



My Most Excellent Year

Steve Kluger

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Dear Anthony:

I appreciate your recent interest, but I'm not accepting applications at this time. Your letter will be kept in our files and someone will get back to you if there is an opening. Thank you for thinking of me.

Respectfully,
Alejandra Perez

P.S. It's not Allie. It's Ale.

Meet T.C., who is valiantly attempting to get Alejandra to fall in love with him; Alejandra, who is playing hard to get and is busy trying to sashay out from under the responsibilities of being a diplomat's daughter; and T.C.'s brother Augie, who is gay and in love and everyone knows it but him.

My Most Excellent Year Details

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From Reader Review My Most Excellent Year for online ebook

Chachic says

Originally posted here.

The moment I saw my good friend Maggie of Young Adult Anonymous give *My Most Excellent Year* by Steve Kluger such a glowing review, I knew I would want to read it. I went on Goodreads and also realized that another friend, Flannery of The Readventurer, rated it highly. I wanted to grab a copy as soon as I could but since books are expensive here in Singapore, I waited until I was in Manila before buying the paperback. I've had my copy since December last year and only felt like reading it recently. I was in the mood for a fun contemporary YA read and thought *My Most Excellent Year* would fit the bill. It was published in 2009 so I realized it's the perfect choice for a Retro Friday review.

I am happy to report that *My Most Excellent Year* lived up to my expectations. It is such a feel good, heartwarming kind of read. I have no idea why it isn't more well-known. It's been out for a while now and I think only a handful of my blogging buddies have read it. It's a good thing I love spreading the word about under-the-radar titles because I need to convince more people to read this. At first glance, I didn't think *My Most Excellent Year* was the kind of book that I would enjoy mostly because the story has alternating POVs (T.C., Augie and Alé) and their interests lie in American history and politics, baseball and musicals. While I love seeing musicals, I'm not a die-hard fan who knows all the songs, actors/actresses and notable performances. And I know next to nothing about baseball and American history. In spite of that, I was absorbed by the story because at its core, *My Most Excellent Year* is about family, friendship and first love. I was charmed by the thought of two boys, T.C. and Augie, deciding to be brothers when they were 6 years old. Not like two best friends who think of each other as brothers, they really act like siblings to the point that even their parents have gotten used to having two sons instead of just one. So they have a Mom, Dad and a Pop. They share their rooms in two households and they have vacations together. I thought it was so sweet how warm and accommodating their families were. This book has such great parents in it, I think it's worthwhile to point that out since we rarely see wonderful parents in YA.

During ninth grade, both T.C. and Augie have to deal with falling in love for the first time. It was so much fun to see them struggling to adjust to what they're feeling (especially Augie, who hasn't even figured out that he likes boys instead of girls). It was sweet how supportive they are of each other, not just in their love lives but also in their interests in general. Like T.C. would watch musicals with Augie even if he doesn't really enjoy them. Being great guys, it's not surprising when T.C. befriends a lonely, deaf six-year-old boy called Hucky and Augie was right there along with him. T.C. wanted to reach out to Hucky because he sees a young Augie in the little boy, while Augie thinks Hucky was exactly like T.C. when they were that age. I hope it doesn't seem too confusing that there are a lot of characters in the book because it was very easy to get to know the characters. I also really liked the format of the book – emails between various characters (I loved how even the parents email each other about their kids), IM messages and diary entries. I could relate to the format because that's also how I communicate with friends and family, especially now that I live away from home. This was such a lovely, immensely readable book, the kind that lets you end on a happy sigh. While younger in tone and feel compared to some of the other contemporary YA novels that I loved, I still highly recommend *My Most Excellent Year* to anyone who needs an uplifting type of read. I'm mighty

curious about the rest of Steve Kluger's back list.

Megan says

I absolutely loved this book.

It's not deep, you won't be crying your eyes out, but it's wonderful. It's funny and heartfelt and very sweet. At times, it definitely strays into the "unbelievable" side of things in terms of dialogue and the total lack of teenage drama, but I think that is part of what makes this book so enjoyable and unique. I can't think of another YA book I have read quite like this one, with these engaging characters and the flow of the novel.

A bit about my thoughts on the Deaf character follow in the spoiler.

(view spoiler)

Definitely one of my favorite books ever.

Lola says

I love this book.

From the very first chapter, I knew I was going to have fun reading this and do so with relish. The story was a fantastic medley of different characters from different age groups and with different personalities and dreams. Key word being "different." It was enjoyable because of its originality and the author's pleasant way of telling the story – he included instant messages, e-mails exchanged, quotes, lists, etc. All of those things crafted lifelike, spontaneous and animated narrators: T.C., Augie (his best friend) and Alejandra (T.C.'s love interest).

T.C., he was a quirky (in a sweet way), too mature for his fourteen years of age, determined, very intelligent, modest, caring and so endearing guy. In fact, there are plenty of more adjectives existing that I could use to describe him, but I'll leave it to that; you might want to uncloak him a little by yourself. I had NO IDEA I was going to fall in love with this character. I was actually expecting to care a lot more the gay one, but T.C. was exceedingly **boyfriend material**. When he first saw Alejandra, he sent her a horribly formal letter asking her out. Obviously, his letter was spurned. Still, he persisted. Meanwhile, between baseball games, he met this deaf little kid that helped him out a great couple of times with his pitching and whom he tried to befriend. I guess what endeared me so much about him was his relationships. With his dad, the kid, his best friend (he referred of him as his 'brother' – know what I'm saying?) and definitely Alejandro whom he didn't want to give up on.

Do you like reading novels written as diaries? Because that was how this story was told. The three main characters shared all their full thoughts with us and what I found most appealing was the fact that they also talked about others and not just themselves and their feelings, states of mind. Sometimes diaries can make book characters look self-centered or melodramatic but it definitely wasn't the case with the bits of diaries in

this book. We could see so much about their beautiful personalities through the characters' entries.

Augie made me think of Tiny from *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* to an unbelievable point. Because they were both very spirited, organizing a play and trying to find love, although I did think Augie to be less, hm, "*look at me!*" So it took my mind trying to separate those characters and consider them as two distinct human beings a great couple of times, but they could have been twins (or dating) by how similar they struck me as being. His affinity for Andy was however so fantastically cute. Things didn't go as expected between them but first love scenarios never missed to make me smile.

Overall, *My Most Excellent Year* was an authentic family, friendship story with enchanting bonds shimmering with throughout entertaining and witty dialogs/situations... and such cute scenes... *I dare you to resist its charm.*

Jaime says

I was not going to buy this book. I already had two perfectly good paperbacks in hand. But then I read the first sentence, and I couldn't put it down. [Note to Ms. LaFontaine: I didn't mean to give you a hard time about this assignment, but "My Totally Excellent Year" would have been like so 1995, we'd have been laughed out of Brookline if anybody found out.] The subtitle's also a gem- 'a novel of love, Mary Poppins & Fenway Park.' That's right, this book was written for you, Kelly and Dr. B. And even if you're not that into the red sox or musical theatre, I think it'll charm the pants off you.

One thing I particularly enjoyed was this is a pretty realistic story. The kids lead more exciting than average lives, but in general, the major events of the book are not set off by Shakespearean setups of mistaken identity or missed notes- they're set up by the kids initiative. Similarly, this is a very happy book- the author has found plenty to write about in his wonderful characters and doesn't need to insert terrible tragedies to provide interest. And all of the characters- parents, adults, small dog- had me from the get go.

In short, I was sad when I finished this at 1 AM last night, because I want to keep listening in on these people's conversations, wandering around Brookline and Cambridge with them, and enjoying their attempts to delight each other. They surely succeeded in delighting ME.

Flannery says

I miss Boston. I miss walking through the Commons in the fall, drinking on roof decks in the summertime, riding the T and just getting off at random stops, shoveling my car out, pumpkin ale, my book club besties, Fenway franks, that feeling that a bar gets when a Dropkick Murphys song comes on, and perusing the Boston Public Library in Copley Square. Hell, I even miss the frakking BU students who ride the green line and the 57 TWO STOPS instead of just walking. This book almost made me physically sick with nostalgia. That's the kind of hold Boston can exert over a person--and I only lived there for a few years. I loved this book. It filled the Boston-shaped hole in my heart.

The author blurb on Goodreads does not tell me where Steve Kluger grew up, but if it isn't Boston/Brookline, I'll eat my own hand. Alright, don't worry too much about me, I'm back from visiting his website and he lives in Boston. I'm glad I checked him out because it confirms something else I'd been thinking—this book is very close to Kluger's heart. He wrote what he knows and is passionate about and did a fabulous job of it. I read a lot of science fiction, fantasy, romance, and speculative/dystopian fiction. All of

these genres are fun to read but I rarely connect with them on an emotional level. Young adult books often get a bad rap but I honestly can't think of an adult book that has moved me the way that several YA books (most recently this one and *The Piper's Son*, which I can't recommend highly enough) have--especially lately.

What do an Asian gay teenager, a (view spoiler) orphan, a single dad, the Hispanic daughter of a diplomat, Julie Andrews, and a same-sex couple, one of whom is a Congresswoman have in common? That's right, they are all characters in this book. People on the lookout for absolute realism should probably give this one a skip but I truly think they would be missing out. This book is about the little magical moments in life and it would be a shame if a reader couldn't just run with the story on this one. After all, we're supposed to be the dreamers, aren't we? Back to the story: TC Keller (Anthony Conigliaro Keller) is named for a famous Red Sox player, as are many other members of his extended family, including his father, Teddy. (after Ted Williams of baseball AND tunnel fame in Beantown) After losing his mother at age six, TC became best friends and brothers (of a sort) with Augie Hwong. Fast forward to high school and the two are now writing a school essay about their "most excellent year." (freshman year) Still best friends, the two are joined in their essay-writing by Alejandra Perez, TC's crush who recently moved to Brookline when her father accepted a position at Harvard.

The story is told in epistolary fashion and I think it is the better for it. Because we not only have sections of Augie, TC, and Alé's essays, but also snippets of news articles, IM conversations, parent/teacher conference transcripts, and letters, we get a feel for so many side characters. One of the best things about this book, if not THE best part, is how you get a feel for the community--not only the family members but also the school, the neighborhood and Red Sox Nation. Boston has a very community feel to it to begin with and I loved how the book really hit home (pun intended) on that note. I've lived all over the place but there aren't many cities where it is totally normal to go to little league or pick-up baseball games if you aren't a kid and don't have a kid on the team. And Kluger takes readers all over the city on dates and adventures. He just *gets it*.

This book is a wonderful example of getting relationships right. Parental relationships, lifelong friendships, sibling relationships (whether blood or otherwise), and I think the most moving relationship was that of mentor/big brother. I think Hucky Harper might be one of my favorite characters ever. TC first sees Hucky, a six-year old boy, watching his baseball game. After Hucky gives TC the pitch calls when TC is at bat with stunning accuracy, TC befriends him and they form an adorable relationship. Hucky, for the depressing reason in the spoiler above, is orphaned. (not at all depressing in itself but only because he was in the foster system *because of it*) He hasn't spoken to anyone in over a year and spends most of his time watching Mary Poppins. While the book is about what made that specific year the most excellent for TC, Augie, and Alé, I know it will be far up there in Hucky's life as well. The extent to which everyone in TC's life went to bring Hucky into their fold was heartwarming.

The blurb about this book indicates that it is about young love. I mean, I guess it is. Both Augie and TC spend most of their year developing meaningful relationships with classmates. When it comes down to it, I cared much more about the secondary storylines in this one. But don't get me wrong--I loved every bit of it.

The bottom line is that this book made me want to move back to Boston, find a cool house in Brookline, and start procreating.

SCB TBR Challenge; April - Teccc. Thanks!

Maggie says

When Flannery first recommended this book to me with the promise of Boston and baseball, my exact reaction was, "....." The opening paragraph of her review cracks me up because what **I** remember most about Boston is: rats. Lots and lots of rats. Since "everywhere" is too general, let me tell you 3 specific places where I saw a rat.

1. Subway (as in Eat Fresh®)
2. California Pizza Kitchen, Prudential Center
3. My dorm room

My friends refused to walk on my left because whenever I saw a rat charging out of the bushes, I'd push them out into the street. Excuse me for trying to save your life! Did no one see the episode of **Little House on the Prairie** where everyone in Walnut Grove nearly died of typhus?! That wasn't just a TV show, that was a PSA.

Second only to rats in Boston are Red Sox fans. The SAWX. I grew up watching sports (not baseball, as if) but nothing in my life prepared me for Red Sox Nation. I lived 5 minutes away from Fenway Park and got a very rude awakening the first (and only) time I tried to take the T after a game. My PTSD still prevents me from talking about it.

Imagine my surprise when not only did I end up finishing this book, I loved it. It reminded me that aside from the rats and the Sox, Boston was also where I first fell in love, strolled through a park at night while someone played the saxophone, and had a chocolate chip cannoli from Mike's Pastry. (Don't knock it til you've tried it! My love for Mike's has outlasted that first love.) Every so often, I need to be reminded that hope exists. I need it to wrap me in a bear hug and refuse to let go until I surrender because anything less won't work with me. Some Disney magic also helps.

My Most Excellent Year refers to the year Alejandra Perez and a 6-year-old named Hucky entered the lives of T.C. Keller and Augie Hwong. T.C. and Augie declared they were brothers in 1st grade and never looked back. T.C. had just lost his mother and he bonded with the quiet kid who was the one person who didn't look at him like he'd just lost his mother. Of course, Augie didn't stay quiet. Have you ever met a quiet Ethel Merman fan? While Augie shared his love of musicals during their weekly sleepovers, T.C. shared his love of baseball. When Alejandra (that's Alé with an é) transferred to their school freshman year and politely rejected T.C.'s offer to consider a relationship with her, while talking to Augie about musical theater, both boys were goners. Their story is told through journal entries, emails, IMs, and texts.

First, I loved that two of the main characters are minorities. This was such an issue for me growing up, and it's still an issue for me now, but it's so important to see last names like Hwong and Perez and not deal with stereotypical characterizations. Augie is the son of a Chinese immigrant mother and American-born Chinese father. His mother terrorizes the Boston theater community with her reviews for the Globe. Here's a sample of her review of *Carousel*:

"Nice songs to beat your wife to. Attend at your own risk."

She instilled her love of theater in Augie, but made sure to warn him about *Carousel* when he was 8. Alé is the daughter of diplomats and her father was the ambassador to Mexico until he accepted a position at Harvard. She's used to hobnobbing (and accidentally insulting) diplomats, actors, and (I'm assuming) Bono. Her closest friend before moving to Brookline was a Secret Service agent.

Second, I loved the fathers in this. T.C.'s dad, Ted, named after Ted Williams naturally, and Augie's dad, Craig, are such presences in their sons' lives. T.C. uses a vocabulary word in one of his journal entries and a few pages later, Ted ends up using the same word in an email to T.C.'s counselor. You can just see T.C. using it around the house with Ted, making up ridiculous sentences along the way.

Third, Augie Hwong is who I tried to get my little brother to be. Yes, the one who is now a big bad cop. I just think children, particularly boys, need a well-rounded education, especially of the musical variety. Also, I knew even back then that he was destined for a career involving weaponry so I wanted to get to him before the mouthbreathers did. Since I controlled the radio in the car (ah, the perks of being the oldest), I played a steady stream of Rent, Les Miserables, and Ragtime. (Wicked came later.) I was so proud when I heard him humming "Would you light my candle?" I was even prouder when Rent the movie came out and he went to watch it on his own.

This book had the same energy of Sorta Like a Rock Star and it was what I hoped Will Grayson Will Grayson would be. The format of journal entries and emails and texts made it an easy, fun read. You don't need to know all (or any) of the baseball and theater references to get this book. Just read a short synopsis of All About Eve so you understand one of my favorite Augie moments. I know it's not perfect, but it had so much heart that like Mary Poppins, **My Most Excellent Year** is practically perfect in every way.

Rating: 5/5 stars.

This was my last book in The Readventurer challenge and it was the perfect book to go out on. Thanks for the recs, Flann!

This review appears on Young Adult Anonymous.

Grace Cohen says

This is an absolutely ridiculous book and I smiled the entire time I was reading it.

Minli says

"If you don't like it, just lie."

A friend lent me her copy of Steve Kluger's *My Most Excellent Year* after I said I wished there were more novels that just happened to feature characters of diversity, instead of having their diversity carry the whole book. This is not to devalue books that specifically highlight a certain experience, but so few of them are equally entertaining as they are important. When was the last time I read about a black Mia Thermopolis or a gay Percy Jackson? I'm not interested in hearing that a character of colour will deter the majority of readers; as an Asian, I grew up identifying with white characters just fine. And if it is true, then doesn't it just highlight some of the problems in educating children (and adults) about cultural or gender sensitivity?

Enter *My Most Excellent Year*, cheekily subtitled A Novel of Love, Mary Poppins and Fenway Park. While it might not be 'serious,' I dare you to say this book isn't important. It does so many amazing things, all with a jazzy smile (or a well-placed 'um'). Told in instant messages, English homework assignments, memos and

press clippings, *My Most Excellent Year* is from the point of view three main characters: T.C., Augie and Alejandra. As the title suggests, it chronicles their most excellent year—the ninth grade.

T.C. and Augie decided to be “brothers” when they were eight, in every sense of the term but actual blood-relation. That means that even their parents get looped in on this, eventually realizing that they’ve each gained an extra son. In the beginning of ninth grade, Alejandra moves to their school. As an ambassador’s daughter, her family is frighteningly educated and well-connected. T.C. develops a crush on her, and she and Augie share some interests—but I don’t want to spoil the rest of the book because you should really read it!

It’s funny, because I didn’t even notice the diversity among the characters until I was past half-way and thought: oh, wow, this book features a guy with a dead parent, a gay Asian boy, a girl of Mexican descent, and a deaf kid. Kluger made me think about them as characters first, characters that inspire each other and inspire me. I love all of them. I would let Augie pick out my clothes, I would invite Alejandra to my book club, and I would even suffer a baseball game if T.C. were coming with me. Even the parents (and one hilarious guidance counselor) were adults I’d totally want on my PTA.

In addition, there are two romances in the novel, one gay and one straight. And both were equally adorable and tingly. TINGLY.

As for how realistic it is... how often is real life entertaining? Or more entertaining than the son of Zeus or the just-discovered princess of a European country? I’m not sure how realistic it is for the CIA to get a couple of teenagers seats to the World Series, or Liza Minelli asking to speak to your best friend. Also, two random boys getting past security at a Julie Andrews benefit? Why not. If an umbrella can help a nanny fly, anything can happen.

Eh?Eh! says

I haven’t quite officially finished this book but I can already see that it’s going to be a happy ending. Nothing bad happens! It’s that perfect department store window, mannequins placed just so. It’s a half-hour sitcom with laugh track. It’s those people down the street you kind of hate, the perfect family with the perfect lawn and the perfect future ahead of them (not the perfection that hides eeeevil secrets, I mean the annoyingly perfect).

The book is a series of school essays (journal entries), emails, IMs, and articles. Each chapter is from a different character POV. Best friends TC & Augie and Alejandra look back at freshman year.

It’s all so extremely ideal I had to “pfft!” the pressure out every once in a while. Especially Augie’s story, which was so unbelievably painless. Annoying things: You can see the effort to show diversity. The little chapter-ending exclamations weren’t as funny as they tried to be. Life is not that perfect!

But it’s also a fun read, where it’s okay that nothing insurmountable happens because I just listened to the news and man is it depressing out there. Give me a moment of fake-happy to recover. YA summer!

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

4 stars for being one of the most heartwarming books ever.

My Most Excellent Year is a multi-medium contemporary about three kids; high school class clown T.C., theater kid Augie, and the absolutely badass Alejandra. This book succeeds mainly because of the main three characters' interesting personalities. Each one is unique and interesting

Alejandra and T.C.'s romance is completely free of instalove. Their banter-filled relationship was so fun to read about. Kluger also does a great job with Augie's budding relationship. However, possibly my favorite part was the feel of friendship and community throughout the school.

I love how heartwarming this book is while still feeling real. This book gives me hope for the human race; all the characters are flawed, but they're all so *good*. Definitely recommended to fans of contemporary and well-written romance.

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Catie says

3 1/2 stars

I am just not cut out for this kind of book. I am that kid that, at age six, figured out that Santa does not exist and then pressured my mom into confessing all. No, I was not upset. I was triumphant. It's not that I don't have a heart or an imagination; it's just that both of these things have always been firmly rooted in reality. If I were in Mary Poppins having a tea party, that table would be made of solid granite and would be heavily anchored to the ground. No amount of pun filled joking would lift that sucker. *However*, if I dig deep, and tell my cynical, realistic neurons to just shut the hell up for a minute, I can enjoy myself. This book is very charming and sweet, not to mention quite funny.

This book is hard to summarize. It's about re-discovering childhood and magic, and having new experiences, and getting out of the shadows and into the spotlight. The story is told with journal entries, emails, chat sessions, and letters. There are three major narrators: T.C. and Augie, who decided to be brothers at age six and have been inseparable ever since, and Alejandra (Ale), who is the privileged daughter of diplomats and new on the scene. At the beginning of their freshman year of high school, T.C. is falling for Ale (who detests his very presence), and Augie is just realizing that he's gay. When T.C. meets a six year old deaf boy named Hucky, he finds himself remembering the magic that his own mother brought into his life. All three of these kids are trying to figure out who they are, and this book chronicles a very formative, heartwarming, adventurous year in their lives.

This book is witty and at times laugh out loud funny, but one of my main complaints is that none of these characters sound at all like teenagers. In fact, they all sound a bit similar (even the parents!). They all have a snappy, clever sense of humor and they all come across vaguely middle aged. Augie, Ale, Augie's mother, and sometimes even T.C. all reference 1950's and 1960's musicals quite frequently. T.C. and his father are obsessed with the Boston Red Sox. Since I am neither a fan of baseball (hate it!) nor musicals (there's really only one kind that I like), this book lost me quite a bit. I probably didn't understand at least 75% of the references.

There is no doubt, when reading this book, that it's pretty much a guaranteed super happy ending. So, this is

where the scrooge in me comes out and says...it's too happy! There's no worry or tension or build-up. With every problem that arises, there is a nice, neat solution. I think that this takes away a lot of the potential lure of the plot – with such a foregone conclusion, why do I need to keep reading?

Okay, so I am willing to consider that the major draw of this book is not in fact the story. I think that the best thing about this book is the sheer positivity of it all. As much as it sort of sickens me, I do feel that it's *very* fitting for a book that's all about believing in magic. So, if you are a much more positive person than I am, and you also happen to love baseball and musicals, I say this book is a great choice!

Perfect Musical Pairing

Augie, Augie, Augie. You really need to get out of the 1950's! Did you know that there's a whole category of musicals that you don't seem to know anything about? Let me just whet your appetite with this world celebrated hit song: Chaiyya Chaiyya, from the movie Dil Se...

I guarantee, once you see the amazing dance moves of "King Kahn," you will no longer covet the girls' parts in the musicals you adore so much. I say you and Ale re-enact this little number next year, complete with train car. Hey, you guys managed to learn ASL in like 2 months right? I'm sure Hindi will be no problem. Also, did you know that Bollywood romances tend to be sweet and clean, just like your book? For some reason, though, when I am watching a 4 1/2 hour movie with flashy musical numbers that's only about 10% in English, my scrooge pathways are bypassed. So maybe that's the key for your next book!

Jim says

4.5 Stars

Wonderful! Funny, insightful, obsessive but in a good way... and unashamedly, universally romantic.

Should I admit that I knew all the movie stars mentioned, and all of their movies? Oh, and Mary Poppins is still one of my favs (true for everyone in this house).

P.S. I learned about this book from Flannery's wonderful review, which I strongly recommend (along with the book!).

~Tina~ says

This is an incredible story!!

This book is written entirely in assignment form, e-mails, texts, diary entries and journals, so at first I thought this would be distracting since I'm not use to this style and usually don't prefer it. But, I liked it and thought the way this book was delivered was very well put together and only added to it's appeal.

My Most Excellent Year tells the tale of three people, TC, Alejandra, and Augie (and then later on Hucky) as they tell about there most excellent year and then some...

These characters were very well developed which isn't something I expected with this type of writing format, thinking the characters would be lost somewhere amongst the letters and e-mails, but sure enough, these characters are very defined.

I loved there story, there personalities and how they are linked.

This was a very touching, amusing and magical book that really took me by surprise, I really love when books do that!

An Excellent Read!

Thomas says

My Most Excellent Year is the story of three teens that are reflecting on their freshman year of high school, hence the title. They are doing it as an assignment during junior year, so the story is made up of letters, journal entries, and other writings. T.C. is in love with Ale but doesn't know how to tell her. Ale is deciding whether to pursue her own interests or to try to live up to her parent's expectations. And Augie, T.C.'s brother, is trying to figure out what true love is.

To put it mildly, I was disappointed with this novel. It sounded interesting and I thought the writing style was unique, but it never really came together as a whole. The characters were interesting but not very convincing, their three separate voices blended together and sometimes I couldn't figure out who was narrating during certain portions of the book. Also, the plot had a little bit too much going on. While it is fiction, and the author is allowed to make stuff up, there was a bit too many story lines that were either over-used or underdeveloped.

I didn't emotionally connect to any of the characters. The book was published in 2008, but the teen speak utilized in the novel sounded like it dated way back, like maybe even past 2000. I give this book two stars because at times it was funny (either intentionally or unintentionally) and sometimes I liked Augie. For reasons other than those, I probably wouldn't recommend this book to any of the teenagers I know.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

5 Sickeningly Sweet Stars

T.C., Alé and Augie are high-schoolers who have been assigned an English lesson of journaling their "most excellent year". Follow along through these journal entries, chats, I.M.s, etc. as the three come of age and come into their own.

Obviously, this one isn't ever going to win a Pulitzer, but judging the book for its genre – it is absolutely worthy of 5 stars. I don't care if it's completely cliché, the characters are too mature to be 14, the plot isn't realistic. So what? Sometimes it's just perfect to read something that makes you feel so good. It's so saccharine sweet that I'm fairly certain I have a cavity and my face is going to hurt from smiling for DAYS. Steve Kluger, where have your books been all my life????

Deeze says

Well the ride is over and I'm feeling pretty sad. I hate turning the last page when the book is so damn good.

That said I urge anyone looking for a fun trip into the minds of 3 teenage school kids (with a 6 year old and a few adults throwing their two cents), in to read this book.

This is a story about love, life and family. It is told through the Diary entry's and various emails and IM messages that are typical of Steven Kluger's style.

TC, Augie, and Alejandra are the main talkers in this story. Through them we learn about family, growing up, falling in love and most importantly that dreams can come true if you work for them.

This book had me laughing out loud most of the time, and yet still had me needing a few tissues. If Hucky doesn't break your heart I seriously doubt you have one.

I wish I had the words to do this book the justice it deserves. Instead all I can do is urge everyone to read it. I'm betting you wont regret it.

I would love to see a follow up book. To meet TC, Augie , Alejandra and Hucky a few years down the line would be a dream come true.

Chelsea says

I'm in love!

I'm trying to come up with a way this book could have been more perfectly tailored to my interests, and I'm failing miserably.

It's a brilliant combination of Jaclyn Moriarty's banter, wacky characters, and epistolary flair, a fully appropriate level of loathing for all things Yankee (specifically Mr. Bucky Bleepin' Dent) to complement the Carlton Fisk adoration (brilliantly discussed in The Greatest Game, for those who are interested), an absolute adoration of Julie Andrews and all she stands for, a dash of E. Lockhart's Dramarama, and a handful of truly wonderful characters.

Funny, touching, tons of fun, and with a pop culture reference for everyone, this is an absolute must read.

Kluger's The Last Days of Summer just jumped about 100 spots up my to-read list.

GraceAnne says

My favorite YA novel of the year so far. It pulls every single heartstring and makes you glad it did. I really did laugh and cry, and sometimes both at once. Completely over the top, and yet somehow utterly believable.

Kristi says

My feelings are kind of torn about this one. There's no doubt that the book is full of hilarious moments. But sometimes the funny felt a little forced. All of the characters are so clever and amusing and witty that sometimes I wanted to scream that real people aren't like this! (At least not where I'm from - maybe Boston is a whole 'nother world.) All of the characters of course had the exact same sense of humor, and their voices started to sound an awful lot alike after a while. And some of the subplots are so unbelievable and tied up so neatly that it jolted me out of the story. Still, there were quite a few times while reading that I literally laughed out loud, and that's fairly unusual for me. So I guess maybe I'll give it one thumb up instead of two.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Randstostipher "tallnlankyrn" Nguyen for TeensReadToo.com

T.C., originally Anthony Conigliaro Keller, was born into a family who loves baseball, and speaks with a very distinct accent. Like his family, T.C. loves the sport and practically knows all there is to know about baseball. It certainly helps him with his grades; if only it could help him get the girl of his dreams. With quite an odd family, a knack at frustrating those around him, making sure he only gets a B+ on everything (except for algebra, since he isn't a poser), and being a trendsetter, T.C.'s life completely changed when his mother passed away.

Augie, T.C.'s non-biological, Chinese brother, became his best friend after his mother died, helping him cope. With a love for theater, movies, and everything dramatic, Augie definitely hasn't found his true identity yet, even though everyone around him, especially the ones he loves, has. Besides theatherics, Augie is a pretty good soccer player, especially when he is playing with T.C. Of course, these distractions can't possibly pull his mind away from how his heart is pulling him in a very different direction.

Alejandra, a.k.a. T.C.'s dream girl, has never fit in, both at school or home. With a father who was the ambassador to Mexico, her dream was never with politics like her brother but more towards dance, which she must keep a secret. Because of her father, Alejandra has been able to meet some very famous politicians and celebrities. Of course, all of the famous people she met didn't help her status in school, since she was automatically considered stuck-up. But T.C. still loves her, except she doesn't love him back, or so she thinks. Not one to hide her opinions, who wouldn't be scared of her?

Beginning in their late junior year, the three flash back to their freshmen year... their most excellent year.

The year where love, sexuality, identity, friendship, and strength were discovered. Each one writing in the diaries for their English class, all addressed to an important person: T.C. to his mama, Augie to the diva of the week, and Alejandra to Jacqueline, the wife of her favorite president, JFK.

Laughter, tears, and relief will be felt by not only the characters but also the readers. **MY MOST EXCELLENT YEAR** takes three very distinct, honest teens who all have problems of their own, and who need each other desperately in the end. Steve Kluger allows the reader to have a close interaction with the characters, who are all very well-developed and defined, making the story all the more enjoyable.
