



Past Perfect

Leila Sales

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All Chelsea wants to do this summer is hang out with her best friend, hone her talents as an ice cream connoisseur, and finally get over Ezra, the boy who broke her heart. But when Chelsea shows up for her summer job at Essex Historical Colonial Village (yes, really), it turns out Ezra's working there too. Which makes moving on and forgetting Ezra a lot more complicated...even when Chelsea starts falling for someone new.

Maybe Chelsea should have known better than to think that a historical reenactment village could help her escape her past. But with Ezra all too present, and her new crush seeming all too off limits, all Chelsea knows is that she's got a lot to figure out about love. Because those who don't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it....

Past Perfect Details

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From Reader Review Past Perfect for online ebook

Catie says

3 1/2 stars

For most of my life I've hated learning about history. It's always seemed so subjective and so obviously tainted by the spin of those who have written it. I remember my high school history classes being taught by the bitterest of the teachers. I'm pretty sure they resented forcing us to memorize oversimplified propaganda as much as we resented the idea that little nuggets like "Lincoln freed the slaves" and "the first settlers arrived in 1620" (never mind all those pesky people who had been living here for *thousands of years*) could somehow help us later in life.

Anyway, getting on track here...I was a little nervous that I wouldn't be able to appreciate a book about teenagers who choose to spend all summer dressed up in historically accurate clothes, pretend to be residents of a 1700's village, and take it so seriously that they make war with a neighboring group of kids who do the *exact same thing* but choose to pretend that they exist a little less than a hundred years later instead. Before I started this book that just sounded crazy!

Leila Sales makes it all so incredibly familiar though. For example, I'm sure that most of us have had those horrible jobs in our lives: those jobs where customers show up simultaneously expecting to have perfect service **and** assuming that every employee is a complete idiot. *You can't have it both ways!* And I think that we've all had those relationships that make us consider giving up on dating ever again. Also, spending countless hours discussing and arguing the minutiae of a subject that the rest of the world rarely spends five minutes on each day? Yeah, I might know a little something about that.

This is an easy, light, romantic read that's exceptionally funny and has just enough depth. Here are the top three things that made me laugh:

- 1) Ice cream rating.
- 2) The number of times that she makes fun of boys with long hair and/or theater kids.
- 3) This: "*Thank you, I said. Thank you, Maggie, for that thoughtful advice.*"

And special bonus: Mr. Zelinsky, who immediately reminded me of Tobias Funke, *AC-TOR!*

Perfect Musical Pairing

Rosi Golan - Shine

This is a girly book and it calls for a girly song! This sweet little Rosi Golan number is about living in the present and finding the silver lining.

Flannery says

True confession: I love reenactors. People who wear oldey-timey outfits for work? You're awesome. Does

your job require you to shun modern technology and to feign ignorance when someone asks you where the bathroom is? You deserve a medal. This is the first YA book I've ever read in which the main character works at a colonial village. (My only other experience with reenactors in a book is from Choke) There's just something about how people having jobs at places like Sturbridge Village and Colonial Williamsburg that entertains me. They have to act oldey-timey all day, but you know that at the end of the day they are getting in their Toyota Corollas, lighting up a cigarette, and blasting Journey on their ride home to a house with indoor plumbing and an icemaker. (or whatever modern cars, music, technology, and vices they enjoy) This author is hilarious. Seriously. And snarky. I had a love connection with this book from page one.

Chelsea Glaser, or "Elizabeth Connelly" when she is working, has been employed practically from the womb at Essex, a colonial village. Both of her parents (the silversmith and the silversmith's wife) work there and she's grown up knowing the life of a reenactor. Every summer, the middle school/high school employees at Essex have a war with the employees at the Civil War ReenactmentLand that is conveniently (or not?) located across the street. In addition to the drama of the war, Chelsea's ex-boyfriend Ezra is also working at Essex for the summer and the boy she finds herself attracted to is a *gasp* Civil Warrior. (I loved that term, by the by) It's funny to me that a relationship that is not the only focus of a novel can be more riveting than many contemporary YA romances where the whole plot revolves around the two lovebirds. I actually enjoyed the progression of Dan and Chelsea's relationship—it felt natural and their conversations felt real...and hilarious.

This book somewhat obviously talks a lot about history and how we interpret events of the past. I was just talking to a friend the other day about this. It's like we have our own memory erasers that just remove all the horrid bits and we just prance around on merry go rounds and sing Kumbaya together in the fields full of puppies in our memories. For example, I once drove from New Orleans to Sacramento in a 15-passenger van with 11 other people. Did it suck a lot of the time? Definitely. But I remember it with a grin on my face because I collected bandannas with my friend Josh at every roadside stop, we listened to some great tunes, and they let me plan the route so we stopped at ridiculous places like a deserted ghost town and to see the huge dinosaurs from Pee-Wee's Big Adventure. I love all those people like family even though I definitely wanted to murder each of them at some point during our year of living and working together. I do have a point here—I loved Chelsea's reevaluation of her relationship with Ezra. Her box of happy relationship memories wasn't what she thought it was upon closer examination. We remember things the way we want to remember them, and when we reinsert the intentionally forgotten parts, people, places, memories might not wow us as much. I went on loads of car trips with my family as a kid and I got carsick every time. You know what I remember most though? Sitting backwards in our Volvo station wagon and listening to Cat Stevens' greatest hits CD. I think I wouldn't look at my childhood so fondly if I had to remember all the places I'd yakked over the years.

In the same vein, I also loved how Leila Sales talked about how we are living in the past and the present at the same time. We are still every version of ourselves that we have ever been in the past; all it takes is one sensory experience to take us back. Like when you think you are over someone and then you walk by a random person on the street wearing their cologne. Or when you remember a joke that you shared with someone but you are 3000 miles away from them and haven't seen them in 5 years. As a total history nerd, I also enjoyed the random historical facts that were interspersed in the text and the discussion of one-sided history textbooks and the countless jokes about historical anachronisms in reenactions.

If you have a snarky sense of humor, enjoy reenactors (or reading about them), were a theater geek, or are just looking for a fun/ny read, I'd totally recommend this. I keep thinking that I should caveat it as not being especially thought-provoking but I actually thought about a lot of things while I read it. (It was, like, totally deep, maaaaan) It is somewhere above 4 stars but below 5 stars for me but my eyes are shutting with

exhaustion and I liked it enough to round up. Oh man, I need to go to bed.

Thanks S & S Galley Grab for satiating my need for hilarity and fun times in colonial America!

ETA: This cover makes absolutely no sense. I hope they change it before the actual release date. Also, I changed my rating to 4 stars.

Ellis says

The more I think about *Past Perfect*, the more I like it. It's a quick, fun, and entertaining read, but not until a few hours after I'd finished did I realise just how much I adored the story. It definitely has a fluff element to it, and while there is mucho adorable - looking at you, Dan - it gets surprisingly real at times, without the story every getting truly dark or heavy. This is one of those books where I would have loved another 50 or 100 pages, not because it desperately needed it to tie up loose ends or provide closure, but purely because I wasn't ready to leave the story yet.

Read the rest on The Random Transliterator.

Btw, if you're like Rose, this clearly is a summery book.

Aleeeeeza says

4.25 stars

I don't know how many of y'all have seen the movie *Sweet Home Alabama*, but it is one of my All. Time. Favorites. I love that movie so much I could see it again and again and again and again and never get bored. Yep, I love it that much. The movie takes place in Alabama (as you could probably guess), and there's this one scene where the main character's very Southern parents are reenacting a scene from the Civil War in which they dress up like Confederate soldiers and then pretend to be enmeshed in a battle on a hillside, then also pretend to die and just lie on the ground for a long while. It's hilarious, really, and that scene is quite possibly my favorite one in the movie. Among fifty-three others.

Anyway, reenacting has always intrigued me. Why people find the past fascinating enough to literally reenact it. That's why *Past Perfect* intrigued me, which is about Chelsea, a girl who's recently broken up with her boyfriend, and goes to work with her friend at Essex, a place for tourists where they dress up as people in the Revolutionary War era and bring the past alive. Sounds pretty cool, right? Well, okay, maybe not, but trust me, it is VERY cool.

Some of my goodreads friends had gotten access to this book a long time before its release, and they ALL loved it. (Well, except one of them—you know who you are!) And because they are awesome, one of them gave me the GalleyGrab link for it and I began it as soon as I could. I can safely say that I'm DEFINITELY on the side of the majority that adored it. I don't know how anyone couldn't; it's just that cute. I liked the book from the very first line to the last.

I think it's partly due to the fact that I instantly connected with the main character, Chelsea. Her voice and

her personality are adorable. She's realistic enough that she makes dubious choices in the book, but wise enough to learn from them. And she's charming enough that you can empathize with her throughout the book as she fumbles her way through her romantic dilemmas. And can I just say this book has one of the most ADORABLE romances of all time? The cuteness factor pretty much killed me, it really did. But there's heartbreak and I felt that, too, strongly enough to literally hurt. And when a book is able to do that to me, it's instantly one of my favorites, like this one.

Of course, I have to mention Chelsea's dad. Her dad...oh man, he was CLASSIC. I just loved their relationship. And the dad's personality! You really have to read the book to understand it, but I was grinning every time he came up in a scene. He's just that awesome. I loved him, basically. I don't think I'd want him for a dad, necessarily, but he's still pretty fantastic.

I also should mention all the Reenactment stuff. I NEED to visit a Reenactment village or whatever you call it ASAP. Because after this book, I think everyone would want to! It was, simply put, F-U-N. The whole war between the Revolutionary Warriors and Civil Warriors was also loads of fun. It was actually one of the best parts of the book! In fact, all the parts of this book are pretty awesome, so that might not be saying a lot...but I definitely loved it a lot.

So on an ending note I'll say that book is kind of like Anna and the French Kiss, in the sense that I was smiling all throughout it and by the end practically glowing. Also like Sixteenth Summer by Michelle Dalton, for that 'awww' factor. You get to learn some fun historical facts, too, along the way! And lots of other insightful things, too, that I won't mention here, but that were...well, very insightful!

The only reason I'm not giving it 5 stars is because there were parts in which I was kind of, just a little bit, not that invested. But it's still good enough for it become one of my all-time-favorites, just like Sweet Home Alabama. Both have the same effect on me: I want to read this book all over again, too! So you should most certainly pick up a copy of it. (And watch the Sweet Home Alabama, too, if you can.)

Limonessa says

As far as YA chick lit goes, Past Perfect is a really fun book.

Chelsea, 16, comes from a family of historical re-enactors,. She lives in the town of Essex, where this kind of practice seems to be the bread and butter of the population. In fact, not only Essex has a Colonial time reenactment village, but a Civil war one as well. And they're bitter, bitter enemies. So when summer begins and Chelsea, as every year before, starts to work in the village, the time for war between the factions is on. Torn between her unwillingness to let go of her past - namely, her former boyfriend - and her unsettling attraction to a rival re-enactor who could finally signify her moving forward, Chelsea, through a trial and error process, will be forced to put her memories and herself under scrutiny and realize what is the value of honesty and friendship.

First of all, the main idea of the book is stunningly good. Historical reenactment, how original. Well, at least for me. You see, I come from a country which holds a certain importance on the historical global scene, what with us having been here practically forever and having gone through numerous empires, barbaric hordes, a variety of popes, republics and so on and so forth.

Yet, NEVER in my life have I had the pleasure to witness a reenactment. I don't think we have them here or if we do they're very much under the radar, mine at least. I really liked that.

Secondly, the idea that our memories work selectively according to what we actually want to remember or not of an event really appealed to me. I've done (and do) that, sadly, a lot of times, just like Chelsea did with Ezra. Maybe the majority of us do it automatically, in a effort to romanticize our lives. Considering the sheer number of books I read in a year to my "escapist syndrome", I certainly have a tendency to do it.

It is exciting when you're telling someone about your recent trip to Burma or to Ushuaia, skipping the part where you got gastroenteritis or puri-puri ate you alive on a beach in Cuba, it is a bit more pathetic and not very healthy when you're talking about a relationship with your former or - even worse - present boyfriend.

Chelsea, like some other female characters that I've encountered lately (Ava in *Pink* for example, is not a very likable character. I really could not understand her adoration to Ezra, why she idolizes him. I did not like how she dealt with being left out of the flock. And when she finally pulls the wool away from her eyes, I did not think she deserved people forgiving her.

Yet, the book is so funny and the dialogue so brilliant that the story just sucks you in and keeps you laughing till the very last page. Chelsea, despite her feeble personality in relation to other kids her age, has an honest voice and her relationship with her father is really hilarious. The trampoline scene in the back of her yard was one of the best of the books, in my opinion.

So, if you're looking for a fresh, funny, unpretentious read spiked by historical reenactment, *Past Perfect* is definitely a good choice. Just make sure to tear off the completely unrelated cover first.

oliviasbooks says

Hmmm.

- I liked "Past Perfect" and I think it was a really cute and enjoyable, well-tied story.
- I liked both the 16-years-old heroine, Chelsea, and her love interest.
- I even came to like Chelsea's best friend Fiona as the story progressed. She redeemed herself in my eyes at the end.
- I liked the trampoline scene. It was sufficiently romantic.
- I didn't like Chelsea's parents at all, but I think normal, but rather unlikable parents are something which can happen to anyone in real life. For instance, I can totally relate to that forever talking, but unobservant Dad.
- I like the title. Although the cover has no connection to the plot whatsoever - apart from the chalk-board rain, which reminds of the make-believe-lives of the colonial times reenactors - the book's title is pretty perfect for the story for several reasons:

* Both the people working for the Essex Colonial Times Village and the staff at the Civil War Reenactmentland are required to represent "their" own era as a rather faultless one. Paying Tourists shall be sprinkled with interesting tidbits about American history, but they are not to be weighed down by dark and ugly pieces of their ancestors' lives during their family holdiday trip. Slavery is something not existing at Essex and African-Americans seeking a job as historical interpreters are assigned historical middle-class jobs and inserted into normal fake-families like everyone else of the crew.

* For the reenactors the past never turns into past perfect, because their days are like those in the film "Ground Hog Day": Everything that ever happened within a certain time span on the grounds - or even far from them - is treated as something that has happened *just now*, because the tourists want the illusion of the past being present.

* Chelsea's problems at accepting the present and the future are anchored to her way of memorizing the past:

Our definition of what happened to us, the essence of what we determine the true past to be depends on what we choose to remember. Do we remember the happy moments and filter out the ugly scratches? Do we see mainly the sunless days and bury the picture of raindrops gleaming in the rain in inaccessible archives of our brain? Are we able to mix and match so our past resembles that of others? Is a perfect memory of anything possible at all? Were our feelings of yesterday real although we don't feel them anymore today? (view spoiler)

- I was a bit annoyed by the War game between the teenage summer staff of the Essex village and the underage Civil War crew. Although I didn't mind a similar plot element in "Jellicoe Road" at all, I thought that the sincerity of the whole hateful set-up in "Past Perfect" was more than a bit childish and forced and strange for a bunch of high schoolers, who partly were about to start college. Especially the forbidden-love-element felt absolutely unbelievable to me.

- Each historical interpreter was handed one costume including undergarments for one long and hot summer? Really? Boy, those kids must stink. I wonder how the mentioned visitors can be hungry all the time.

- I do love ice-cream, too. I can eat it all year round, I can fit a big helping into my stomach when everything else threatens to burst through my belly-button, I never tire of it's cold creaminess and I would like to be an connoisseur, too.

Tatiana says

Who knew people obsessed with historical reenacting were so awesome?

(Somehow, they don't appear to be particularly cool in these pictures, do they?)

And yet, this book and its characters are A TON OF FUN!

After discovering the sheer awesomeness of Dungeons & Dragons' enthusiasts in Into the Wild Nerd Yonder and stage crew fanatics in Pink, learning about this new type of nerdery was a special, unexpected treat. Seriously, who would want to hang out with popular (=boring) people after getting to know this gang?

There is nothing in Past Perfect that I didn't like. Humor (and not a mean-spirited type, for a change) - check. Meaningful friendships - check. Cute romance - check. Batty, but sufficiently present parents - double check. Pranks, parties, cavorting with enemies, kidnappings - check, check, check!

I simply adored this novel!

Great find, Flannery.

Isamlq says

Past Perfect = **Fun!**

For a novel peopled with re-enactors, it reads surprisingly authentic: fun characters, believable relationships,

and a sweet love connection. Have I mentioned how easy to like the characters are? Comparable to Anna and the French Kiss, had Chelsea and Dan not veered off into their conversations of love and history. I want my fluff *fluffy* less sappy deep conversations. (I'm in a very give-me-something-easy mood.) And yes, Past Perfect supplies that and more. It is a feel good book made to make one enjoy.

A number of really good parts: Fiona, honest... and harsh when needs be, but there. I loved her. The jokes. Seriously, left me feeling like I did when I was reading Anna and Ettiene. The War. The rivalry between Chelsea's and Dan's camps *is* reminiscent of the one in Jellicoe Road. And mentions of ice cream? The pros and cons and rating the same. What fun they had! Seriously? This was one hilarious read.

So, snark? Humor? Likeable characters who screw up and read real?
Check. Check. Check.

Jo says

3.5 stars... rounded up.

"What can I say; I have a thing for guys in period dress, okay? That's just who I am."

Initial Final Page Thoughts.

This book was like the younger tag-along sibling of Jellicoe Road and Frankie Landau-Banks. Very cute, a bit silly, surprisingly funny, sometimes annoying but ultimately, wholly charming.

High Points.

Chelsea. Fiona. Ice cream connoisseurs. History. Original and hilarious setting. "Pony tails are just a deal breaker to me." YES. Essex Village. Renactmentland. Secret loves. Kidnapping. Pranks. Petticoats and bonnets. Trampolines. Redcoats. Cheerleaders. Telephones. Family secrets.

Low Points.

Chelsea started to grate on me a bit.

I don't like it when fictional best friends fight.

There were a *lot* of unnecessarily long paragraphs about METAPHORS and HIDDEN DEPTHS and LATE NIGHT LIFE CHATS and it sometimes got a bit BORING.. I mean boring sorry... got carried away with the capitalisations. I liked what Ms Sales was saying but I didn't think it really fit with the tone of the book on some occasions and it often felt quite jarring. Like I was laughing one minute and then something serious was mentioned and I felt guilty for laughing and I had to be all serious all of a sudden.

Chelsea, mate, you're sixteen... there's plenty of time to have angsty boy times and intense talks with a boy you have only just met. Please, just enjoy jumping on a trampoline with said cute boy.

And that's *not* a euphemism... *clutches pearls*

Also, there is a bit at the end that really reminded me of the bit in Mean Girls when Cady gets Prom Queen and the principal says "You know, winners aren't required to make a speech." Which made me laugh and think I need to watch that film again soon....

Heroine.

Well, when I say you started to grate on me... I mean that I wanted to you to stop talking about Ezra and just call Fiona and eat ice cream and tell you to shut the eff up.

Because Fiona and I pretty much had the same mind.

You were funny, appreciated history (sometimes I wish I had taken A-Level history) and you love ice-cream. BUT... You were a bit whingey and you were a bit stupid when it came to the people of the male disposition *but* you get Brownie points for *wanting* to get over McDouche. Even if you dragged your heels in actually doing it...

And also you can work a historically accurate costume. Praise needs to be given for that. It takes a real woman to look good in a historically accurate costume.

Best Friend.

YES. I loved Fiona. Although she did let Chelsea get away with a lot of her whinging. If I were ever to moan that much about a boy I just know my friend would throw a dollop of ice-cream at me ~~which I would proceed to eat anyway.... Waste not want not.~~

But I liked their ending.

Love Interest.

Ezra= yuck. Why was he even still in the picture? He had absolutely no personality and he was definitely not someone who is worth all the pining he got. In a word... yawn.

Dan= OK, now we're getting somewhere. Although, I feel I don't really you well enough. I would like to have had a bit getting to know you style flirty conversations (But *not* about difficult family situations.... Because we've only just met. And it would be intense.)

So... what's your favourite colour?

Why do you like the Sex Pistols so much?

Why don't you brush your hair?

Although why there was even a competition between a boy who wears historically accurate costumes (It actually reminds me of when I visited Warwick Castle and there was a bloke in a powdered wig who was pleasing to look at but he was, I repeat, in a *powdered wig* and it was confusing to say the least) and a boy who doesn't like sledging... I don't know.

Theme Tune.

History- Funeral For a Friend.

See, we were having fun weren't we? Talking about boys in period costume and messy hair and crooked grins and stuff and then BAM... I hit you with this song. About metaphors and history and love and ANGST. Kinda ruined the mood, did it not?

This is how I felt about this book a little.

FUN FACT: FFAF are from Wales which is where I first encountered people who thought it was socially acceptable to dress in chainmail and walk around the streets re-enacting things with blunt swords and beards and dressed like wizards.

Yeah.. the jury's still out on this one.

I'm going to shake these reviews up a bit from now on to make things a bit clearer in determining the sadness of the book and the amount of love-related angst.

Boy/Girl Angst Level.

9/10. Jeez. OK. Well... this book had the usual amount of boy angst you can expect when the heroine is

confused about which boy she loves. I mean... I guess I need to cut Chelsea some slack. It *is* difficult to choose between a complete loser who doesn't have a personality and treated you like crap and a cute boy with a bit of a rebellious side but actually truly cares about you and he's a great big brother *and* he looks good in tweed pants and braces.

It completely needs a bajillion pages to work it out.

Harumph.

Sadness Scale.

2/10. This book was very tame in the sadness scale because it was mostly funtimes all around so I didn't get choked up about anything.

I did like the part where Chelsea was looking through the memory box and remembering her relationship how it *really* was as opposed to the rose-tinted view she had before.

I thought how Ms Sales depicted that bitter-sweet feeling of looking back into the past and being almost afraid to move on was interesting and realistic and *almost* excused the way Chelsea was behaving towards Ezra.

And also, Dan's history was interesting... would have liked to have explored that a bit more.

Recommended For.

People who like history. People who would choose the boring boy over the cute boy with a lopsided grin. People who are wondering what the girl on the cover of this book licking rain has anything to do with this book... SPOILER: Nothing. People who are wondering how one would go about becoming an ice-cream tester. People who think that trampolines are for jumping on, not oversharing on. People who want a surfer soul connection. People who always wonder whether the people in museums/history villagers *are* hot under all that material. People who want to know where the toilets are.

I received a copy of this from the publisher.

You can find this review and other exciting things on my blog [here](#).

Aj the Ravenous Reader says

3 to 3.5 stars

I am an absolute fan of fluffy reads and I resort to this stuff occasionally or when the need arises. Thus, when I saw that super adorable book cover, I thought this would be the **perfect** pick (as the title suggests).

I learn soon enough though that the cover has absolutely nothing to do with the story and though it pains me to say this, I have to admit that this did not fully meet my expectation. :/

It has a wonderful concept about a young girl's romantic problems particularly about trying to move on from her past relationship. There is even love triangle which would have made the story exciting enough. The plot is also enriched with the element of historical reenactments (which to me is mainly the entertaining part).

However, it seems to me like the fluff was way overdone that the main premise has become a bit too

averagely executed. The characters lack enough depth and personality for me to feel connected with them which disappointed me because in Leila Sales' *This Song Will Save Your Life*, I felt deeply connected with the main character.

Maybe it's just me and maybe it's because I just read a really intense series before this. I really don't know.
Sighs

Nevertheless, this is still a decent read and the author is still a talented writer. I like how she reconciled past and present events and I appreciate the life lessons she imbued the story with. There were also a lot of parts that made me laugh and amused me.

So, if you're looking for fluff overload without too many complications and complex plots, this is still recommendable. ^^

Nomes says

Reading *Past Perfect* was reminiscent of the time I read *Psych Major Syndrome*. I just didn't want to stop reading it. Not because it's an adrenalin-fuelled, tension-filled, mind-blowing plot but because I was just having such a good time reading it that it felt like a crime to stop. So I read *Past Perfect* until 3am and grinned and sighed my way through it.

The first reason I fell in love with this book was because it is gorgeously funny. The prose is a dream: insightful and sharp and snarky, slightly whimsical and completely relate-able. I found out after reading that Sales is a comedienne. Which absolutely makes sense as not only were there poignantly brilliant one-liners, but the whole experience is doused in a whimsical and clever humour. Gosh, I was crushing on so many sentences and sentiments and overall themes.

The premise of this book is truly awesome. Chelsea is working @ a historical colonial village, where her parents also work, and her relationship with employees there is somewhat family-like. They are close-knit and loyal and I loved them to bits (some were endearing, others intense and others provided comic relief). Amongst them is Chelsea's (awesome) best friend &, awkwardly, her ex-boyfriend, who she just can't seem to get over.

Chelsea's Historical village is in a fierce all-out, teenager-y war with the teenagers who work @ a rival historical village across the road. (Think the townies and the cadets in *On the Jellicoe Road*). Chelsea gets kidnapped by one particularly cute boy from the enemy's camp and even after her rescue can't stop crushing on him even though he is completely forbidden...

I loved the escalating war between the two teen historical summer-job crews. It was clever and intense and fiery. And funny, haha.

I loved the whole setting of Chelsea working at the colonial village. So much fodder for in-jokes, random historical trivia (awesome stuff) and it's a vivid setting I haven't read before in YA ~ kind of like a summer camp vibe, but more funky ~ and Sales absolutely takes advantage of it ~ using quiet irony, loads of humour

and a little bit of heart. This is one of those books that so effortlessly portrays a vivid setting that you feel you were there with the characters, and bonded along. I felt like a part of the gang :) I want to go there and hang out.

I LOVED the romance in this. It was just perfect for my tastes. I swooned, I ached, I wanted more of Dan ~ their chemistry and honesty and dialogue and kisses and complications and betrayals felt so genuine. lovelovelove.

Not only was Chelsea and Dan's relationship brilliant ~ but all the characters were real. Chelsea's best friend was funny and true and I loved her. Her parents cracked me up. Even minor characters were treated with their own unique flavour.

Flannery talks more about the history side of it~ it was genius and so relate-able and even while I was having immense fun reading this ~ it also made me think a little ~ about history and my memories, and who I am and what makes me me, etc. It had a gorgeous message without being at all didactic (rather liberating the reader to think for themselves. Without sounding cheesy ~ it felt uplifting by the end)

There's some awesome jokes in here, a brilliant sense of camaraderie ~ it feels like Sales took her time creating this world and it's nuances and characters (loved the ice-cream testing, the FARBS, the history the people had together).

I pretty much thought this was brilliant. Pretty much a perfect reading experience for me (loved every single minute of it) Why aren't there more YA books like this?

Thanks to Flannery for recommending this to me (it was even better than I imagined!) and to S & S Galley Grab for the galley :) ~ I will be purchasing my own copy to squeeze onto my favourite shelf :D

Maggie says

This was the nerdiest, dorkiest book ever. And it was awesome. So awesome, in fact, that the minute I finished the book, I googled Colonial Williamsburg. (PS. Their website address is www.history.org *Russell Crowe in Gladiator voice* NERDS UNITE.)

Like the great rivalries of yore -- Montagues vs Capulets, Jets vs Sharks, Lucille I vs Lucille II -- the Colonials and the Civil Warriors are enmeshed in a decades long battle. It started when Civil War Reenactmentland had the audacity to open across the street from Colonial Essex Village. This much history in one place may sound too good to be true, but according to the Colonial Williamsburg website, there's a Historic Jamestowne less than 10 miles away. However, they just formed a partnership.

Our heroine Elizabeth Connelly, government name: Chelsea Glaser, is descended from historical interpreters, i.e., her parents do this shit too. Her life has been Colonial Essex Village since she was 6 years old. This familiarity with the land and the history gets her elected as the Colonials' Lieutenant. Right after she's elected though, she gets captured by some Civil Warriors including a tall, handsome fella, an Ultimate Warrior if you will.

Look, some people descend from reenactors and some people descend from WWF fans. Thanks, Grandpa.

What follows, besides **Cold! Hard! Vengeance!**, is the geekiest prank war imaginable. It's the battle of anachronisms, which to a historical interpreter is akin to slapping them on the face AND insulting their mama. Chelsea and co. strike back by placing *phones*, those modern, newfangled contraptions, throughout Reenactmentland right before opening time.

You can discover the rest of the shenanigans for yourself, including some thorough discussion about ice cream.

Oh, but it can, Draco.

I was pleasantly surprised and very amused by *Past Perfect*. I loved the tone, the humor, the setting, and even those slutty milliner girls. It reminded me a bit of an angst-free Jellicoe Road. I highly recommend this book -- and then we can all road trip to Colonial Williamsburg together! Leila Sales even made a *Past Perfect* playlist for us via Spotify! <http://bit.ly/obw8MX>

Arlene says

There is one common thread throughout all of history, it's that people have always fallen for the wrong people.

A boy once told me that love without heartbreak is just a pretty myth.

Past Perfect is my first literary encounter with Leila Sales, and after finding her writing enjoyable and entertaining I am eager to dive into her book *Mostly Good Girls*. In this story, Sales presents a unique set of characters, setting and plot that not only had me engrossed within the first few pages, but also excited to see how she'd continue to infuse light history lessons throughout the book in a way that was interesting. Color me impressed!

In **Past Perfect** we get to meet Chelsea Glaser who along with her mom and dad have worked at Essex American Revolution historical reenactment village since the age of six. When the Summer kicks off and she discovers that her ex-boyfriend Ezra will also be working at Essex, Chelsea realizes she needs to learn to let go of her past, stop perfecting the craft of "living history" and start living in the present. Not an easy task when she begins to fall for Dan who works for the rival Civil War historical reenactment village that her group of friends is currently at war with.

I found this book enlightening in many ways. First, these reenactment villages were quite impressive. I didn't realize how seriously some people take this stuff. The way they interact with "moderners" and how they perfect their reenactment craft through their history lessons and way of communicating was all very interesting. Second, Sales has a clever way of infusing a bit of history into her story in a way that you don't feel schooled, but rather curious to learn more.

Most of the characters in this story were likeable, especially Dan. I enjoyed his honest revealing moments with Chelsea especially the scene with the trampoline and the night he and his crew kidnapped Chelsea during a war raid. The banter between Chelsea and Dan had me craving their scenes and I was slightly disappointed to see we didn't get more. They had nice chemistry that Sales could have taken advantage of.

I was a bit disappointed in the art cover. I was looking forward to how that tied into the story because I thought it was adorable, but alas there was no connection between the cover and the story. Slightly disappointing considering all of the creative angles this story provided and the endless tie-ins they could have created with a nice cover. But that's a minor point.

Overall, I enjoyed the writing, the cast and the history lesson. Well done Sales!

Ari says

To make it clear, it's a little bit more than 3.5 stars :)

AND I think I'm becoming more and more exigent when it comes to the books I read, and I'm also becoming lazy when it comes to my reviews.

This is no exception.

So here come some random thoughts:

When I think about PAST PERFECT I think about myself in high school. It's not that I miss *being* in high school, but I miss some parts of it, and you'll get some glimpses of that inside this review too.

#1 The cover

I really love it - it's beautiful, and simple.

Look at that beautiful girl, with that smile, and the flower in her hair, looking so happy.

It's not particularly related to the story, but it's gorgeous anyways. And it's a tiny part of my "past perfect" because I miss the rain, I miss dancing in the summer rain. I have a lot of memories that come back to me only by looking at it, and it brings such a big smile on my face.

#2 The heroine

Chelsea has a great funny voice and PAST PERFECT it's a laugh-out-loud kind of book, full of irony.

Even though sometimes she seemed a bit naive, I could connect with her, understand her. She reminded me of my younger self and she made me smile a lot. I could understand why she wanted to please her friends, and why she needed to be loved again - off course she did some mistakes and from time to time I wanted to shake her and make her realize how silly she was, but some other times I just wanted to hug her for being such a sweetheart.

#3 The setting

Who said history is boring?... Well *I* would have said it in high school probably, but only because I didn't like my teacher (he didn't like me either so I'm fine with it).

Chelsea's job is to get dressed in historical clothes and pretend for the day that she lives in the past. I would love such a summer job. And this is not even the most interesting part. Because there is a war going on behind the scenes (between the people working at Essex, and the people working for the competition). And that really is something fun to watch.

4 The love story

Chelsea + Dan = ♥?

Well their story was sweet for the first half and strange on the other.

First let's meet our sweethearts:

- Chelsea (behind the scenes) the Colonial lieutenant at Essex Historical Colonial Village
- Dan, the enemy, a civil warrior (from the competition)

So I liked the way they met, in the middle of that war (who wouldn't like to be taken hostage by a good-looking guy?). And they were cute together (most of the time). And I loved their first kiss, it was sweet. I have a soft spot for first kisses - in the way some people collect stamps I would collect first-kiss-memories if I could ;))

BUT - there's always a 'but ... ,' right? I didn't really understand Dan, I couldn't get him.

He loved to sing and he didn't enjoy that much working for the Civil War Reenactment, but why did he care about what people thought about him being with Chelsea? It didn't make sense.. and what about the "tomb stone" - did he know or did he not?

#5 The triangle wanna be.. or not so much?

Chelsea + Dan - *the Ex* = ♥?

Ezra (sounds like a strange name but maybe is just me), Chelsea's ex boyfriend, was another character that I didn't quite understand. I don't really know why did Chelsea like him so much, but at some point or another in the past I might as well have liked some guy without deserving it, so maybe I'm just being a little bit hypocrite.

I didn't like him. He seemed to be manipulative, and he had an ego the size of mount Everest, and in the 'full memories' he acted like a big-fat-jerk.

BTW, I liked how she kept remembering parts of her past being perfect, but when she really looked into them she realized how not-so-perfect her love story really was. Because we all keep our good memories when it comes to the past relationships and forget the bad ones, it felt so damn real (in fact this is probably true if you are the dumped one, if not it's more like it to go the other way around).

Anyways, I must say that if something is over it happens *for a reason*, you should keep that in mind in the real life, it might save you from a heartbreak.

#4 The war game

It remind me a tiny bit of On the Jellicoe Road (really, really tiny bit) but I don't know why it worked better in that story.

Here it just got a bit out of control. It awed me to see how far could they go with this war (view spoiler).

Now, there would be a lot of other things to talk about, but as I said I am too lazy to put them into words. There were some things that really bothered me and I had to lower a bit the rating, but somehow I just couldn't leave this book behind.. it made me think about a lot of things from the past, because we all had our past perfect.. and it was perfect (right?) while it lasted.

PS: I know, the rainy girl from the review-cover has nothing to do with the story, but it matches the book cover, so that's OK ;)

Review originally posted at ReadingAfterMidnight.com

Blog (EN) | Facebook | Twitter | Tumblr | Bloglovin' | Blog (RO)

Vinaya says

Dear Leila Sales,

It's not you, it's me.

Okay, maybe it *is* you, just a little bit.

There are characters that I love to love, and characters that I love to hate. Characters that I merely despise, however, are rarely to my taste. Take Eona, for example. God, that girl frustrated me, annoyed me, made me want to scream at her and shake her till she saw sense, but I still loved the book.

Chelsea, the heroine of this book, inspired no such emotion in me. I like a little bit of perspective even in my escapist fiction, and this just didn't give me that. Through the whole book I was just like, Yeah, so?

The setting of the book is pretty awesome. Chelsea gets a summer job in Essex, a living history Colonial village where her parents work, and where she's spent most of her summers. This year, however, she wanted to work at the mall, a scheme that was overturned by her best friend Fiona's desire to work in Essex. Her life is further complicated by the fact that her ex-boyfriend Ezra- whom she's still pining over- is also working there this summer. And as if things aren't hard enough, Chelsea finds herself falling for a Civil Warrior from the neighbouring Reenactmentland, Essex's bitterest rivals.

The entire generation of junior interpreters in both places are at War, trying to undermine each other's places of work without letting the adults know about the ongoing rivalry. They sneak into each other's camps and plant anachronistic implements and indulge in petty vandalism. This entire scenario reminded me A LOT of Jellicoe Road, but without the magic that infuses Marchetta's world. Despite the logic fails in the territory wars in Jellicoe Road, I was infinitely more invested in the 3-way battle between the Cadets, the Townies and the School. For some reason, the War in past Perfect felt too juvenile and petty, even.

But my biggest problem with this book was Chelsea. For some reason, I never managed to connect with her character. I like romantic angst in my YA books, sure, but there has to be a solid base for the angst. Father died? Okay. Parents divorced? Okay. Constrained by financial and cultural circumstances? Okay. But a story about a sixteen year old girl with two loving parents, a great, supportive best friend and a comfortable, happy life playing Juliet in a made-up war? Not so much.

I think the reason I had such a problem with this book was because the heroine took herself so *seriously*. If you're going to write fluff, then write it with humour and passion and fun. If I wanted to read the moanings of a middle-class teenager whose greatest trial in life has been her first real break-up, I'd go back and read my diaries from high school.

Also, Chelsea came across as a little too self-centred for my taste. (view spoiler)

I was completely unconvinced by the romance, both the star-crossed nature of it, and the reason why Dan actually likes Chelsea totally escaped me. In fact, one of the saddest moments in my life was (view spoiler)

So why did I still give this 3 stars? Because it is a light, easy, well-paced read with occasional flashes of genuine humour. I really liked the descriptions of the living history villages, and I would have been happy to

have a bigger spotlight shone on them. I also liked the characterization of Chelsea's dad (I can totally see where her self-absorption comes from!) and her friendship with Fiona.

Chelsea's eventual realization that she had over-romanticized her relationship with Ezra also resonated with me, as it would with most girls/women with a weakness for charming assholes. I'm a little iffy, though, about how sudden her epiphany is. One minute she's all like, oh Ezra was the best boyfriend ever, and the next she's like, all my great memories are being filtered through rose-colored glasses! I know from personal experience, and from nurturing friends through similar relationships, that these things never just burst into fireworks in your head one day. It is a slow process of introspection and an inch-by-inch journey into realization. But this growth is not portrayed in the book at all.

All in all, this was a very 'okay' book for me, easily forgettable. (Sorry Flann!) I DO like Sales' style of writing, though, so I'll be looking up her other books to see if they appeal to me more.
