



Trainers V. Tiaras

Grace Dent

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Fifteen-year-old Shiraz Bailey Wood's days are filled with hanging around outside Claire's Accessories, her parents work crap jobs, and her school is pretty much loser central. But this loveable British dreamer with a brain and a heart of gold is beginning to feel there might be a lot more to life than minimum wage and the bling of a souped-up car.

Trainers V. Tiaras Details

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From Reader Review Trainers V. Tiaras for online ebook

Kristi says

I was laughing my ass off the entire time I read this novel! Shiraz is a very lovable character. I wasn't sure about this book at first. First off I had idea what a Chav was, and the cover scared me a little.... But once I started reading I was sucked into to Shiraz's voice. The novel consists of journal entries. Think Sloppy first, British style.

I may not have understood everything she was saying (thankfully there was an English dictionary for all the American cousins) but the girl is bloody brilliant!

Some of my favorites:

Baps: (n.) boobs. Also boobies, breasts, blouse potatoes.

Fangita-eater: (n.) this is a pretty, erm, rude word for a girl who things other girls are hot and doesn't fancy boys.

Knob: (n.) a boys penis. But it's also an insult too. "Stop being a knob!"

Marmite: (n.) brown yeast extract spread that British people have on toast, which to an American person who isn't used to it will taste like Satan's jockstrap.

Up the duff: (adj.) pregnant, knocked up, in the pudding club.

Despite what you would initially think, Shiraz is very smart. And unfortunately it isn't something that her environment encourages. Her mother seems to think that a rich husband is the way that Shiraz needs to go. Which is very sad. But while reading the novel you'll soon learn that Shiraz is not the type of girl to settle down with a rich husband, she has a mind of her own. She has typical teenage problems. Figuring what to do with your life, working through friendships, problems with boys, it's all in there and humorously done.

While this novel lacks elegance and grace... if your looking for brutally honest, this just might be your ticket. I'm looking forward to hearing more of Shiraz's voice.

Lauren says

When I picked up this book at the library, my first thought was: This book is either going to be an epic disaster or hilarious.

While it does go a bit off the rails in places, overall, it's hilarious.

First things first: Ms. Dent captures the Chav dialect and cadence (to this American reader, at least) while still making it readable. That alone is a huge accomplishment. It might be the strongest part of the book.

For Americans: Chav is a derogatory term for a certain subset of lower-class culture in England. Think redneck, only with an obsession for gaudy designer labels. Admittedly, knowing something about that culture does help in appreciating the book.

If you ask fifteen-year-old Shiraz (yes, like the wine), she'll tell you she isn't a Chav.

Except she totally is.

That's one of the fun things about this book. Even as Ms. Dent runs wild with many of the Chav stereotypes, she humanizes Shiraz and the people around her. Shiraz is a three-dimensional character, and while I did roll my eyes at yet another character with literary talent, it sort of works here, because it plays opposite of the Chav stereotype (and Shiraz is embarrassed by it).

Diary of a Chav is silly. But it balances nicely on the fine line between satire and a genuine story that cares about its characters. Recommended.

Jaki Hamilton says

Loved this x

Jennifer says

This book made me cackle so much. A frank, refreshing look at a teen girl in Britain who's finding her way in the world.

I wish the publisher would've kept this title instead of Americanizing it to "Diva Without a Cause." I know if I was a teen, I would wonder what a chav is and checked out the book due to curiosity. The glossary in the back of British slang is helpful and, also, hilarious.

E. Anderson says

Shiraz Bailey Wood isn't really a chav - even if she wears trackies and loves hip hop and doesn't really care about exams. But she and her best friend Carrie go to a school frequently referred to as "Superchav Academy" and her mother seems put out by Shiraz' sister, Cava-Sue, who is attempting to better herself by pursuing A-levels at an arts college. Since Carrie has become infatuated with her new boyfriend, a terrible rapper, Shiraz has been spending all her time avoiding the lovebirds and hiding the fact that she's actually doing well in English. But when Cava Sue runs away from home and her parents refuse to get involved, Shiraz knows there's only one thing she can do: write a TV talk show in hopes that they can put her family back together. While at first *Diary of a Chav* seems like a hard knocks version of the Georgia Nicolson series, it's not long before Shiraz's unique voice comes out. Past the hijinx, jokes, and rants, this is a book about social class, stigma, and finding yourself despite the way everyone else wants to see you. Complete with an index of Shiraz' slang, you can be sure this isn't the last you'll hear from Miss Wood (if only because several sequels are already available in the UK).

Anna says

Where do I even begin? This book... I didn't like it at all.

First, as you can probably tell, the book is about a British teenager. And since I had an ARC, the book only had about five of the British words in the glossary, while the published copy will have a "full glossary of about 12-16 pages." Okay, that's good for a British ARC - but for an American? I didn't understand a lot of things because I didn't have a full glossary.

Second, this book did not get interesting until close to the end. The only reason I actually didn't just stop and not finish it was because I was bored on my vacation and had nothing else to do. It drags horribly all the way through the beginning and the middle.

Next, the description on the back of the book says that she tries to do everything she can to prove she's not a chav, but from what I read, she doesn't really do much. In school, she hides the fact that she is actually doing her work and trying to do good so her friends won't make fun of her for sucking up to the teacher. She wants to go to college, but the only person she tells is her grandmother. She dresses like all the chavs and acts like them too - so the back of the book was really misleading to me.

The back of the book also says that Shiraz had a "funny voice and spirited narrative." From reading that, I would think that I would actually find stuff that Shiraz's writes funny... but I didn't. There were only a few things that I found funny about it, and the rest of the time the book kind of just dragged on.

As you can probably tell, I didn't really like this book, and I wouldn't recommend it for you to get it when it is published in October. If you really want to read it, I would wait for a softcover or get it from your library.

Nasty Lady MJ says

To see full review on the amazing new blog [click here](#).

I have a penpal who's from the UK. And one thing she likes talking about is Chavs.

Yes, Chavs.

Being American I have no idea what she's talking about, even after a lengthy explanation about the hideous overuse of tracksuits and fake tans.

And then I saw this book....

Yep, I now know what a Chav is. Thank to Ms. Dent's book.

And I feel for Livvie.

To be honest, normally I wouldn't like a book like this. The characters are horrible people. The writing is

grating at times with numerous grammatical errors and slang that has even my BBC America watching brain shaking my head (thank you Dent for the glossary). And the plot is basically non-existent save for that stupid climax at the end which I'll try to forget happened for what's going to be a fairly positive review.

Yes, I said positive.

Because despite its numerous issues. I enjoyed this one a lot. Mainly because the concept of what a Chav is is sort of making me nostalgic for some TLC.

Because that's what a Chav is. It's like putting Kate Plus Eight, Here Comes Honey Boo Boo, and Sixteen and Pregnant, and Jersey Shore in a blender and getting a very bizarre human being (and yes, I know two of those shows are on MTV but essentially they're almost the same network these days). And reading about someone that is so low brow makes for an interesting read.

To be honest, this book would've been better if it would've been written for a different market. I can see this really hitting the spot if it was written for the literary crowd. Dysfunctional family check, unlikeable but intriguing characters check, nuevo writing style that's not quite right but works check.

Add a little bit of seriousness and a bit more style to it and it would be in business.

But as a YA novel it just doesn't do it. I almost felt like Dent tried too hard to be YA. It almost sounded like she was trying to emulate The Princess Diaries. In fact, there's a Princess Diaries reference in the book. It's just that Dent isn't Meg Cabot.

As annoying as Mia got she was still endearing. Shiraz is anything but endearing. Despite the fact that Dent tries to portray her as some diamond in the rough...to put it simply Shiraz is your stereotypical Chav. How are all her problems solved in this book?

Well, reality TV.

I kid you not, a reality TV show solves all our characters problems. It's really that simple.

And in ironic way I'm not peeved about it like I should be. It's annoying, but as vapid as these characters are it sort of suits them.

I guess I should talk more about the characters and the irrelevant plot. I'll start with the plot first since it's barely there.

The gist of the story is that our dear heroine is about to take her GCSEs and sort of doesn't give a fuck. In fact, no one at her school gives a fuck. Till an awesome teacher comes in and...

Well, it starts going that route than stops.

Thankfully.

Though it's still an annoying subplot.

And it's not like Shiraz is fully reformed at the end anyway.

And I don't really understand why Super Teacher thinks that Shiraz is some great writer. Maybe she has great ideas but she's essentially a functional illiterate.

Really, she is.

Just like she's borderline TSTL except there's nothing she really does that's TSTL because she does nothing.

But even though I hated her, she works as a character. Because there was something relatable about her as awful as she was. Maybe it's because I've seen and dealt with kids that are like her. Maybe it's because I felt sorry for her growing up with her crazy mother. But as annoying as she was, I was able to tolerate her unlike other characters.

Another thing I liked about this book was that it wasn't romance heavy. Admittedly I like me some man candy in YA, but if the romance in this book would've been fully formed I think it would've been detrimental to the book. Shiraz, for one thing, was way too emotionally immature to have a relationship. And the guy she's crushing over really isn't worth much.

Besides, as I said before, the strength of this novel looking at the working class in the UK through Shiraz's family. As insufferable as a lot of these characters were, they were all realistic or depicted a part of their culture like Shiraz. I think probably the best and most infuriating character was the mother. Yes, she is totally unrealistic. You'd never expect a person to act this way or treat their children the way this woman does, but I felt like her character served a purpose. And even though she was an annoying bitch, you wanted to keep reading about her and what awful thing she was going to next.

So overall, this was a strange book for me to read. Character wise and plot wise it wasn't great. The characters were unlikeable and the plot was nonexistent, but it worked. Maybe it's because I wanted to figure out what the heck Livvie was complaining about, or maybe Dent actually did a fairly decent job depicting what is known as the TLC: UK Edition.

Brooke Shirts says

I've seen this book described as a working class version of Louise Rennison's "Georgia Nicholson" novels, and the description is apt, although I think Dent's work has a bit more depth.

Shiraz is the second daughter of a blue-collar family in Essex, who is fond of hoodies, trainers, and scads of bling. Her high school is referred to by the press as "Superchav Academy" and her parents view higher education as a method of sponging off the government. But she's got brains under the many pounds of lip gloss and eye shadow, although she doesn't quite realize it herself. Her very funny growth realization that perhaps a life spent working in a factory isn't the best use of her potential is clever and well-done. (In fact, I'd like to use the passage where Shiraz spends a three-week internship at a kofta factory required reading for some kids I know.)

Needless to say, the British slang is half the fun. Cor!

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Jaglvr for TeensReadToo.com

Originally published in Great Britain as TRAINERS VS. TIARAS, Grace Dent has crossed the Atlantic and now we are able to enjoy the rich adventures of Shiraz Bailey Wood.

Meet Shiraz. Most of the folks in her small town think she is a "chav." And if you're like me, you're wondering what in the world is a "chav" right? Fortunately, Ms. Dent supplies us poor American folk a glossary at the back of the book. A "chav" is a poor working class person in Britain. My first thought was, "OK, so this would be similar to our term trailer trash." I wasn't wrong! For in the definition Ms. Dent provides, she claims that being called a chav is a bit like calling someone trailer trash. So, having that out of the way, you can get the gist of the tone of the story.

Poor Shiraz is faced with the derogatory definition throughout the book. It starts off at Christmas time where she complains that she gets knock off trainers (sneakers for us Americans!) and a diary. She can't believe her grandma would even think of giving HER a diary. Is she nuts? But as the story unfolds, Shiraz comes to write down everything that happens over the course of the next year.

The diary format has been used before, that's nothing new. We've seen it THE PRINCESS DIARIES, BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY, and the Louise Rennison novels. But what makes DIARY OF A CHAV stand out is the unique way Ms. Dent has Shiraz tell her story.

Shiraz is a loudmouth and doesn't want to stand out at school. But when a new English teacher shows up and sees something in Shiraz, Shiraz finally starts to contemplate if there is more to life than just earning money at a job. Her year at school does a two-week work stint, and while working at a mind-numbingly boring job at a packing plant, Shiraz decides she will try to do the work at school.

While dealing with school, Shiraz also has troubles at home to deal with. Her mom and older sister are at odds and, to solve the problem, Shiraz writes to a Jerry Springer type show for help. Airing their dirty laundry on TV doesn't turn out the way Shiraz expects it to.

And to top all that off, her best friend, Carrie, has ditched her for her exciting new boyfriend, Bezzie. Shiraz doesn't think Bezzie is all that, but Carrie can't see beyond having such a grand guy, and the friendship starts to suffer.

For those expecting a book to flow elegantly and gracefully, DIARY OF A CHAV isn't that book. But if you're looking for a brutally honest look at the life of the teenager in working class England, this is your book. Shiraz is a breath of fresh air. She may irritate you at times with her disregard for authority, but in the end, she does choose the right path and you want to cheer for her when she does!

For more adventures of Shiraz, look for POSH AND PREJUDICE (SLING THE BLING in Great Britain) due out in June 2009. For those of you that absolutely can not wait, you can get your hands on this and more in the series from Great Britain.

Diane Boukhalil says

I'm on chapter 2 right now. So far, so good! It's funny, & it story is really similar to our stories us girls have! Pretty funny.

--I'm now on page 111, I was on page 30 I didn't even notice I was that far! I was just so into the story, through out it, like so far where I reached.. there were some exciting events. But anyway, iim looking forward to reading more of it!

F I N A L L Y finished the book!

Patricia says

Okay, this one had me talking "funny" afterwards- a chav is a very lower-class English girl (read: juvenile delinquent), and Shiraz claims that she is not one, but her neighbors are. She is writing in a diary because her grandmother gave her one for Christmas. She starts out looking like a total airhead, obsessed with fashion and friends, doing okay in school, but not great, and worrying about her non-development in the boobs department and her inability to get along with the "lads" at school. In the end, she turns out to be a pretty good kid, who learns a lot from trial and error and personal family experience, and makes some wise decisions, too. Entertaining with lots of English slang that really did require the glossary at the back of the book, at times!

paula says

Shiraz Bailey Wood is a wannabe ghetto fabulous fifteen year old in Essex. That's Essex, near London, not Essex, near Baltimore, although they are weirdly similar. OUR Essex is a blue-collar community, with a reputation for teen pregnancy, lottery addiction, and recreational drug use. It also smells like poo, due to the proximity of the county's sewage treatment plant. (That's according to my colleague TinkerCinderBellaHontas, who grew up there, so don't email me.)

Shiraz's Essex is pretty similar. Her mom, who works at Essex's version of the OTB, cooks nothing that is not processed. Her family watches reality TV to the exclusion of anything else. Her favorite outfit is her pink tracksuit, accessorized with her biggest gold hoops.

And Shiraz speaks in this incessant drawly slang, half Cockney, half what is euphemistically called "urban". It's hilarious, it really is. For a school assignment, she has to write a letter of complaint.

"I have just spent two weeks of sheer unmitigated hell in a half-finished hotel, what was advertised as 'the most stunning jewel in the crown of this fabulous island.' Well if this is your most stunning jewel mate, you ain't got much bling bruv, 'cos this place was a right state and you are a proper liberty sending anyone there."

The whole book kind of reads like a stand-up comedy character gone long-form. Which we've seen - Jeff

Foxworthy has a whole slew of "redneck" books, about which, obviously, the less said the better. I used to entertain people with my excellent East Baltimore accent at parties ("Aoh yeah hon, all's zere wen 'at sugar plant sploded - ey was ambylances an pleece as fawr azzy ah could see!"), and I will bet you real money that Grace Dent has been doing her Shiraz impersonation for years. She loves this girl, like you love a trashy cousin who doesn't yet realize there's more to life than chain restaurants, reality TV, and the mall; and in the course of Shizza's year, her eyes begin to open.

It's so funny, and in the end, it's big-hearted and lovely. The slang will be an impediment for some readers, but there's an equally funny glossary in the back. For example: about *Last of the Summer Wine*, Shiraz says "This is the most boring 'comedy' in the universe... despite never being funny, it is on every week and always has been and always will be until the end of time due to the cast making a pact with Lucifer in 1982 and becoming immortal."

I for one? Really appreciate that explanation.

More like this on Pink Me: <http://pinkme.typepad.com>

Rachael says

Sixteen-year-old Shiraz Bailey Wood is not a chav. So what if she likes fake gold jewelry and hoodies? So what if the school she attends has been unfortunately nicknamed Superchav Academy? Just because she's poor doesn't mean she should be insulted as working class trash, but she doesn't really know how she can change her situation. When a strict new English teacher sees potential in Shiraz, she dares to hope that there's more to like than troublemaking and minimum wage. But as Shiraz's situation goes from bad to worse with her best friend practically dumping her and a falling out between her mother and sister, it seems everything is trying to discourage her from reaching for her dreams. Can this sweet and authentic girl find a way to rise above her situation?

Diva without a Cause, formerly inaccurately titled *Diary of a Chav*, is told in sometimes funny diary entries from the perspective of a working class British teen. As an American reader, I was somewhat confused by the unfamiliar British slang and put off by the poor grammar, although I assume the lingo is part of "keeping it real." That seems to be a big part of Shiraz's mentality, but unfortunately, that was one of the only real desires I could pinpoint for her character, and getting to the bottom of the "real" Shiraz was an entirely difficult task. Despite diary entries being traditionally deposits for someone's most innermost thoughts, I rarely felt like I was inside Shiraz's private life. The majority of the time, I felt like I was listening to an overdramatic gossip, which did more to annoy me than maintain my interest. Poor characters aside, I did enjoy this unusual portrayal of working class culture because even if I don't agree with all of their values, as displayed primarily by Shiraz's mother, I recognize them as authentic and universal, not just localized in London. At the same time, though, I was kind of disappointed there was no real statement made about these ideas, unless they speak for themselves; for example, Shiraz's mom thinks the way to live a comfortable life is to marry a rich man, not to get an education and a good job, and while Shiraz does seem to want to continue with her schooling, nothing further is said on the matter. The feminist within me is disgusted and Shiraz's own sister's feminist opinions do nothing to negate that. I really don't know what Dent was trying to accomplish with this novel, as the theme of rising above one's situation is rather feeble within this novel. I'm quite disappointed, because I was looking for a fast, fun read that *Diva without a Cause* didn't live up to.

Diva without a Cause is enjoyable enough and may be liked by fans of the more gritty *Ballads of Suburbia*

by Stephanie Kuehnert and The Brothers Torres by Coert Voorhees. I only reluctantly look forward to this novel's sequel *Posh and Prejudice* because the continuation of Shiraz's story actually has potential.

reposted from <http://thebookmuncher.blogspot.com>

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

This book was suggested to me by a teenager in England who was laughing at me because I didn't know what a "chavvy area" was. Bet she didn't think I'd actually read it.

Steve lovell says

Shiraz Bailey Wood, the main character, is the Kylie Mole of the C21st, Brit version. Assuming 'chav' is Britspeak for 'bogan', just as the aforementioned Aussie comedic icon magnified and lampooned the teenage culture of the western suburbs (Melbourne and Sydney - or my own Hobart's northern), Grace Dent does the same for Greater London.

There is much to enjoy in this exaggerated (one can only hope) version of how life is seen through the eyes of Shiraz and her mates, most of whom are similarly and wonderfully labelled. Through all the chaos of their outwardly dysfunctional families and relationships, love in the end shines through - particularly after Shiraz hilariously achieves one of her seemingly unreachable ambitions.

There are many positive messages to be had, but I suspect the 'foreign' lingo may be a tad incomprehensible to some antipodean youth - the book obviously being designed for the English market. A school library here could do worse though than investing in this or its sequels. The book was a delight throughout and reading it produced many a chortle.
