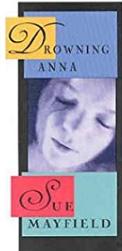


# Drowning Anna



By Sue Mayfield

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## Drowning Anna By Sue Mayfield

When Anna Goldsmith moves from her posh city school to a small town, everyone's gossiping. Her accent makes her stick out a mile away, while her near-perfect grades set her apart as a teacher's pet. But when the most popular girl in school, captivating and witty Hayley Parkin, befriends Anna, she couldn't be more thrilled. Then Hayley begins her cruel games. What starts as innocent teasing leads to mean remarks, and even violence, toward frightened Anna. But Hayley's cunning leaves a deeper impression on Anna than anyone, even her best friend Melanie, could have ever anticipated.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Opening with the attempted suicide of 15-year-old Anna Goldsmith, Mayfield's (*I Carried You on Eagles' Wings*) intense novel unspools at a breakneck pace. Succeeding chapters alternate between the first-person narrative of Anna's only remaining friend, Melanie, entries from Anna's diary (which Anna is clutching when her mother discovers the girl unconscious) and third-person viewpoints of Anna's mother and father at the hospital as they wait for their daughter to come out of a coma. Melanie's perspective and Anna's entries dovetail as they recount the escalating cruelty of their classmate Hayley Parkin. Hayley at first befriends smart, attractive Anna, who is new to the school, then turns against her. The author wisely leaves the cause for the rift a mystery, choosing instead to examine Hayley's subtle machinations: a trip here, an insult there, always out of sight of the teachers. Readers witness the dwindling of Anna's self-esteem (a few graphic scenes describe Anna cutting herself), the tenuous friendship forming between Anna and Melanie, and the insidious ways that Hayley buddies up to Melanie to undermine Melanie's loyalty to Anna. Structurally, the shifting viewpoints detract from the drama; Adele Griffin's recent *Amandine* does a more effective job of portraying the psychological claustrophobia that results from adolescent power plays. Nonetheless, Mayfield's drama will keep the pages turning. Ages 10-14.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 7-10-Anna Goldsmith, 13, moves with her family from London to a northern town. Beautiful and an ace student, she is praised by her teachers, given a violin solo, and assigned to play center fielder in hockey, displacing Hayley Parkin, who is her first and seemingly devoted friend. What Anna doesn't know is that Hayley is an adept manipulator and all of her classmates live in fear of her. First she draws people in to learn their sensitivities and secrets, then launches whisper campaigns against them. Once she has totally isolated her victim via social ostracism, she launches physical attacks. When Melanie Blackwood, who really wants to be Anna's friend, gradually gives in to Hayley's pressure, Anna begins to cut herself. Upon discovering this activity, her well-intentioned but all-too-busy parents call on the teachers for help. A few superficial changes take place, and the adults work to set the "personality clash" to rights. But Hayley is just getting started. Although the vocabulary is simple, this book is complex in structure. The first chapter is told in present tense via an omniscient narrator as Anna sets in motion what will be the climax of the plot. The next chapter features Melanie reminiscing about how all of this started. Anna, who is comatose through most of the book, speaks mostly through her diary entries and letters. The shifting narratives contribute to a compelling story that will strike a chord with many young teens. Published as *Blue* in the United Kingdom, this book should reach large numbers of readers here as well.

*Cindy Darling Codell, Clark Middle School, Winchester, KY*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 8-12. Sixteen-year-old Anna Goldsmith is intelligent, talented, beautiful, and shy. When she moves from London to a small Yorkshire town, she is immediately befriended by the popular and fascinating Hayley Parkin. But then Hayley proceeds to drop Anna for no apparent reason, and cruel bullying drives Anna to attempt suicide with an overdose. Most of the story is related through Anna's one real friend, Melanie, in an extended flashback after the attempted suicide. Though full of British phrases, the story crosses the Atlantic easily; the theme of teen cruelty and bullying rings true anywhere. The characters are mostly well developed, though villainous Hayley remains an enigma. Teens will recognize Anna, whose many talents cannot overcome the mind games Hayley plays on her. Mayfield captures teen girls' closeness and cruelty with

excruciating accuracy. *Debbie Carton*  
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