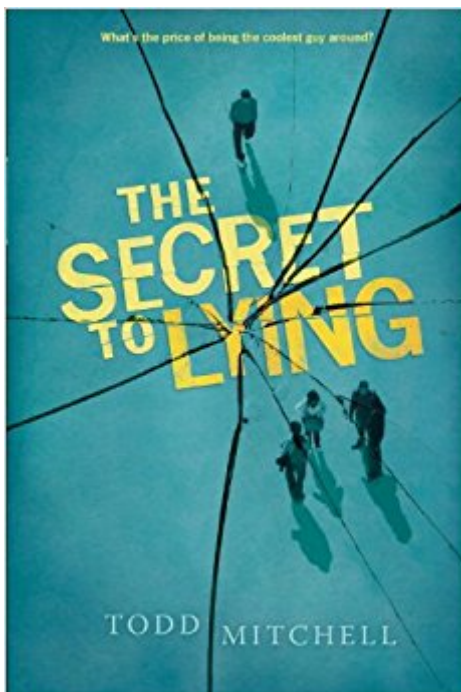


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The Secret To Lying



Synopsis

A teenage boy's self-reinvention gets out of control in a sharp, funny, poignant, and compulsively readable novel that gives a familiar theme a surprising twist. James was the guy no one noticed – just another fifteen-year-old in a small town. So when he gets into an academy for gifted students, he decides to leave his boring past behind. In a boarding school full of nerds and geeks, being cool is easy. All it takes is a few harmless pranks to invent a new James: fighter, rebel, punk. Everyone's impressed, except for the beautiful "Ice Queen" Ellie Frost and the mysterious ghost, an IM presence who sees through his new identity. But James is riding high, playing pranks and hooking up with luscious Jessica Keen. There's just one thing awry: he's starting to have vivid dreams of being a demon-hunting warrior, a thrill that is spilling over into dangerous and self-destructive acts while he's awake. As he's drawn deeper into his real-life lies and his dream-world conquests, James begins to wonder: What's the price for being the coolest guy around?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 – 11 In his old high school James, 15, was unremarkable, "the guy no one noticed." When he's offered a scholarship to a public boarding school for intellectually gifted students, he accepts. He is done being a dull, boring nobody and sees ASMA (American Science and Mathematics Academy) as a chance to reinvent himself. How hard could it be to impress a bunch of overachieving nerds and geeks? With purple spiked hair, grunge clothes, and a few little

lies, James has most of them convinced he's from the wild side, a street-fighting punk with pyromaniac tendencies. His scars help propagate the tough-guy image, though they are real, and self-inflicted. James's character is compelling as he straddles the line between fantasy and reality, builds friendships, pulls off outrageous pranks, and deals with the angst of first love. He and his friends are real teens—funny, intelligent, and still a bit vulnerable. Sensitive readers will make an emotional connection with James and root for him to overcome his demons, both real and imagined. Teens will also relate to the poignant IMs between him and the enigmatic persona of ghost44, who tells James, "I can't be myself in person." This coming-of-age novel is imbued with wry humor and offers a thoughtful take on the importance of learning to live in your own skin.

—Patricia N. McClune, Conestoga Valley High School, Lancaster, PA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

When 15-year-old nobody James gets accepted to a boarding school for gifted kids, he has a rare chance to completely reinvent himself. He dyes his hair purple and wows his new friends with tales of street fighting and carjacking, which helps attract the attention of girls—admiring looks from gothy Jess and scowls from perfect-girl Ellie—for the first time ever. Somewhere in the mix, he also starts cutting himself, chugging cough syrup, and engaging in increasingly reckless behavior, more out of boredom rather than any deep-seated psychological trauma. Just in case readers need things further spelled out, he also starts having vivid dreams of conquering demons. This isn't quite a teen problem novel, but it walks a similarly fine line: serious issues, taken too heavily, risk melodrama or didacticism. To the end, tactical strikes of humor and perceptive insights (not cutting feels—“like tasting water”) keep this investigation of teen identity issues aloft, and the unusual focus on a male cutter helps set it apart. Grades 9-12. --Ian Chipman --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Although it was many years ago, I remember vividly the social challenges and emotional adjustments of my teen years. "The Secret to Lying" rekindled bittersweet memories of my stressful youth. Todd Mitchell expertly guides us through the multicursal labyrinth of confusion and rebellion so characteristic of adolescence. The story begins with James Turner struggling for minimal recognition in his high school. He is the geek, the gifted student who is not challenged in school - so finds it boring. His High School principal introduces him to the American Science and Mathematics Academy (A.S.M.A), a boarding school for gifted students. Beginning the next

academic year, James transfers to A.S.M.A. The new school represents an opportunity for James to present a new face to his world. Now, at last, James can remake his image into one his peers will accept. At last James can be accepted by his society, not as a brainy nerd, but as a cool kid respected by all. So, James lies to everyone he meets and starts to persuade them that he is a hard case who lived a violent life. James invents stories of pranks and gang activity. As his fellow students listen and begin to accept his invented self, James exaggerates more. Finally, James becomes accepted as a cool kid who is a bit crazy. Some even fear him. The Secret to Lying is not your usual novel. Todd Mitchell tells us a story but his style is different. Mitchell alternates from narrative to "Instant Messages" (IM), and then to imaginative dream sequences that deepen the psycho-social message of human growth and development. Each style paints an intentionally different tale, yet all combine in the end. James narrates most of the character interaction and normal plot development. As he narrates his tale, he offers his impression of the people and events he encounters. James shares his schemes, pranks and his thoughts. His intrigues impress and often entertain the students but irritate some faculty. Early in his new life at A.S.M.A. a fellow student, identified only as ghost44 begins IM conversations with James. The IM sections function as James' only real check on his honesty. Ghost44 sees James beneath his false image and causes him to sometimes relax from the conflict within himself and his fellow students. James has vivid dreams with complex creatures from his own psycho. These dreams counterbalance his false image in awareness. They seem to be an internal emotional struggle of James with his personal demons. By the end of the novel the three "tales" converge and the story reaches resolution. I strongly recommend "The Secret of Lying". Todd Mitchell writes an intriguing novel.

The Secret to Lying is a quick paced, absorbing read of teen angst, identity crisis, and kids searching for their place at school. I'm still working my way into reading the world of YA and found this book to be captivating, though at times a bit predictable. Mr. Mitchell does a good job with blending scenes from the real world and those of the MC's dreams. Dialogue is credible and fitting with characters. Spouts of wittiness are woven throughout. Overall, I enjoyed this book and believe young teen readers would find it entertaining as well.

This book is a wonderful read, and I could not put it down. The characters are intriguing, easy to connect with, and easy to love. I couldn't put it down. This book teaches what it means to discover who you are, and should be required reading for any child that plans to grow up.

As a graduate of the school the book is based on I really appreciated the memories reading this story brought back. While the story is "fictional", it isn't hard for me to imagine everything in it (outside of the dreams) actually occurring.

Once I started reading this, I couldn't stop. Its a great story of a teen trying to re-invent himself, with a lot of unexpected twists and turns. This book won't let you down. I also met the author, he is a very nice guy, with a few other great books such as The Traitor King. I would recommend this book to everyone!!!!

I could not put this book down! I started it on a trip and when I arrived to my destination I found myself picking up this book instead of looking at the sights. This story is so relatable to people of all ages, not just teens. I am impressed by the depth at which the characters were developed. I now look for them in people around me. I'll be looking for the sequel!

A well written tale of a young man trying to invent himself again with a change in school. Clever twists and creative storytelling make for an enjoyable read from start to finish. A real coming of age story of a journey to become comfortable embracing your identity. Loved it!

One of my favorite books!

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