



# Everything is Changed

*Nova Weetman*

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## **Everything is Changed** Nova Weetman

Lifelong friends Jake and Alex are torn apart when they make a terrible split-second decision that ends in tragedy.

As guilt closes in on Jake, he becomes increasingly determined to confess to the police. But Alex just wants to move on with life. He's got a cool new girlfriend, fancy new house and posh new school, and doesn't want his future to be ruined by a mistake in his past.

Told backwards in alternating viewpoints, this gritty novel takes us through the wreckage of a broken friendship, back to the moment when everything changed.

## **Everything is Changed Details**

Date : Published October 3rd 2016 by University of Queensland Press (UQP)

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Author : Nova Weetman

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# **From Reader Review Everything is Changed for online ebook**

## **Michael Earp says**

The format (told in reverse chronological order) makes for an interesting read! Tragedy, guilt and the tatters of a friendship we see unraveled, and learn how it all came about.

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## **Libby Armstrong says**

This is how good this book is: swans are playing the cats tonight, and I have had my head in this novel since I picked it up after dinner. Fortunately at third time when I finished the Swannies are up!

With my bookseller hat on, the three things I love about Nova's new novel 1) enthralling story relayed in reverse 2) well drawn teen male characters 3) suspense without gratuitous language or violence

This will appeal to less regular readers, which in mid teens (esp male) is a tough audience. Congrats Nova on your amazing 2016 offerings.

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## **Kelly (Diva Booknerd) says**

Before the accident, Jake and Alex had been raised in a leafy, family oriented suburb of Melbourne. Jake lives with his single mother in a small unit, working long hours as a nurse to provide Jake with a bright future he would otherwise have never been afforded, Science being his chosen field of study. Alex is about to embark on a new adventure, moving to an affluent suburb, a new home and a private school education, while leaving Jake and new girlfriend Ellie behind. Regrettably. Until the accident.

Two very distinct characters who both endeavour to overcome grief and in Alex's case, culpability. Jake's internal struggle with his guilt felt incredibly honest and genuine. His grief is palpable as he copes with the aftermath of the accident and feelings of isolation as Alex begins to distance himself both physically and emotionally. It soon becomes apparent that Jake harbours feelings for Alex's girlfriend, the two having bonded over Alex's departure and becoming close friends in his absence.

Alex wants to forget the accident and Jake is the constant reminder Alex is determined to distance himself from. Alex felt incredibly narcissistic and seemingly only cared for himself while under his flawless exterior he was terrified of repercussions, escaping into his new life, new friends and abandoned twelve years of friendship.

Although the storyline was captivating, the regressive storyline didn't allow for me to connect with either character, as the reader is unaware exactly what the referred to accident is, or how it was caused. As the storyline regressed, I felt myself holding back from an emotional connection until learning what role Alex and Jake had played, not committing to either character as an emotional defence.

The most intriguing aspect was the difference in emotion from both Alex and Jake and how each young man dealt with his internal struggle. Their twelve year friendship has left the boys heavily influenced by one

another, but the introduction of distance, environment and socioeconomic factors also seemingly factored into their individual reactions and ongoing turmoil. As the boys drift apart, it's Alex's girlfriend Ellie who becomes the link that ties their lives together. The storyline begins with a single narrative from Ellie's point of view, but it lacked an emotional impact which may have been more effective as an epilogue.

Alex and Jake have always been inseparable, until their drunken stupor and a night that will have repercussions for them both. *Everything Has Changed* is captivating and intelligent with a unique narrative from the accident, then regressing throughout both Alex and Jake's lives. Refreshing and wonderfully written from the male perspective as a multifaceted narration dealing with the emotional struggle between grief and guilt.

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### **Renee Mihulka says**

I loved this book. Ambitious, devastating and authentic.

You can read my full review at the CBCA website - <http://readingtime.com.au/everything-...>

Or via my own website [www.reneemihulka.com](http://www.reneemihulka.com)

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### **Trisha says**

This is so achy breaky my little heart. So much sorrow.

And there's the whole backwards thing. Which makes it even more of a challenging read.

But basically I hurts. Lots.

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### **Lily says**

Told in reverse, this book is a fascinating look at the fracturing of a friendship, sifting through the wreckage of two people struggling to deal with the consequences of their actions, back to the pivotal moment when everything changed.

Written in a way that is quietly intelligent and unique, *Everything is Changed* is simultaneously dark and harrowing and intense. It is a study into the psychology of guilt. An analysis of character. A challenging look at how we react to and face our mistakes.

The style of storytelling is incredibly compelling and surprisingly easy to follow, creating a narrative that is so much more intriguing and powerful than it would have been if told chronologically. This is, undoubtedly, a character driven novel, recounted from alternating viewpoints it enables the reader to explore the perspectives and voices of two friends, Jake and Alex, torn apart in the wake a terrible choice that ended in tragedy. Each character felt distinct and authentic, their emotional journey and individual struggles captured with devastating honesty. It is easy to sympathise with each character. They are so achingly raw and real and

open, their fault and flaws and insecurities laid bare. There is a real sense of isolation and loneliness, an empty longing and uncertainty that draws you into their story. There was something heartbreaking about witnessing certain moments of friendship between the pair but knowing that they were already falling apart with a sad sort of inevitability. There is something poignant, thought-provoking and emotionally nuanced about this book.

My only complaint is that I felt like the story needed more resolution. I really wanted it to delve deeper into this idea of dealing with the consequences of your actions, especially as it felt like it was setting up for a really interesting discussion on how privilege affects justice. I still enjoyed it, I just wanted something a little bit more.

Actual rating 4.5 stars.

Disclaimer: I received a free copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Steph says**

A story of consequences but told from the end to the beginning. So we know the ending but need to work our way back to find out what led to it. A compulsive page-turner, with real characters that are not always likeable but still manage to evoke sympathy at different times.

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### **Pary says**

The idea of a story told in reverse was so gripping. Delivery failed 100%. Not sure what, but the entire book failed. Never got to know the characters, none of them were particularly likable. Complete waste of time.

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### **Sandra Shannon says**

Set in and around the suburbs of Melbourne tells of an incident which changes the lives of the two main characters, Alex and Jake. They have been best friends forever, but things change. Alex and his family are moving to another suburb, another school. Alex and the new girl at school are hitting it off. Then there is the 'incident'. Where does this leave Jake? This novel is told in reverse.

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### **Saturday's Child says**

One moment, one action, that's all it takes for everything to change. This novel had me hooked from page one as I just had to know what did Alex and Jake do. The clever way in which it is written in reverse kept me guessing right up until the end. My only problem with it is that I'm now left wondering what happened next.

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## Clare Snow says

"And I want to punch him, right there in his perfect pretty face, and give him some reason to remember I'm still here."

On the Notables for the CBCA Book of The Year Older Readers 2017. The story is amazing, not least because it's told backwards. While I thought I knew exactly what was coming, I didn't and surprises kept jumping out from the page.

"I just wish he'd stay and be frightened with me instead of leaving me here in the borough alone."

Jake and Alex did something terrible and the police are questioning them. We don't know what happened that night, but it soon becomes apparent a man died and the guilt is not shared equally between the boys. Jake wants to tell the police but Alex wants to forget and get back to his new school and girlfriend.

"I wonder where my friend has gone. He's nowhere to be found in this place."

The seemingly simple premise encompasses so much more. What was the crime - murder, manslaughter, an awful accident? Why does Jake feel more remorse, was it all down to him? And could they had done something to avert it all. Or as Jake's favourite teacher says,

"You always have to allow for chance."

As the story unravels, the pain becomes acute - the boys' emotions on display. And this really is the point, not so much the twists and turns the story takes, but the heart wrenching breakdown of their friendship, and the lives they knew, all the while in reverse.

The reverse timeline is so cleverly done. As the awful moment approaches, I felt worse and worse, already knowing exactly how bad things were, and that there was no hope for Alex or Jake, or the man who died. While knowing all this, I still wanted more and couldn't stop reading their pain.

"She smiles and for the moment I've saved her from knowing just how bad I really am."

When Alex says, "Let's get into trouble." The foreshadowing, that isn't foreshadowing at all, broke me. They will never escape from where they don't want to be.

"This is a freeway. A major road that does little more than get people very fast out of where they don't want to be."

One of these days I might try a book which doesn't wend loss and grief through exceptional word craft, not so much when I read *Everything is Changed*. Somehow I managed to read *Bro* by Helen Chebatte and *We Come Apart* by Sarah Crossan & Brian Conaghan around the same time. Each book is as heart wrenching as the next, but all three have a slightly different take on what happens when violence collides with boys who don't consider the consequences of their anger and/or stupidity. The latter two combine racism and racial violence in the mix. Very different beginnings, but leading to tragedy and death as the action spirals out of control.

This review is from my blog <http://ofceilingwax.wordpress.com/201...>

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### **Danielle {halfdesertedstreets} says**

Cinematic and devastating. 4.5 stars and full review here on the blog.

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### **Tanya Grech Welden says**

Every year as an educator I inevitably teach at least once a unit in Human Sexuality to a group of year 8 or 9 students. As part of this program we explore the gender and the general differences in brain function between the sexes. It never ceases to amaze students that in males the part of the brain which predicts unfavourable outcomes is less developed in teenage boys than their female counterparts. Of course, as educators we know this too well, seeing this played out on a daily basis with the boys that we work with.

"Why did you do that?"

The subject, a year 10 boy shrugs his shoulders.

"What were you thinking?" We probe a little further.

"Nothing." Comes the emphatic response.

Nothing is probably the best description of what was going through the adolescent brain the moment the chair (or fist or rock) was thrown through the window. Impulsivity is characteristic of many teenage boys and the impact of such an episode is the core focus of Nova Weetman's latest YA offering *Everything is Changed*. The novel tells the story of Jake and Alex, best mates who, in a moment of spontaneity, make a mistake that will change the course of their lives forever. Told in reverse the novel tracks back through events and documents how their lives, and those around them, literally fall apart.

*Everything is Changed* is suitable for use with students in the middle years of secondary school. I imagine that grade 10 will be the sweet spot for this. With engaging language and a cast of characters that students will easily identify with, this is a story that doesn't preach. The story speaks for itself and will no doubt evoke an emotional response in students while also providing rich content for debate and discussion. In light of this I would definitely flag this as a wonderful text for shared class reading. Similarly, it would work well in smaller reading circles. Of course, in terms of text construction, the story provides wonderful opportunities to discuss how the reverse telling of the story contributes to our understanding of the key themes and ideas. Students might also appreciate comparisons with other film and prose texts that also challenge the convention of a linear and chronological narration; *Pulp Fiction* for example.

*Everything is Changed* is a compelling read with a grittiness that will strike a chord with adolescent readers. I imagine that many of these readers will find its accuracy haunting, as they will no doubt draw parallels between Jake and Alex and their own experiences.

Tanya Grech Welden

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## Amanda says

*Everything is Changed* is Nova Weetman's latest release, but it's a story based on an idea she's had for years. Originally imagined as a screenplay, Nova has taken the idea and formed it into a YA novel, with a twist: the story is told in reverse.

At the start of the novel we meet Alex and Jake, former best friends. They've known each other since they were little kids but four months ago, at the end of Year 9, an incident fractured their friendship and they're still dealing with the repercussions.

This is such a unique book in that you could read this front to back, or back to front (I even gave this a go, starting at the end and reading towards the beginning - it works). It's not like other books that have a prologue and then jump back in time, it really does follow the timeline in reverse showing us how the boys are coping now and slowly progressing closer and closer to the accident.

This is a great examination of character, both boys are distinct and I found myself siding with one and then the other, depending on whose perspective I was reading. It was easy to feel for Jake because he's dealing with abandonment and loneliness. But I also sympathised with Alex as he's trying to make the best of a situation he didn't ask for, while leaving behind the life he knew.

It would be easy to assume that the accident is what drove the boys apart, but as I approached the ending, I realised the boys had been growing apart for some time, with people and circumstances driving a wedge between them. Both of them continue to act as if things are the same, but it was clear their relationship was fraying.

There was an element to the story that made me feel as though I was watching from the outside, I never quite connected with the boys. I also had to keep reminding myself that the events I was reading about were happening backwards, but once I got into the rhythm of the story I found it compelling.

Ableist language: crazy, lame, nuts, moron, dumb.

*Everything is Changed* is a thought provoking look at the friendship between two boys and how easily the dynamic between them shifts after a life altering accident. Cleverly told in reverse, this story will draw readers in and captivate them.

Thank you to UQP for my copy.

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## Diem says

As 'Everything is Changed' is a story told in reverse, the reader has to do a bit of work. I wrestled with my curiosity and relented by reading the final two chapters to ease my nerves. However, all it really did was further compel me to continue reading the story in its intended order.

There's also an incredibly strong sense of place and I think Nova Weetman has done a marvellous job of



writing the Melbourne I recognise on these pages.

Additionally, I found Weetman's exploration of Melbourne private schools to ring so true. I did find myself subconsciously trying to pin down which all boy school Alex attended in particular, although I know it's most definitely an amalgamation of all the private schools in Melbourne.

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