



The Hunger

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Fifteen-year-old Paula's perfectionism drives every facet of her life, from her marks in Grade 10 to the pursuit of a "perfect body." A history project brings her face to face with her grandmother's early life and, as she delves deeper, she is disturbed to find eerie parallels between her own struggles and what she learns of the past.

As Paula slowly destroys the very body she's trying to perfect, her spirit is torn between settling for her imperfect life or entering the shadowy mystery of her grandmother's Armenian past. The shimmering Euphrates River beckons her, but, as she soon discovers, there are many things worse than imperfection.

The Hunger Details

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From Reader Review The Hunger for online ebook

Stacey says

I have been an avid reader of all of Skrypuch's books and have been impressed with them all. She writes well-researched books that draw on the reader's emotions and empathy and she presents information that is not prominent in publishing yet still accessible. This title fell short of that precedent. The link between the main character's eating disorder in the present and her past life experience of her great grandmother and aunt during the Armenian genocide felt odd and disconnected. I feel that I understood the message that the author was trying to relay, but it didn't work for me as a reader, especially since I had read *Daughter of War* (featuring the characters of the past life segment) and was enraptured by their story.

Jennifer says

It was so good to reread this book again, I believe this might be the only historical fiction novel I've ever read and it was so good. The main character is relatable in the way that she's struggling with the public and how she feels about her image as well as educates on the facts of anorexia and bulimia. As for the historical fiction part. I was very surprised when I first read this and found that I like the historical fiction parts, which now that I'm rereading it I feel like I can finally move on to other historical fiction books that I own but have yet to read. My favorite part is how she was able to relate to the role in which she played in the novel and how eager she was to learn certain aspects of her life as well as her ancestors lives. This novel is a great pick me up and I'm happy I finally reread it.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

What a gripping description of bulimia! I don't think I've ever read one so realistic. I can only hope that the author isn't writing from experience. I was getting nauseous just reading about the vomiting! However, I now feel, as I never did before, that I really understand what it's like to think like a bulimic. If the story had been solely about Paula and her battle with bulimia, I would have given it 5 stars.

However, over halfway through the story it switched to a near-death experience, where Paula slips back in time into the body of an Armenian ancestor, Marta, who survived the Armenian massacre in Turkey during World War I. I understand why the author did this. Paula had an assignment about her Armenian ancestry, for one thing, and, for another, Marta's experience of starvation by the Turks contrasted with Paula's deliberate self-starvation. Also, the experience of living Marta's life for a short time made Paula realize that she wanted to live and helped her on the road to recovery.

I'm not sure that this time-travel thing worked, even though I found the section about Marta just as interesting and gripping as the sections about Paula. I think I would have preferred two separate books. I also thought it ended rather abruptly, but I'm not sure what else it needed. Nevertheless, I still give it 4 stars because it was such a good read.

By the way, the section about Marta is actually a sequel to *Daughter of War*, which deals at greater length with the early incidents of Marta's life as described in *The Hunger*.

Liralen says

Mm...very, very typical late-90s treatment of eating disorders, but with one notable twist: *Hunger* ties in the Armenian Genocide through Paula's understanding of her grandmother's experience. There's a big chunk of that in the second half of the book, but I would have loved to see more of it sooner—I know so little about the genocide, and I didn't come out of the book with all that more of an understanding. Part of that, I think, is that Paula doesn't know anything about it either, at the beginning of the book; her understanding is gained through a sort of...dream...she has when she's very ill. I'm reminded some of *If I Should Die Before I Wake* (which I adored when I was younger), but...either that gave me more info on the Holocaust than this does about the Armenian Genocide, or I already knew enough about the Holocaust for it not to matter, but here I really needed more info to fully appreciate it.

Anyway. It also remains interesting to see how eating disorders are treated in these older books...here we have another Miracle Doctor, but there's also just lots of little things, like Paula's parents being kept away from her entirely (the pendulum is, fortunately, swinging in the other direction now), and the hospital putting her on bedrest but not taking any steps to ensure she eats, and the fact that when she goes to a specialised clinic she has to agree to stay for a six-month minimum (which some people now and then *need*, but which clinics are much, much less likely to get away with now because of insurance policies). So nothing to write home about, but I did appreciate that twist of bringing in Armenia.

Amy Mathers says

<http://amysmarathonofbooks.ca/the-hun...>

Natalie Stait says

This is a book I read and sincerely appreciated in adolescence. I couldn't get it out of my head and had been searching for years for the title of this novel. I'm happy to have finally found it so I can revisit it someday.

stealthybadger says

Bluntly, *The Hunger* by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch has been a flawed book. Several other mixed reviews mention its positive aspects: the historical accuracy, the evidence of research done for the latter half of the novel. They also mention the negative, weaker aspects, which I too picked up on. They include a certain rocky transition, which I thought was the weakest point and will discuss later, and a lack of character depth, which is an opinion some may not share.

The book revolves around two characters. Paula claims the first half, dealing with her serious anorexic and bulimic issues. The reader will explore the poor choices she makes, such as losing emotional control, buying fatty foods then purging, and refusing help offered by those around her. The latter half involves the similarly-named Marta, whose life takes place in the Armenian Genocide of 1925-1923. Here, Marta

struggles to stay alive, cherishing the very food that Paula deemed so horrible. The two characters are connected through (SPOILER BEGIN) a link I thought was weak in my opinion, as Paula only began to have interest in her Armenian descent after being assigned a history project about her ancestors. Personally I felt the link between them should have been stronger, to build a deeper connection between the very different two main characters.

The section I thought was weakest was the halfway transition I mentioned earlier. What happens is Paula goes out for a vigorous jog in her weak condition, and subsequently faints from exhaustion. Then she has what I believe was intended to be a near-death experience, which is set engulfed in white light, still waters, and lifeless sand while viewing the events of her own life. She is beckoned forth by a vision of Marta, and the two switch roles by “stepping into” each other, all in a course of 4 ¼ pages. Overall, this section felt rushed, as if Skrypuch, the author, struggled to find a way to transition between two very different storylines. (SPOILER END). Perhaps the two storylines of Paula and Marta would have been better in two separate novels, as the two share little between them other than Armenian family relation, and an opposite view on the value of food. If the author insists on having them in the same book, an alternate transition, or smoother, longer transition would have been more effective.

On a more positive note, I thoroughly enjoyed the historical accuracy. Even if the book does not explicitly take the path of a real-life account (though the author’s grandmother had direct input and experience during the genocide), the heat of the desert and the fight for life feels very authentic. There is a strong quote from Adolf Hitler which is mentioned multiple times, and somewhat defines the second half of the novel: “after all, who today remembers the Armenians?” Just this quote alone makes the book an informative piece for information about the Armenian Genocide, and an appropriate read for those suffering from anorexic conditions. If you can tolerate two very different topics in one book, and tolerate a little bit of writing roughness, it makes a satisfying and educational read.

Ivy Melcher says

Paula is a typical fifteen year old whose life revolves around her looks, and body image. Paula is a perfectionist and she has this goal to achieve the perfect body. Then at school she is tasked with a history project and she goes to her grandma for help. As she learns about her grandmas past she notices similarities between her life and the past. Slowly Paula is ruining her body and eventually she has to make a choice. Choose to live an imperfect life where she can't achieve the perfect body or learn about her grandmothers mysterious past.

This book is very creepy as it does deal with body image and a creepy past. I would use caution when reading this book simply because of the pursuit to achieve a perfect body. However, I did enjoy this story and the messages it deals with. Growing up I struggled with body image and in a way I still do. So in that way I was able to relate to the story but for me it was a little hard to read.

Diana Flores says

This book I find it amazing, the author did great job in the transformation it was really creative.

penelopewanders says

I was looking for a book about the Armenian genocide to use with a class of teenagers. This was recommended to me, and it certainly is an interesting book to read with a class - but the focus is much more on eating disorders than the Armenian genocide. I'm pretty sure this would not work well with the group of boys I'll have in that class, although it's clear that anorexia is not a "girls only" theme.

So as a book about the journey of an anorexic, it's very good - at times borderline TMI, but I think that's probably ok too. There are some suggestions for further reading at the back -I'll try to see what I can find there.

Sandra Strange says

Paula's parents don't notice when she turns anorexic/bulimic because dad is too busy being proud at her running and mom is too busy with her own life. Trying to complete a history project, she begins to delve into her grandmother's past. The past becomes all too real when Paula's body shuts down because of self starvation and she is sucked into reliving her great grandmother's history as an Armenian orphan struggling to survive in the midst of the Armenian Turkish massacres of the early twentieth century. Though the protagonist is only fifteen, this book is suitable to high school readers. It is positive, but there is graphic detail of her bulimia and also graphic violence.

Ninjalurking says

"The Hunger" by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch was quite honestly a mediocre read. Centered around 15-year-old Paula, the novel focuses on her battle to attain the ideal figure and the personal struggles she confronts throughout her battle with bulimia. However, more than partway through the story, the perspective changes as Paula is transported back in time to the early 1900s. She delves into the life of Marta, a young Armenian girl on the brink of death during the Armenian Massacre of the first World War, and Paula is forced to relive the inhumane atrocity of her own ancestors' pasts. Upon returning to reality, Paula comes to be aware of the value of life and how the detriment she is causing to her body is for no good reason, especially when people have experienced pain as brutal as Marta's.

I was pleased to see that the novel was thoroughly researched. Plenty of facts on Armenian history were provided in a way that was easily comprehensible for the intended audience. Paula's symptoms and bulimic behaviour also seemed to be accurate and were described graphically in order to convey a negative outlook on disordered eating. Not only does Skrypuch illustrate many of the horrendous consequences of anorexia and bulimia, but the author also implicitly states the importance of seeking help, and how crucial the role of family is in recovering from an illness.

On the other hand, I found that the novel was poorly structured, the author's style was far from ideal and the second story introduced halfway through was irrelevant. The change of focus from eating disorders to the Armenian massacre was confusing, as we were only beginning to get acquainted with Paula's character. Although it was related to Paula's grade 10 history project, the time travel took away from the original story when I believe more time should have been spent describing the horrors of eating disorders in order to more effectively emphasize the gravity of such mental disorders. When dealing with as mature a subject as eating

disorders, we can assume the target audience would be teens who can relate to this sort of situation.

However, the vocabulary used in the novel was fairly basic for a teen audience.

Finally, I am thoroughly dissatisfied with the shallowness of the characters. There was a lack of insight into their lives which resulted in the novel being unsuccessful in allowing readers to develop an emotional connection to the characters. In my opinion, the novel would have been much more enjoyable if it was solely about Paula's eating disorder. While it may be somewhat overused, anorexia and bulimia remain to be appealing and chilling topics to many teens. Therefore, adding the element of history to it was unnecessary, and would be better off in a completely separate book.

Personally, I would not recommend this book, as it was poorly written and only mildly entertaining, save for the fact that I was able to relate the issues faced to my own life. If you are looking for a deep, thoughtful book with a great deal of imagery and vivid characters, I would pass this one by.
