



Teenage Waistland

Lynn Biederman , Lisa Pazer

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“You all believe that losing one-hundred-plus pounds will solve everything, but it won’t. Something far heavier is weighing on you, and until you deal with that, nothing in your lives will be right.”

–Betsy Glass, PhD, at first weekly group counseling session for ten severely obese teens admitted into exclusive weight-loss surgery trial

Patient #1: Female, age 16, 5'4", 288 lbs.

Thrust into size-zero suburban hell by remarried liposuctioned mom. Hates new school and skinny boy-toy stepsister.

Body size exceeded only by her big mouth.

Patient #2: Male, age 16, 6'2", 335 lbs.

All-star football player, but if he gets “girl surgery,” as his dad calls it, he’ll probably get benched. Has moobies—male boobies. Forget about losing his V-card—he’s never even been kissed.

Patient #3: Female, age 15, 5'6", 278 lbs.

Morbidly obese and morbid, living alone with severely depressed mother who won’t leave her bed. Best and only friend is another patient, whose dark secret threatens everything Patient #3 believes about life.

Told in the voices of patients Marcie Mandlebaum, Bobby Konopka, and Annie “East” Itou, Teenage Waistland is a story of betrayal, intervention, a life-altering operation, and how a long-buried truth can prove far more devastating than the layers of fat that protect it.

Contains an afterword by Jeffrey L. Zitsman, MD, director of the Center for Adolescent Bariatric Surgery at Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital

Teenage Waistland Details

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Loveliest Evaris says

Mixed feelings from this book.

At the very beginning it was somewhat compelling, but I got confused because I didn't notice the narrator shift between chapters. Once I cleared that up I was invested into the characters almost right away, with the exception of Bobby whom I really didn't care that much for. He just wasn't as compelling as the girls. Up until the middle mark I was having a good time reading it, and then when the "secret" came out I was floored by how out of left field it was. Then everything became as clunky as the beginning and to add to the misery, it became very cheesy and unbelievable and touchy-feely. By the end everything was wrapped up nicely, which made me gag a bit because I'm sorry but I would not have forgiven Char for anything she did. At all. She got off too easily. So I had this at 3.75 stars in my head and then 3 stars and now I'm giving it a final score of 2 stars because of the dramatic decrease in quality over the course of the book.

miteypen says

This book was unsparing in its look at the ways our society deals with childhood obesity. She covers just about every approach possible, from fat camps to parents' support groups, and ends up admitting that there is no one approach that is effective for all children and that fighting childhood obesity is a complicated, frustrating endeavor, especially for parents.

The author herself was never terribly overweight, but grew up obsessed about getting fat. This is actually a sub-theme of the book: the way that we make our children fat-conscious, even when they don't really have a weight problem.

I recommend this book for anyone who is concerned about how we handle the problem of childhood obesity in our society. This isn't a book just for parents and in fact, even teens could get a lot out of this book. The bottom line is, we need to think more empathetically and comprehensively about the problem and this book will help us to do so.

Chelsea says

Marcie Mandlebaum knows she is grossly overweight, and can't help feeling as though her mother would love her more if only she was thinner. Bobby is a mediocre football player with dreams of being a star, but he has his "moobies" and his father's expectations to hurdle first. Annie "East" Itou feels sad all the time since her brother moved away and her mother refuses to leave her bedroom. The only time she feels half normal is when she is pigging out with Char. Char is East's best friend who is also hiding a huge secret, one that could unravel East's entire life. On the inside, these four teens are seemingly very different. On the outside, however, they are all morbidly obese. After going through a series of tests and interviews, they all qualify for a controversial Lap-Band clinical trial, a surgery that will help them lose large amounts of weight. It also means drastically changing their lifestyles, though, and the four friends will get to know themselves and each other better than they ever have before.

Teenage Waistland is a surprisingly good book. I was snagged right at the beginning from the incredibly raw voices each character had. But be warned: this book is not full of happy scenes and feel-good moments. On the contrary, the stories are all quite tragic and sad, each in their own unique way. I admit I got a little squeamish over some of the details, but it was fascinating to read about the Lap-Band. Who hasn't seen those ads and wondered what it was? I thought there wasn't enough about the eating habits or requirements after the surgery though, as it was mainly about the emotional impact of the weight and the baggage each teen had in their life. This almost glorified the surgery, showing the teens losing a ton of weight and overcoming their emotional baggage, without paying tribute to the intense eating lifestyle changes. Lynn Bierderman and Lisa Pazer are fantastic writers, creating some really touching moments and a few downright hilarious ones. Buying a certain item for Marcie's sister's party CRACKED me up! And though it felt rushed, the ending wrap-up for all of the characters was rewarding.

Izzy says

Teenage Waistland is a support group for obese teens undergoing the Lap Band weight loss surgery. Marcie struggles not just with a big body size, but a big mouth, ultra-thin remarried mother, and super-skinny stepsister. Bobbie wants to lose the weight, but it means he won't be able to play football anymore, which will disappoint his dad. And East has the toughest situation of all - dark and morbid herself, she lives by herself with her depressed mom who refuses to leave her bed. These three teens become friends, but through a fourth girl in their support group - energetic, enthusiastic Char. Except Char's hiding a secret, one that could change everything.

This book was written from three perspectives, Marcie, Bobbie, and East. Each was raw and honest, sucking me in with their no-holds-barred stories. The cover may look fluffy and cute, but this is in no way the case for the actual content. The three teens have their own emotional tales to tell, and I found myself enraptured by every one.

Marcie had a biting wit that led to one-liners that could crack me up and a certain scene that left me in hysterics, but beneath her cynicism was a lot of pain that made me feel for her. Bobbie seemed like a typical jock on the outside, proving through his budding romance with Char that he was actually sweet and gentle. It was easy to relate to him, what with the pressure he felt from everyone to continue playing football but his own disgust for his body. East had the most heart-rending story of the group. Her voice could be somewhat overly dark and depressing in places, but it was understandable given her struggles with her shell of a mother.

TEENAGE WAISTLAND was initially slow going for me, but the deeper in the story I sunk, the more addicted I became. By the end, I found myself completely immersed in the world of Marcie, Bobbie, East, and Char every time I cracked the book open, especially as twists showed up to bend everything around. This was a book I didn't expect to like as much as I did, and provided a pleasant surprise. Although it could be heavy on the emotions, I wouldn't call this a particularly dark book - there were several scenes that lightened things up, and the ending, while on the too-perfect side, wraps everything up nicely. I would recommend this to anyone looking for a read that's not fluffy while straying away from depressing.

Brandy says

*Very mature issues

Teenage Waistland centers on 4 morbidly obese teens that are in a clinical trial for Lap-Bands in teenagers.

Marcie - a girl who feels out-of-place with her new stepfamily and being taken away from her old home and father.

Char and East - a set of best friends that both have a horrifying event in their past that has left emotional scars

Bobby - a linebacker who is struggling with his dad's expectations for his future.

Throughout the trial, the teens are part of a support group that is learning how to handle their potential new lifestyles and weight loss. While they plan for their future weight loss, they will be forced to examine the deeper issues that have led to their problems with food.

The authors do not shy away from dealing with the tough issues that can cause teens to turn to food as a comfort, and the book does deal with some very touchy and tough topics: drinking, teen sex, abortion, suicide, etc. Teenage Waistland is an intriguing novel that deals with a topic that I haven't come across in any YA fiction before.

Stargazer5 says

I bought this book for my daughter, Jackie, and decided it would be a good idea to read it before giving it to her in order to make sure she wouldn't take the gesture as an affront or criticism. While reading it I soon became very certain that it wouldn't offend her, and in fact, would (and did) do just the opposite.

My daughter has been struggling with her weight for practically her whole life. Now that she's a teenager, it's harder than ever. I'm so glad my friend recommended this book, and I'm so glad I shared it with my daughter. By the botyh of us reading it, it loosened up the conversation between us about her weight and her future (a future that just might have weight loss surgery in the cards like the young people in the story). It allowed us to relate to each other by talking about the characters and their journeys through weight loss. The sense of humor and fresh take on the lives of overweight teens put a new spin on how I perceive Jackie and how she perceives herself. It's all for the better and I recommend parents and teens alike read this book, especially in families with overweight teens.

Aaron says

I met the two authors of this book last year at a RI Library Association conference. I thought their intent was strong: to write a book that a did a good job of presenting the stories of teenagers who really work struggling with their weight issues in a realistic manner. This novel does just that. Written from the perspective of three obese teenagers who have joined a study to explore the potential use of lap-band surgery, this novel looks at the fact that weight issues are usually tied to other psychological challenges faced by the individual, which is

one of the reason why the novel includes the use of group therapy, food diaries, and exercise regimens as part of the study.

I thought the three characters were well written, though many of the secondary characters take on a stock or flat presentation that makes it difficult to care about them or really know anything about them other than the fact that they are family/friends of the narrators or are also in the study. I thought this was a good look at the issue, but it sometimes comes across as being a bit preachy and hits you over the head with a sledgehammer rather than letting the characters and their stories send the message. Not a horrible book, but not a great one, either.

Alexei says

Teenage Waistland is the story of 3 patients in a clinical trial for the Lap- Band program. Marcie is 16, 288 lbs, and stuck with her size zero mom. Bobby is a star football player with "moobies" (Man-boobies) and still a virgin at 16. His mom and dad want him to lose weight, but his dad doesn't want him to get "girl surgery". Annie "East" is 278 lbs and living with her depressed mom who won't get out of bed. The book is about the journey each character takes in the program.

If there's one thing I hate more than anything, it's co-authors! Forgive me, PC and Kristen Cast, but It annoys me that one person couldn't write a book ALONE!!!! The reason I quit this book is because I got lost from page 1. The writing is disjointed, the characters confusing, and the dialogue a messy rant from the character's mind! All the characters sound the same in dialogue, I don't know who they're talking about, and I don't understand the setting or time frame that they talk about! I don't know if they are talking currently or in the past! I had to put the book down, or get a head rush from trying to master their concept of time!

Julia says

This book was a tough one for me, because I too was a severely overweight teen, despite not being quite at the level of these characters physically, I could personally identify with most of the emotional stuff. So going into it, I was sceptical, but I ended up being really impressed.

First off, they got the emotional stuff dead on. I've been through dramatic weight loss too, and it really is just as hard and scary to lose it - no matter how much one wants to - as it is to be overweight in the first place. Having not had surgery such as was done here, I can't specifically relate to those issues, but I do know well the world of eating buddies & sneak eating and the many other issues that come with being abnormally overweight.

The authors throw alot of issues in here besides just those directly related to food. This book has all the drama a person could want or handle. And yet, the drama in this book all has a point. It shows how overeating and being overweight is a much more complex issue than mere calorie intake/output. I like how it discussed the importance of support when making big changes such as these. I do think the method by which it achieved this realization in the characters was a bit over the top, but I guess sometimes such messages might be necessary.

My biggest beef with the book was that the clinical trial that these teens participated in only required 1 year of group counseling. It seemed to almost suggest that after that time, people would be just fine. Since many of the characters had to have that one cathartic moment or shocking realization, it also seemed to suggest that after that moment, all was smooth sailing. It wouldn't be. Also, I would think that most people with eating disorders - which these teens so clearly have - would require more help after the 1 year mark.

I didn't know how to feel about the final reveal about 1 character's weight loss success after her surgery. In many ways it seemed a little too "happy shiny people" given the nature of the book. On the other hand, I liked the fact that for one teen, surgery did not prove to be the ultimate factor in her return to mental and physical health. So I'm mixed there.

Ultimately the reason I gave this a 5 star review is that while I really did like the book, it is truly amazing to me that the authors could pull it off with as many issues and as much drama as they did. It could have been a disaster if handled with less skill and sensitivity. Kudos on a job well done.

Rachel Robins says

Lisa Pazer and Lyn Biederman exceeded my expectations in this fun, sassy, clever and Enormously revealing narrative about what can be lost and gained in the world of fat teenagers. I found myself laughing out loud to the defensive, self-deprecating humor and less than tame conversations among this group of overweight teens participating in a trial lapband surgery program. Together, these characters are struggling to come to terms with the emotional weight padding their fears, traumas, and insecurities. The way Pazer and Biederman are forgiving of the fat-kid stereotype--not being too careful not to let it all hang out--and raising awareness to the truth of how obesity affects young people in the modern day makes this story full of both realistic life problems and over-the-top dramatic sequences. Reading a few chapters every night was as much of an indulgence for me as that 9pm bowl of moosetracks ice cream. I found myself feeling awkwardly sympathetic to characters I would have otherwise expected to feel very little connection to. The writing style is hip and totally in touch with today's fast-paced, texting-crazed, loose-lipped Teenage Waistland...

Jay G says

Want to see more bookish things from me? Check out my YouTube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfer...>

2.5 Stars

This book follows a group of teenagers who undergo a weight loss surgery called LapBand. After their surgery, they attend a support group they call Teenage Waistland. The book is told from three perspectives: Bobby, East and Marcie. Through another girl in the support group, Char East's very bubbly best friend, they become friends. Only Char is hiding a secret that may change everything forever.

Each perspective was great to read from! Each teen had their own story and unique voice. I loved Marcie and how sarcastic and witty she was. Bobby was very relatable to me as he went through a lot of things in his life regarding football and his dad's expectations of him. East's story was absolutely heartbreaking to read about. Although her perspective was often very depressing, I enjoyed her voice. I really like how the book dealt

with difficult topics effectively but also kept the story light and not too dark.

Personally, I did enjoy the book, but I found it to be very slow and not very engaging which is why I am only giving it 2.5 stars.

Kaethe says

Despite what lazy novelists may believe, obesity is not rooted in emotional issues. It is rooted in genetics, where weight has exactly the same heritability as height.

Jennifer says

This was an everything novel. Yes, the main focus is on four teens who have lap-band surgery in order to lose weight, but within the lives of those four teens, just about everything happens. There's sibling rivalry, a parent living vicariously through his child, the big game, familial distance, and a terrible secret. Describing it in a list like that makes it seem like it's the description for the next episode of some popular soap opera. The good news is that all of these issues fit the characters and the novel without it feeling like it's trying to do too much.

Multiple voices allow for this to not feel quite so overwhelming. Marcie, Bobby, and East all take turns telling their portion of the story. There is a fourth character, Char (short for Charlotte), who does not narrate, but is still an integral part of the story. Plus, the fact that all her information is rolled up with East's is a wonderful method for showing how closely the two have bonded and is a perfect set-up for what's to come.

The characters are interesting and dynamic without coming across as cliché. This is tough when you have the jock, the big mouth, the wild girl, and the shy girl. Even the ancillary characters (like Marcie's perfect, modelesque step-sister) don't necessarily fit the mold you would expect.

I was sucked in to their stories and struggles. Some scenes made me laugh, some made me sad or angry, but mostly I just wanted to know what happened next.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Jennifer Rummel for TeensReadToo.com

Eating for comfort is just the tip of the iceberg for this group of obese teens. They've each qualified for a weight loss trial surgery - the Land-Band procedure is currently available only for adults. With this trial, the teens are required to keep a journal, write down a truthful account of their food intake, and attend weekly group therapy sessions, as the surgery is only a tool and not a solution.

Told in alternative perspectives, Marcie, East, and Bobby share their ups and downs in the aftermath of the surgery. The group comes together to form Teenage Waistland, a support group. They share more than just their favorite foods. Friendships are made and broken. Romantic relationships begin. Family drama ensues. Secrets are revealed.

While dealing with a serious matter, including different points of view makes this book enjoyable to read. The teens' lives deal with significant issues which all changed their eating habits. They dig down to the deeper roots of their issues and, in some cases, begin the healing process.

TEENAGE WAISTLAND is a satisfying, emotional read that will linger with you after the last page has turned.

Karen says

I really enjoyed this book alot!! This book was different then I thought it was going to be about...

It follows about 5 overweight teenagers that go through (well, four really) lap-band surgery to help them with their weight loss. At first look I thought this book was strictly about their losing weight and what they go through pertaining to that, but I was wrong...

This does talk about their surgery and their weight loss progress, but there is more to this story then that. It talks about the underlying issues that each person is dealing with that has lead to their overeating. There is so much drama in this story! It has heartache, tragedy, forgiveness, etc....

I love the characters in this book, especially Char...The authors did a great job with character developement in this book...

I would definitely recommend this book to everyone....anyone that likes teenage angst, drama, etc...
