YA Reads Book Reviews says

Before you begin reading *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*, put all those expectations you may have about how a book is written on a shelf somewhere. You can pick them up later when you're back to reading regular books.

Good. Now that that's done, I can tell you about Jaclyn Moriarty and the *Ashbury High* books (*Feeling Sorry for Celia*, *The Year of Secret Assignments*, *The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie*). These four books aren't sequels, but they do revolve around the same high school and involve characters who tend to appear in most or all of the other titles. Moriarty's narrative is often told through letters, school assignments, meeting notes, blog posts and comments, emails, and more, making it a. sometimes difficult to remember that the narrator may not always be reliable and b. really, really fun to read.

The opening of *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* sets the scene for us: it's the final year of school for Em, Lyd, Cass, Toby, and the gang. But this year, two new students appear: Riley and Amelia. And no one knows from whence they came. (Cue scary music here.) The bulk of the entries that make up the book are school assignments the students have written—and considering the assignments are to write a gothic retelling of the first term and ghostly retelling of the second, the reader is never entirely sure what's true (did a ghost really start typing into Lydia's computer?) and what's the students' flexing of their creative muscles.

Em makes it her mission to unravel the mystery surrounding the ethereal Riley and Amelia, and most of her homework assignments and blog posts involve her musings on the two new students. In typical Em fashion, they're hilarious. Meanwhile, Lydia is dealing with the aftermath of her breakup with Seb and her parents' weird relationship by throwing spectacular parties, while Toby has taken to sorting out the meaning of black holes and the life story of an Irish convict who was sent to Australia several centuries earlier. (Trust me, it all ties in to the story.)

And then, of course, there are Riley and Amelia themselves. Their background is a mystery, revealed with carefully placed (and misplaced) breadcrumbs that lead us back to their real stories near the end of the book. I loved them. Then I hated them. Then I admired them. Then I worried about them. And then I ended up realizing they were only a small, small part of the message Moriarty is sending with this book: about second chances, and redemption, and friendship.

For a gothic novel/ghost story, *The Ghosts of Ashbury High* sure is funny. It's also wickedly smart, wholly engrossing, and has found its way on the top of my "must re-read" pile. It's a shame to me that Moriarty isn't more well-known here in the U.S., and I'm making it my mission to change that. You should join me.

Emily says

Another swell one from Jaclyn Moriarty. One of the things I liked most about this last book in the Ashbury High series (I think it's the last, which makes me sad), is that we got a sense of the teachers through their own letters/notes/documents, and not just through the eyes of the students. I always liked Mr. Botherit, but it was mostly because his name made me laugh. Now I can add him to the list of characters that I love from this series.

Amongst all the silliness and windingly crazy plotlines of these books, there's something very real about these characters. They act like high school kids. They're silly, brilliant, emotional, and often make horrible decisions. I also like Moriarty's inclusion of adults in these books. They're characters rather than props, which is not always the case in young adult novels.

She was very clever, keeping the reader guessing at what the real ghost story might be. As always, I had an inkling that there was more to the story, but didn't come close to figuring it out. (view spoiler)

I highly recommend this series. Books 2 and 3 are still my favorites, but they're all well worth reading.

Rad says

I wanted this book so badly that I made my boyfriend order it for me from Australia.

Screw you, United States! I ain't waitin' six more months!

Anyway, so the edition I read was called "Dreaming of Amelia" (although you can bet your sweet bippy I'll be getting this "Ghost of Ashbury High" edition as soon as it comes out), so let's take it from there.

Altogether, I didn't like it as much as my beloved *Murder of Bindy Mackenzie*. But, I mean, come on. That's impossible to do. And I still devoured this book. Devoured!

Emily's and Lydia's sections were my favorites. And of course I loved the four or five mentions of Bindy that were thrown in (THANK GOD) - and even Briony managed to make it in there! ... once. But not Sergio ...

I'm getting ahead of myself. Once again Jaclyn Moriarty cooked up a whole big steaming book of mystery that all gets answered in the end. Most of the book is told from the different HSC Gothic Literature exams that the students are taking (have taken?). Emily's exam is probably my favorite, just because she's so over the top and also because she's still mixing up her words.

AND SO! FURTHERMORE! It was epic, and also a bit hard to tell which ghosts were real and which were not. Lots of ambiguity.

Also, you've gotta be thinking: Ashbury High has got A LOT of weird stuff going on. I mean, someone almost got murdered last year and now, this year, ghosts. GHOSTS! Ghosts.

Ghoooooosts.

Alana says

Now I'm a huge fan of Jaclyn Moriarty. I love her flawed and sometimes hilarious characters and the format she uses such as letters, diaries etc, but Dreaming of Amelia I wasn't as happy with! I was more than pleased to hear more from Em and Lydia, but to have Seb and Lydia split up, and Charlie split up from Em living in Singapore?

It wasn't just that though, I don't think this book in the series flowed as coherently as the others. It was told through their HSC exams, blogs and minutes from meetings of the Trust Fund committee, and it felt a bit all over the place.

I still liked the book but it felt a bit overly long, and I got a bit over it in the middle, and wished they would hurry things up a bit.

Also, Em definitely crosses the line into annoying territory in this one. I found her so funny in Finding Cassie Crazy but in this one I think JM went a little bit over the top with her. Maybe it's because she didn't have Charlie to balance her out.

For whatever the reason, I couldn't enjoy this book as much as the others, but I'll still give it three stars because it was quite well researched (Irish convict, black holes etc), and frankly, it was good to read about Em, Lydia and Cassie again despite everything.

Brianne says

Oh man, Moriarty has done it again.

I love mysteries, and her books always keep my guessing until the very end. I figured out the biggest one in the book a page before it was revealed, which is perfect as it shows how Moriarty created and maintained suspense throughout the novel, while still giving her readers clues.

Every question that came up (and there were many) was resolved by the end of the novel, and though of some of the answers really surprised me, they were all believable. I love a good plot twist, and this book has so many!

Moriarty's characters are just as well done as her plot. All of their voices are so unique, so funny, and so real. Emily is one of the most charming characters I've ever read. She made me laugh out loud multiple times, and I grew to care about her so much that I always felt what she felt.

The only reason I didn't give this five stars was because I found it a bit slow in the beginning (though it has one of my favourite openings ever), and there were some voices I greatly preferred over others (Riley and Emily), and sometimes was tempted to skip other voices to get to them.

TheBookSmugglers says

Original Review [HERE](#)

It was a dark and stormy night (when I started reading *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*). The rain fell torrentially and the trees outside rattled against my window occasionally. The house was silent and I was all alone. The lights in the street were out and I was reading by candlelight (ok, not really, but just go with the flow...). Reader! Hear the truth of my words! I had a strong sense of foreboding and a feeling of impending DOOM right after the first few pages and I felt I could faint at any moment.

And why, do you ask? The ghosts?, were you scared of the ghosts? Yes, Ghosts!!!! I say. I was too scared of the ghosts but no!!!! That sense of impending doom came upon the realisation that this book is INCREDIBLE and that I would have to go and buy Jaclyn Moriarty's entire backlist, even if that made me bankrupt!! Even if I had to walk the miles to the bookstore in that DARK AND STORMY NIGHT!!!!!!

You know, gothically speaking.

It is the last year of High School for the students at Ashbury High and most of the story takes places during an HSC (High School Certificate in Australia) English exam on the topic of, yes, you guessed right, Gothic Fiction. The students have been asked to write a personal memoir which explores the dynamics of first impressions, drawing on their knowledge of gothic fiction. Thus, the majority of *The Ghosts of Ashbury High*'s narrative is via that exam question but also with letters, minutes from the school boards' meetings, IM transcripts, blog entries (another assignment: write about Your Journey Home) interspersed throughout. Most of them alternate between the same four kids' writings: Riley, Emily, Lydia and Toby and it mostly involves Riley and...Amelia.

"The first time I saw her I knew that my Amelia was a ghost"

Riley

Riley and Amelia are new at Ashbury High, a private school for rich and privileged kids, recently transferred from the neighbouring Brookfield public school on scholarships. From the get go Riley and Amelia take over everybody's imagination with their aloofness, their mysterious comings and goings and their complete, obsessive involvement with each other at the expense of everybody else. Soon, they are excelling at everything: swimming, essay writing, arts. But there is just something not quite right about these two kids.....

I love epistolary novels. I LOVE them, in fact one of my all time favourite books is Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*. Jaclyn Moriarty made me remember why exactly I love this form of narrative with this excellent novel. Starting with infusing these letters and essays with so much character and voice that it would be easy to recognise which of the characters is writing what even if it wasn't stated at the beginning of each part. The mysterious, dark Riley; the reliable, deep Toby; the almost serious yet spoiled Lydia; the drama queen Emily.

“It was the first day of Year 12. I had set out that morning with trepidation. I did not, in all honesty, see a crow, a raven, or any other black bird on the way to school that day. And yet! I was trepidatious.”

Emily

BUT!!!!

Those are first impressions dear readers. Because this book is terminally clever: as the kids write their memoirs and starting with their first impressions of Riley and Amelia, we, as readers, are doing the same with the kids. And by the end of the book, none of them are left standing – within the book or within the reader.

It starts very, very light, hilarious even with each of them writing in what they think a Gothic narrative should be (complete with excess of exclamation points!!!!) and because of that, the reader never knows if what we are reading is true or not. Yes, epistolary narrative always has a degree of unreliability because we are wholly dependent on whoever is writing and whether they have chosen to write the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

BUT!!!!

Even what a narrator chose to leave out of its narrative is important. And because there are four distinct narrators, a certain degree of truthfulness always end up making its way into the story. Sometimes they narrate the same event even, from such a completely discrepant point of view and yet both have got to be true somehow.

“There was the first time I saw this exam question. It happened just now. (...) my first impression of this question is that it sucks. Nothing has happened so far to change my mind.”

Lydia

As the story gains momentum and the plot thickens, I could not turn the pages faster. The story is almost like a farce, definitely gothic (ghosts!), a lot of comedy and so much heartbreak and character growth that I don't even know how or when it happened but all of a sudden I am not reading the book I thought I was reading when I first set out.

This is a story about rich kids, poor kids, how their surroundings influence and the parenting that each has, shaped their present and possibly the future. About the opportunities the State and life give them (or not), and about abuse and about turning a blind eye to abuse and how adults sometimes suck so much (I could sucker punch the school's principal if I could after a conversation he has with Emily) and how friendship and resilience and smarts can help with changing things.

BUT!!!!

That is not all. Somehow in the middle of it, Moriarty manages to go all historical as Toby's narrative is actually him telling a story of an Irish convict who is sent to Australia when it was still a penal colony. Tom Kindaid's story intermingles with the other narratives and is as interesting as the rest of it all.

“I have just noticed that the exam question asks for a personal memoir. So you want to hear from me – Toby Mazzerati – not some Irish convict dude named Tom Kinkaid who lived here in 1804. Hence, please disregard the above, and I will start my answer now. Thanks for your time”

Toby

And also: BLACK HOLES!!!!

And if you think for a moment that all of this is too much, please trust me when I say this. It is not! I can't stress that enough!!!! With extra exclamation points!!! It is of **UTMOST IMPORTANCE** that I get this point across!!!!!! All is flawlessly linked and you only realise that in the **EXTRAORDINARY** ending when every.Single.Plot.Line comes together and my head exploded (gothically speaking) with the sheer brilliance of this book.

It is imaginative, poignant, heart-warming AND heartbreaking. Hilarious too.

PLUS!!!!

It has awesome **GIRLS**. Who talk to each other about many, many things other than boys. Although boys are involved and for example, the romance between Lydia and Seb which we see happening via Emily's narrative (because she is a "student of love"), is amazing. But not as amazing as the girls themselves and how smart, talented yet flawed they are and what they will do for each other and how afraid they are of the future because this is what this book is all about: the future and how to get there and how terrifying that moment between the end of your teenage years and the beginning of your adult life is.

Above all though, this is a book about second chances (for everybody. And I do mean, **EVERY SOUL**) and how without them there is **NO** future.

I can't think of a single thing that does not work in this book and I loved it with every bit of my being (brain and heart!) and I re-read it before writing this review and still it managed to evoke this feeling of greatness and warmth and it is awesome and I **URGE** you to go and read it. Your life may depend on it!!!! You know, gothically speaking.

Good Golly Miss Holly says

DREAMING OF AMELIA - is set in the world of Ashbury High where our beloved Lyd, Cass & Em are facing their final year of high school. The girls want to make this their best year yet but things are thrown into discourse after their rival school, Brookfield High is asked to share the stage in their final school play.

The students are also utterly captivated by an inseparable pair of scholarship students, Amelia & Riley who seem to do everything in their power to appear mysterious and secretive but nothing could be more captivating than the thought of a ghost haunting the hallways causing a flurry of attention.

There are 2 things that keep me coming back to Jaclyn Moriarty's novels:

A: Characters - Jaclyn Moriarty has written 3 of my favourite characters ever - Lyd, Cass & Em. I'm so glad they keep popping up in each of her books, they are so real and believable, always managing to send me into a fit of laughter quite often. But not only these 3 girls, I also feel like I know the subset of characters quite well which rarely seems to happen in such slim novels.

B: Writing Style - I am a huge fan of books in alternative formats such as diaries and letters but Jaclyn takes this to another level including blog entries, school essays and many more ideas on the extremely creative side which gives you a direct link to the every thought and feeling of the characters. The only downside to this writing style is it takes a couple of chapters to adjust to the new format but once you are assimilated you fly threw the book.

The only advice for those who are wanting to add this book to their wish list would be to hold off and read Jaclyn Moriarty's books in series order as I'm sure they'd provide much more enjoyment if read in succession.
