



Not a Drop to Drink

Mindy McGinnis

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Regret was for people with nothing to defend, people who had no water.

Lynn knows every threat to her pond: drought, a snowless winter, coyotes, and, most importantly, people looking for a drink. She makes sure anyone who comes near the pond leaves thirsty, or doesn't leave at all.

Confident in her own abilities, Lynn has no use for the world beyond the nearby fields and forest. Having a life means dedicating it to survival, and the constant work of gathering wood and water. Having a pond requires the fortitude to protect it, something Mother taught her well during their quiet hours on the rooftop, rifles in hand.

But wisps of smoke on the horizon mean one thing: strangers. The mysterious footprints by the pond, nighttime threats, and gunshots make it all too clear Lynn has exactly what they want, and they won't stop until they get it....

With evocative, spare language and incredible drama, danger, and romance, debut author Mindy McGinnis depicts one girl's journey in a barren world not so different than our own.

Not a Drop to Drink Details

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From Reader Review Not a Drop to Drink for online ebook

Ellen Gail says

She twisted underneath him, bringing her knee into his groin and pulling her knife from her boot.

"Mother taught me to carry a knife for always."

She left him holding his intestines in disbelief as she disappeared down the hill, his gun tucked securely in her waistband.

Dramatic voiceover voice: In a world where clean drinking water is scarce, supplies are limited, and disease is flourishing, a mother and daughter must fight to hold on to their water, their family, and their lives.

I totally fell in love with this story! Lynn as a character is hard and raw in so many aspects. She's had to fight and kill and work from such a young age. She also has the ability to be caring and open when given the opportunity, which is not often. She can be warm, but never mushy or overly sentimental.

There is romance, but it's very minimal and natural. Like not even a HINT of instalove. The relationship between Lucy and Lynn is given arguably more development than her relationship Eli. I really don't have any complaints about the characters. Lauren, Stebbs, and Vera, they all contributed to the story in various ways. Especially Stebbs. His gradual integration into Lynn's life was done perfectly.

(view spoiler)

"Lynn was nine the first time she killed to defend the pond, the sweet smell of water luring the man to be picked off like the barn swallows that dared to swoop in for a drink.

Lynn does eventually grow a heart and get "soft" and yada yada yada, but she's still a fierce bitch who will kill to protect her own. She's just learned that what she considers her own might stretch a little further than the clothes on her back and her water supply. There was an element of thirst missing from the story though. I suppose because Lynn & Stebbs were relatively well off when it came to having access to clean drinking water, but the story never felt parched.

Ohh! The writing! I have to compliment the writing! It's so sparse and open, a gritty survival story that doesn't feel false or like it's trying too hard to be tough. It just works.

Not a Drop to Drink manages grit without pretension, a fight for survival with a core of humanity. It knows what the story is, who its characters are, and succeeds in telling a great story beautifully. Bravo!

UPDATE! There is a cat on my lap again, but the review is written. =)

That sense of satisfaction when a book with a really fucking gorgeous cover turns out to be just as good on

the inside. I'm very very pleased.

Review will be written when I can get this cat off my lap. At the moment I am paralyzed by snuggles.

Flannery says

In *Not A Drop To Drink*, Mindy McGinnis has envisioned a futuristic United States in which access to water is strictly controlled. The population has been decimated by diseases including (but not limited to) cholera due to overcrowding in cities, the aforementioned water situation, and the strain on resources. In terms of YA dystopian “explanations,” I found McGinnis’ world to be very real and very possible, especially the lack of antibiotics once people were forced to move into organized cities and the demand for medication relentlessly skyrocketed. Access to water and medications in this future is controlled and everything is expensive, so a majority of people cannot afford very much of either. I was actually reminded of the Japanese tsunami a few years back, when news outlets were speculating that radiation could affect people on the west coast of the US and they advised people to take potassium iodine tablets. After (no joke) a day, you couldn’t find them anywhere in the whole Seattle area and Amazon suppliers had shipping estimates of months. The plausibility of the water shortage was scarily real to me, and that is one aspect that lends to the overall success of this novel--it doesn't depend on the fantastical to wow the reader, and it doesn't need to.

From the very first few pages, I was completely interested in this story. Lynn, a teenage girl, and her mother live alone in a house by a pond, from which they gather water to purify daily. Both Lynn and her mother are hard workers and absolutely capable of living in isolation, and when the occasional person shows up to steal water from their pond, they have no hesitation in shooting them down to protect their claim. They don't mess around, and neither does McGinnis with her sparse, frank text, which feels very intentional and totally works for the story. The scope of the setting is small but the containment made the narrative more exciting because it honestly feels like you are sitting on that roof with Lynn or hauling that water bucket up the hill with her. It was refreshing to read about a girl surviving instead of a girl who needs to bring down a widespread government conspiracy, a girl who must save the entire human race, or a girl with two (or more) different love interests. While reading, I tried to think of other experiences that give me the same feeling as reading this book, or ways to describe it to potential readers. Here are a few:

1. You might like this book if you like The Walking Dead and think you'd enjoy reading about living on Season Two's farm setting.
2. You read and enjoyed Susan Beth Pfeffer's Last Survivors series, but wished one or more of the characters were more useful and logical.
3. When you started reading Blood Red Road by Moira Young, you were excited about Saba and what might happen before she ever left home.
4. You love reading books that involve surviving in the wild and don't mind reading more about the day-to-day rather than tons of movement and epic action sequences.

About two-thirds of the way through the novel, I found myself wondering where the plot was going. It kind of meanders around, not that I minded, but I was worried the author would try to throw it all at the reader at once: a romance develops, a few additional (and intriguing) characters show up, and there is a lot of back-

loaded action. Though the pacing was a bit off, when all was said and done, I was satisfied with the ending point and the amount of resolution and I think most readers will feel the same way. There were a few surprises that I (perhaps embarrassingly) didn't see coming and a somewhat cheesy epilogue but overall there was very little about this novel that I didn't enjoy. If I could make one wish, it would be that the city in the novel would've been left as a current and real American city. "Entargo" makes the entire book less serious to me as it reminds me of all the dystopian YA with fictional names for everything, and I really did not understand the point of doing this since nearly everything else in the book is so recognizable. I wish *Not a Drop to Drink* could just own its realism and call Cincinnati or Cleveland or Pittsburgh or wherever by its name. Regardless, it is really exciting to me to read such a successful debut work. I hope McGinnis will come through with more adventures in years to come.

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Scarlet says

Some spoilers, nothing major.

It is highly frustrating when a book that screams potential fails to live up to it. *Not a Drop to Drink* could have been something bold and off-beat but alas, McGinnis just had to squeeze in unnecessary cliches and kill the originality.

Not a Drop to Drink describes an apocalypse that is chilling in its plausibility - **no drinking water**. In Lynn's world, having a pond in your backyard is akin to having an unlocked safe that everyone knows about and wants a share of. Survival does not come with a list of alternatives. Either kill to defend what you have or die trying. If you have nothing, take what you can by force or die from a parched throat.

It's a hard life in a bleak world for Lynn, and the only person she shares it with is her mother. Hardened by circumstance, these women spend hours on the roof scoping the horizon for strangers and shoot without hesitation whenever someone gets too close. They do their own hunting, grow their own vegetables, chop their own firewood, drink from their own pond.

This is roughly the first 20% of the book and it's awesome. The prose is spare and complements the desolate landscape beautifully. But once mother dies, the book goes on a nosedive and never recovers.

My biggest beef is Lynn herself. **Her actions are so contradictory to her supposed upbringing that I don't see her as a real person at all.** This is a girl who has never interacted with any human being besides her mother. The only man she has known all her life is the cripple who lives in the neighborhood, but they have never actually spoken. She has been taught to think of all strangers as enemies, trained to kill without remorse. Any girl who lives like this for sixteen long years will, in my opinion, have zero social skills. And if she suddenly finds herself orphaned, she will only become tougher. More distrustful of people around her. Scared. Confused.

Lynn, on the contrary, develops amazing social skills and goes all soft. Barely a fortnight after her mother's death, she's chatting with the neighborhood cripple, looking after a young girl that a stranger, I repeat, a stranger, entrusted to her care, and falling in love with the stranger, I repeat, the stranger, himself.

How completely out-of-character is this??

I don't have a problem with tough girls going soft. Actually, I want Lynn to have a conscience, I want her to think before she pulls the trigger. But this must happen gradually. In degrees. Convincingly. Not overnight. Not so suddenly.

And no way can such a girl be so comfortable in a relationship. That idea is too far-fetched. Lynn, who did not know what flirting meant till Eli told her, is now cuddling up with him in bed?! I understand if she has feelings and she's confused and doesn't know what to do, but **I do not buy that she would so readily act on her feelings.**

Another thing that bothered me was the overall lack of finesse. The prose is beautiful and descriptive but more often than not, it describes the wrong things. This is not a happy story. Some very tragic things happen. **But Lynn's emotional reaction to these events is absent in the narrative.** There are long passages about what Lynn saw, what she did, what she said, but nothing about what she felt or thought. This is where McGinnis could have shown Lynn's soft side - by letting her mourn, process her grief, come to terms with her loss. NOT BY letting her adopt an orphan or be in a relationship - things that go completely against Survival-101 that mother taught her.

I was taken aback by the ending, but in a good way. It was unorthodox and brave - two adjectives that could have described the book had McGinnis not tried to make unwarranted additions to what should have been a spare, unadorned survival story.

It is not a great feeling to go from "*This is surprisingly good*" to "*Meh*" in less than 100 pages. I read this book because the reviews convinced me this was not the usual dystopia, and while that is true, it is still not good enough.

2.5

Amanda says

Super excited to read the final version of this book. Mindy is fresh, snappy, and unexpected in her writing. She keeps you locked into the story with great characters, interesting turn of events, clever dialogue and a solid narrative that is sure to make her one of the greats in YA fiction. Reserve your copy early (I know I will) for 2013!

Regina says

The world of dystopia young adult fiction is pretty crowded right now. It is the what is the what in genre fiction. Given that, it is hard to find a book that is fresh and provides a perspective not yet covered by all of the post-apocalypse/dystopia books out there – it is pretty exciting to find one that is new. *Not a Drop to Drink* is that fresh perspective.

The book starts from the improbable premise of a young girl who is around the age of 16 and only knows one person in the world – her mother. She knows of a man who lives nearby, but doesn't truly know him. And she knows nothing about the world but survival by offense. She spends her days either preparing for

winter or protecting her water source with deadly force.

Not a Drop to Drink takes place in a world where there was first an oil shortage and then a severe water shortage. The countryside has been abandoned by the government in the US and the cities are tightly controlled. The story takes place in rural Ohio, there is no government and daily life is more brutal than any imagined wild west or Little House on the Prairie.

There are a lot of details about daily survival, food preparation, water purification, house building and that is what made this book interesting – and this is the part I really loved. The author realizes what it would actually take to live outside of society and the infrastructure we rely on so much. She uses those daily survival details to provide the framework of the world she builds. If readers enjoy reading about the daily details of survival then they would like this; these details are where I think the true beauty of *Not a Drop to Drink* is. There is great character development and a good amount of action, but what *Not a Drop to Drink* demonstrates is the day to day living would be like in a post apocalyptic world. This is the Little House on the Prairie for the end of the world readers. And it is not romanticized, it is not idealistic.

Is there romance? So what would a modern post-apoc/dystopica young adult novel be without romance – so yes, there is romance. But, romance is not the driving factor of the story and the book is not working toward a predictable happily ever after.

In short, I loved this book. I could not put it down. It is not without flaws, but it was enjoyable and adds something new to this perhaps too full genre.

Keertana says

Not a Drop to Drink is the type of novel that would have never appeared on my radar if it were not for the enthusiasm of dozens of bloggers. In fact, I believe this is one of the few dystopian novels I've picked up since my string of disasters with debuts last year, so color me surprised to find that McGinnis manages to do this genre justice. Not only is her debut gritty and realistic, but it combines one of the best aspects of dystopia that seem to have been buried under endless love triangles - fear. One of the primary reasons that dystopia became a favorite genre of mine was precisely because it lent itself so beautifully to psychological development; understanding how the fear of a future world led its people to behave in such inhumane ways. *Not a Drop to Drink* captures this dilemma perfectly, all without the eyesore of a love triangle or the burden of a mindless protagonist. If that isn't fortuitous, then I don't know what is.

As its title suggests, *Not a Drop to Drink* takes place in a futuristic world where water is a scarcity. Lynn has grown up in the middle of nowhere, far away from cities and other proper means of civilization, choosing to live with her mother in their small house with their small treasure. And by treasure I mean water. With water such a rarity in this world, Lynn has been forced to fight for her pond and, from a young age, has been taught by her mother how to shoot and just when to kill. In other words, shoot on sight, make no friends, and survive. When Lynn's mother is killed, though, Lynn slowly finds herself opening up to others surrounding her, but as her heart opens, so does room for danger as well...

Not a Drop to Drink is a largely plot-less novel, but that is far from being a detriment. While I found it to have an unusually slow start, it swiftly picked up and I found myself immersed in Lynn's life. McGinnis does a brilliant job of portraying the harsh brutality of the world Lynn has grown up in and we are witness to the

prickly thorns surrounding her walls as she fails to connect with those around her. Lynn finds Lucy, Eli, and Neva - a young family searching for water - and with the help of her neighbor Stebbs, slowly grows to envelop them in her life. McGinnis never rushes Lynn's growth, taking her time to make her feel comfortable with strangers and re-connect with her humanity. One of the largest themes of this novel is that of life vs. survival. From the moment she was born, Lynn has simply been surviving. Her mother, a heartless woman whose circumstances turned her to steel, never let Lynn feel the brunt of gentle emotions. Thus, Lynn has a long way to travel, psychologically, before she can learn to see people and not enemies, before she can learn to trust instead of kill.

I love that this is not only a far cry from the typical overbearing governments that litter dystopias, but this is also a much more realistic portrayal of a futuristic conflict. McGinnis writes beautifully and the details of her world fit in like puzzle pieces into the story. Although the main focus of this novel is on Lynn, there is still a depth of world-building that is slowly revealed over the course of the novel, as well as a plethora of other mysteries that begin to show by the end. Unfortunately, I found this was a detriment to the novel as, frankly, there was simply too much piled on to that conclusion. For once, the epilogue was mildly satisfying, but beyond that, the quick succession of events towards the end lost any real impact those concluding scenes may have had. Moreover, the characterization of many of the secondary characters was ever-so-slightly disappointing. None of them had the level of depth that Lynn or her mother possessed, and while this didn't impact my enjoyment of the novel in any particular manner, I would have loved for those other characters to come alive for me the way Lynn did.

Nevertheless, if you've lost belief in the dystopian genre, then this novel is the one to restore your faith. *Not a Drop to Drink* is an engaging thriller, full of concise prose and vivid characters. You'll come away from this with a far better appreciation of dihydrogen monoxide than before and, most likely, a thirst for more solid stand-alones from this genre. If nothing else, McGinnis has proved to be an author to watch out for and I can only hope she continues to belt out winners.

Emily May says

Survival. Sometimes it isn't about a dramatic fight to the death in a deadly arena that is being controlled by sadistic morons who want to create some good TV. Sometimes it isn't about demons and monsters and all those things that go bump in the night and are secretly trying to drag you off to some hellish dimension. Sometimes the biggest threat to survival is a lack of that which so many of us take for granted. If you pictured the end of the world as a loud affair, full of guns, bombs or fallen angels, then *Not a Drop to Drink* is the perfect book to show you how something so seemingly trivial can turn the world on its head.

This is a dystopian book. How many of those have I read these last two years? Well, I've completely lost count. And yet, I still think McGinnis has managed to deliver something special here. Like I said, this isn't a loud and dramatic tale. It's a quiet - but quietly fierce - story of survival. Lynn has been brought up by her mother; the two of them live alone in a house away from the rest of civilisation (if, indeed, civilisation actually exists anymore). Lynn has been taught the importance of protecting the water in the pond by their home, she knows that sometimes extreme measures have to be taken in order to save the water and survive. She has to be willing to defend the water at all costs. She even has to be willing to kill in order to survive.

Not a Drop to Drink is very atmospheric and the author expertly creates this sense of a small, isolated world in the middle of nowhere and Lynn's fear of the external threats that could enter it. This really is a true

survival story. Every day of the two women's lives is dedicated to making sure they live another one. They are faced with constant fear of going hungry or thirsty, freezing to death during the winter, being attacked by coyotes or... worse. Being attacked by creatures who know how to fire a gun. The overwhelming sense of fear and loneliness permeates the novel from start to finish.

Lynn and her mother are two very different people but are obviously so important to one another and their relationship was told well from the beginning. I dislike the term "coming of age" but I suppose it is hard to deny that this book also falls into that category - it's about growing up and learning and the loss of innocence. It's about the lengths one young girl is willing to go to in order to survive against the odds. Despite the lack of fast-paced drama, I think this is an incredibly powerful novel that stands out in an over-saturated genre. The fear is built slowly through niggling doubts and uncertainty but, for me, this makes it all the more potent.

Brandi says

Have you ever gone through a drought? Maybe had your community pass around 'drought preparedness' fliers, or had to face fines for not following a watering schedule? I have and I found it really very ulcer inducing. I remember reading about when Georgia had a really bad one several years ago that had the water shut off for certain hours, and people with a set number of gallons to use a day; I remember being so thankful that I had never been through a drought. Last summer wasn't the first drought I've been through since then, but when we had a drought here in upstate New York I was caught completely off guard, and my anxiety went through the roof! I had thought a place like this wasn't in danger of all that really, but times, they are a-changin. My point with this back story is that I've always been very anxious about water, and reading stories like *Not a Drop to Drink* really stoke that fear.

The only water she'd ever known was laced with dirt and tasted slightly of fish.

... "life was falling from the sky."

The story is about two women, a mother and daughter, who for the last 16 years have perfected the art of survival. Lynn's mother is *hard*; she has become a killer in order to secure the only reliable water source available to her and her only child, and taught Lynn to be just as hard. **"Lynn was nine the first time she killed..." "Death and gun powder were scents from her childhood..."**

Then one day everything changes when Lynn no longer has her mother for protection, and she ends up not only forming an uneasy friendship with her only neighbor, but she actually takes on a dying little girl she found in the woods. Lynn had only ever had her mother, but when she finds Lucy, and the others with her, suddenly she realizes that you can help people without compromising your own safety.

The only thing I will say that I wasn't happy with was having the back story for *why* there was a water shortage be so late in the book. This could just be a personal issue, because there are hints leading up to the why of it, but I prefer to know earlier than later.

I really loved the prose and the way that Mindy McGinnis cultivated a sense of desperation and loneliness without ever going over the top for the sake of it. She created a situation that was believable, and characters that work their way into your heart. I highly recommend this book to anyone who likes survival stories, strong female characters, and realism.

Giselle says

This is a story about survival in a harsh, harsh world. It's not an action packed dystopian. It's not an edge-of-your-seat thrill ride. It's the journey of a young girl who's discovering the ugly truths, but also the beautiful roots, of humanity.

Lynn has been raised inside a house with only her mother by her side. She was raised hard, and she was raised cold. Everybody is the enemy. Their pond is their only life source, so they must guard it with their lives. This is a world where drinkable water is extremely rare and not obtained without exhausting effort. Lynn and her mother have been living a hard, merciless life. I could immediately feel the weight they held on their shoulders. The hard edges they had to build around themselves to survive is amazingly sad, and the loneliness becomes a palpable entity around them. It's a truly desolate life in an ugly world. One that is unfortunately all too realistic, which is what makes these types of stories the most tragic. From the animal attacks to the scavengers, to Lynn's character after facing what one should never have to, it brims with shocking truths. This is the kind of dystopian that makes you feel ashamed for ever complaining about trivial things.

It's not a story with a heart-pounding plot, however. Some may find it too slow for their taste. Personally, I found the gradual pace was what gave it its power. It's really about growing up with the odds stacked against you. Every day, Lynn faces fears of running out of water, of being attacked by animals, of not being able to defend her house - or even herself - from heartless scavengers. The atmosphere brims with a constant threat. This is what gave the book its life. I did expect more to actually happen overall, but my full attention was glued to these pages regardless.

Inside this picturesque setting are remarkable characters who walk its plains. Lynn, our main character, was raised to have a thick skin. She can shoot an intruder without a second glance, without knowing if he even deserved the bullet for that matter. And don't think she's broken up about taking someone else's life, either. To her, these people are threats that must be eliminated. They are the enemy, period. This made her sort of impenetrable, yet I still found myself connecting to her on many levels. I could feel her strength, her need to survive above everything else. This was ingrained in her character and it made me just as sad as it made me proud. Early on in the book her life changes quite abruptly, but this was the beginning of a small crack in this shell of hers. She soon meets other survivors who become big players in this novel. For the first time in her life, Lynn finds friendship, love, and the courage to share a piece of her heart with others. I found this change in her admirable, and so, so deserving. She really has such a huge heart. She just needed *someone*. Stebbs is the father figure who's the voice of reason and also highly capable. Lucy is a little girl who you can't help but fall in love with. Eli is the first boy to make her blush. His presence gives the book a mild dose of romance that is barely there, just enough to offer the romantic element this story needed.

Arrestingly atmospheric with an unflinching writing style, Not a Drop to Drink is one dystopian that stands out among many. It's a cruel and greedy world we live in, Lynn is seeing it at its worst.

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at Xpresso Reads

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

“Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink”

I noticed *Not a Drop to Drink* still sitting on my “Currently Reading” shelf this morning. Uhhhhh, I read it last Fall. I’m pretty sure I even wrote a review about it . . . but I obviously didn’t bother posting said review anywhere or saving it. I think I need to start taking some Gingko every day for my memory problems : (

Anyway, I read this book a long time ago and I think you all should read it too so I’m posting a review.

Lynn has spent her entire life with her mother on their rural property. In Lynn’s world, leaving the safety of your home (and more importantly your water source) is asking for trouble. Outsiders are automatic enemies. It’s kill or be killed and Lynn has become pretty adept at killing. When Lynn’s situation changes drastically, she has to decide if she too is willing to change. A reluctant trust must be built with her nearest neighbor, Stebbs, in order to survive . . . especially with strangers squatting in the nearby forest.

This was a humdinger of a book. My favorite dystopian stories are the ones where world building isn’t a requirement, because the world is OUR world . . . just a shittier version. That’s the case here. The world is Lynn’s property, and you don’t need anything more than that. This book was **intense**. Seriously edge-of-your-seat reading at times. It took everything I typically hate about YA and simply “disappeared” it. Aside from the no bad world building, there is also no instalove, and there is no flowery prose and characters who talktalktalk like no human you’ve ever met. In fact, I think what makes this book so striking is how sparse the writing is. What is said is what needs to be said. No fluff. No filler. And Lynn? Lynn isn’t your typical young adult heroine like this:

Nope, she kicks ass and doesn’t generally bother taking names . . . but occasionally she’ll take some boots, or coat, or something else she finds useful. Now, that’s not saying this book is 100% problem free. It’s not (hence the 4 Stars rather than 5), but the good is soooooo much better than the norm I was able to forget all about the bad. Oh, and even though this book is marked #1 in a series (**GOD GIVE ME CANCER BEFORE I READ ANOTHER FREAKING SERIES!!!!**), the ending is completely satisfying so you can just pretend there isn’t going to be another book.

Highly recommended to young adults and old adults alike.

Drew says

“Regret was for people with nothing to defend, people who had no water.”

I'm still reeling over this book.

You've heard it all before. A dystopian, tough female character trying to survive, blah blah blah. **Wait, what? This one was actually good?**

If you're tired of cheesy and unrealistic YA I don't think you'll be disappointed by this book that stood out in an overcrowded genre. I can't describe my love for it enough - the fantastic narrator, heart pounding plot, and desperate survival atmosphere all had me hooked.

What if the water ran out?

Lynn has spent her whole life helping her mother guard their pond in a time when water is scarce. Her days are filled with hard work and a constant fear that one day she will lose the pond.

I couldn't believe the level of awesomeness Lynn possessed. Her mother taught her everything - how to hunt, check for infection, and not hesitate to shoot down stragglers.

“Years before, Mother had shown her pictures of the thirsty dead. Their skin hung from their bones like the wallpaper that sloughed from the walls in the unused upstairs hallway. Swollen tongues were forced past lips cracked and bleeding.”

Now, there was some romance, but it didn't overpower the plot and I actually loved it. Lynn has lived with her mother her whole life, so she's curious and innocent when it comes to Eli, the stranger who happens upon her pond. Their chemistry was strong and I loved them together.

I don't know how I can convince you to read this book. It was an **unbearably sad struggle for survival and normality** in tough times that felt all too real. The writing was gritty, the characters touched my heart, and I loved the brutal ending.

I can't wait to continue my journey with Lynn in the sequel, In a Handful of Dust.

Melanie says

See more reviews at YA Midnight Reads

Thank you HarperCollins Australia for sending me this copy. No compensation was given or taken to alter this review.

"Water water every where, but not a drop to drink."

What will our world be like in a few decades' time? Will it be thriving with the interminable technology? Or will it be in decay from a Word War III, on the brink of extinction? Or, would our world be one with water everywhere, but not a drop to drink?

Mindy McGinnis, invites readers into her **imagination** view of what the world will be like with water still around, yet undrinkable due to a waterborne, contagious disease, Cholera. Which is why there may be water, but there's not a drop, drinkable. With the exception that you know how to purify it. Lynn and her Mother have been living in the same place for a long time now, and the reason they don't move is because they have a pond which acts as their water source. Lynn has been protecting the pond ever since she was a young girl- shooting anyone or anything that dared to take a step near the pond. Water is treated like gold. It is everyone's key to survival.

The characters of *Not A Drop To Drink* were the best thing about this novel. Lynn has been protecting her pond from every threat that defies it. Brought up by her Mother, all she's ever known to do is survive. And she's damn good at it. I haven't read a novel with such a ass-kicking female in some time so I haven't had much to compare to. She's brutal, but not too brutal. Selfless, but not too selfless. Sure, she has a few tiny flaws not worthy of mention but that is what helped define Lynn furthermore. This is not only Lynn's story though. This is also the cute and hopeful, Lucy's. This is also the humorous, Stebbs' story. And this is also the swoon-provoking, Eli's story. Each of them play an important part to this novel and Mindy McGinnis' characters were so vivid and authentic that they leapt out of the page.

With the ingenious and thoughtful idea and plot line, the romance was fitted in perfectly- slipped right into place. I actually considered not mentioning this aspect if it weren't for the excuse to talk about Eli more. Eli's passion and heart made *Not A Drop To Drink* more likeable than ever. He's not typical at all, people. He is utterly unique and just. No words.

The only qualm I have with *Not A Drop To Drink*- is the world building. It is there, but not significant or descriptive enough in my belief. Maybe it's just me being insanely critical as my first thought when reading the synopsis was 'Oh! World building will make this book shine.' Nonetheless, Mindy McGinnis' debut is a strong start to a promising writing journey. I'll definitely be reading her future works.

Not A Drop To Drink, is quickly paced, heart-breaking and strangely real despite the dystopian setting. This book not only provides a fantastic story set in the distant future and kick-ass heroine, however also opens the reader's eyes to see how essential drinkable water is and what life would be like without it.

Whitney Atkinson says

4.5 stars

This was interesting, believable, and worked very nicely as a standalone (even though I know it's a series).

Alice-Elizabeth (marriedtobooks) says

Read this as an e-book via Scribd!

T/W- Death of newborn baby, Suicide, Violence

What... the actual heck just happened? I've been feeling super confused about what was actually going on with Lynn as a main character that I personally found quite unlikeable. The storyline involves a pond being kept watch on by Lynn and her Mum, who try and shoot towards any strangers who get close to their lands. Until the day that everything changes and new responsibilities are placed onto Lynn's shoulders. I really struggled to connect with any of the characters, it was quite a grim and depressing read as more and more death experiences happened as the novel drew to a close. It also ended on a cliffhanger which I wasn't fully satisfied with. I won't be reading the sequel.

Trina (Between Chapters) says

Re-read in April 2016.

New rating: 5 stars forever and always.

This world still feels so utterly real. It still evoked a lot of emotion from me the second time. There was one character I'd forgotten completely, so that was a surprise.

Loved watching Lynn's character arc. She goes from being raised this completely heartless killer to growing a conscience and letting people in. Watching her walls come down makes me feel so proud of her!

It's full of death and gore and gritty things, but there's also a beauty in the simplicity of this story.

I love that the romance is there, but it's awkward (just like these characters) and doesn't take over the entire story. I also really appreciate this time around how I can see that Lynn acknowledges her emotional responses to terrible situations but is able to push them aside to deal with the task at hand. They are definitely there, but she doesn't allow them to shut her down, which is what was needed in this story.

First read in January 2014.

Original rating: 5 stars

Original review:

Although I wouldn't say this is one of my all time favorites (*LOL, wrong!*), I have to give it 5 stars. For the reading mood I was in when I picked up this book, it was just what I needed. I couldn't believe it was a debut. I loved every moment, found no holes, nothing was unbelievable, and had no lingering questions. It's not a happy story, but I found that very refreshing.

One thing I want to mention right up front is that I don't think this should be classified as young adult. The main character is a teenager (I am guessing around 16, although I never caught a real mention of her age), but there is absolutely no reason an adult wouldn't enjoy this book and it's a shame that the YA category will probably scare many adults away. There are more mature themes in this book than in most of YA.

Not a Drop to Drink is very world and character driven. The plot is basically just survival, and dealing with other people for most of the book. There is a bigger conflict building throughout the story that doesn't amp up until the end. I thought the pacing was excellent. In the times of just survival there is one traumatic event after another that propel you through the story. I enjoyed the way in which we learned how the water shortage came about. There is gore, death, disease, rape.. the way the characters handle losses, and manage to survive was very moving to me. I enjoyed that this book wasn't afraid to include the more gritty aspects that would surely be present in this type of world. The descriptions of illness and injury, and in one instance just the mention that one girl has lice - it all strangely appealed to me (while grossing me out at the same time). Every aspect of the story worked together to paint a picture of a future that seems like a very real possibility.

There is a bit of romance, but I greatly appreciated that it wasn't front and center. There is a scene where the main character specifically states that she will not have sex with the boy she's with. And I just had to take a moment to applaud. It was so refreshing to not have a YA story turn the plot into a love story, or worse, a love triangle, and then include sexy times. That just wouldn't have been appropriate in this story and I am so grateful it wasn't forced in.

This is one of those stand alone novels that makes you wish it were a series. Which is ironic because so many series and trilogies that exist have readers crying out for more stand alones. I guess it's a sign of how great this book was, that its world was so full that I could see many other stories being told here. There will be a companion novel, but so far I don't think it's known who it will be about. I will without a doubt be picking it up!

madametschenny says

Meine Rezension könnt ihr hier nachlesen, wenn ihr mögt: <http://dasblondinchen.blogspot.de/201...>

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

Actual rating: 3.5

“Do you want to die like this?” Mother had asked that night and every night since then. Lynn’s answer never changed. “No.” And Mother’s response, their evening prayer. “Then you will have to kill.”

A YA dystopian with beautiful stark writing and a strong female lead that got gradually worse the further one gets into the book. **The book started off so well, but got impeded by a needless romance and a very strong heroine who grew increasingly insipid.** The world building was vague, but the setting was so well-depicted that it didn't decrease my enjoyment.

The first 25% of this book felt a lot like reading Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. The beginning was absolutely gripping. We are plunged into a dystopian world, whose background is vague, but where one thing is abundantly made clear: **this is a fight for survival, and water is the key.** Lynn lives with her mother Lauren on their little farm, with a precious pond of water, which they desperately protect. This is not too far from the distant future, up until around 15-20 years ago, water still ran free from faucets, but since then, something has gone wrong, and it has become a valuable commodity. The human body can go without

food for a long time, but not without water, and a slow death from thirst is not a pleasant one. To defend their land, to protect their water, their lifeline, Lauren and Lynn have to kill. It is a literal matter of life or death.

Years before, Mother had shown her pictures of the thirsty dead. Their skin hung from their bones like the wallpaper that sloughed from the walls in the unused upstairs hallway. Swollen tongues were forced past lips cracked and bleeding. Eyes sunk so deeply into sockets that the outline of the skulls was evident.

It is a hard life for a 16 year old. Lynn has killed, she has hunted animals for food, she harvests her small farm's crops, she has to haul in and purify the water. She spends hours sniping invaders from the rooftops of her home. There is no such thing as a break. The first 25% of the book is so brilliantly, sparsely written. The reader feels the urgency of the situation as Lynn and her mother battle out every day for survival, living under a state of constant alert, wary to any change, any sudden sounds that will warn them that a potential threat to their existence is approaching.

This is a somewhat frustrating review to write because there is a lot going in the book, and there is no way for me to summarize the book or to go into details with the plot or characters without spoiling it, so I'll leave it with this short summary: shit happens, and some new people come into Lynn's organized, strict existence. And that's where things went wrong for me.

The Plot

Overall, quite well done. The beginning and the end are incredible, action-packed...which makes the middle half seem so out of place. **The middle half of the book felt completely complacent compared to the rest of the book; the survival aspect of it was very much diminished, replaced with a lot of emotional feeeeeeeels and bonding and happy cuddly moments that doesn't seem consistent with the overall theme of the book.**

The Setting

One of the better dystopian settings I've encountered. This is due to the fact that the setting itself is centered around such a small area of Lynn's existence, in a very rural farm. The setting is limited enough so that we get a good feeling for the environment without being overwhelmed with a complex world-building that, in the case of YA, oftentimes shoots itself in the foot. They live on a large, rural plot of land, with one close neighbor (Stebbs) with whom they share a peaceful, but wary existence. They keep an eye on each other, and their peace is tenuous. They are surrounded by forests, stream, wildlife. It is a perfect setting for a nature-based survival story, and I devoured it.

The world building and background is vague, but in this instance, that's not a problem for me. We don't find out much about the setting until it is told to us through conversation over halfway into the novel. I did get a little frustrated at times, but **the story itself is compelling enough in its fight for survival that I felt like the background was something that didn't require so much detail.** In that sense, the plot holes in the background, and the fact that it is left deliberately unclear is not intolerable. The setting is small enough so that any large, complicated setup for a dystopian future would have felt widely out of place.

There are bits and pieces of science that were completely ludicrous to anyone with more than an elementary knowledge, for instance, the sterilization of water using exposure to normal UV light (AKA weak sunlight). No. It doesn't work that way. Also, there was a scene in the book where a medical doctor tries to cool down a high fever by plunging a child into a freezing body of water. No. Absolutely not. Any reputable doctor would know better than that. But again, I'm nitpicking, and these inconsistencies are minor enough not to bother me too much.

The Characters

I loved Lauren and Lynn. Lauren is Lynn's mother. She remembers the time when things were normal, when water ran freely from faucets. She has an English degree, which is rendered completely useless right now, except as a tool for educating her daughter Lynn when time allows for it. **Lauren is tough. She has killed before, she will kill again, and she has taught her daughter to do the same.** It's not meaningless, they have to live, and if they don't kill the invaders, others will kill them. There is a small question regarding her morals and her trigger-happy fingers, but I prefer to think of it as a mother hen defending her chick.

Lauren did not raise an idiot. She taught Lynn everything she knows, and that has made Lynn into a very, very competent 16 year old. She kills when she needs to, Lynn is absolutely unflinching in that sense, and I loved her for it. She makes some tough, truly heart-breaking decisions, but I never got to mourn for her or feel sorry for her, because she does it so matter-of-factly. I admire her for that. **She makes tough decisions, and she never second-guesses herself, or regret the fact afterwards.** Which makes it all the more mind-boggling that she acts so out of character when she meets the child, Lucy.

I hate, hate, hate the random insertion of a stupid child in the novel to prove that the main character has a heart. Lynn acts completely inconsistently when she chooses to more or less adopt Lucy. It makes no fucking sense. Lynn is out for survival. Survival is best when you are not bogged down with a kid, so why the fuck does she develop a soft heart when it's most inconvenient? Lucy is also an inconsistent character, she does not act like a 5-year old. She is too mature at times, and she acts her age at times, which is best described as annoying and stupid. But then again, I hate kids, and I hate children as a plot device, so it might work for some readers.

I loved the gradual development of a paternal-type of relationship with her neighbor, Stebbs. Their relationship grew from an uneasy one, at best, to one that is more complex than either would have initially guessed.

The Romance

It wasn't terrible, as dystopian romances go. I wouldn't call it insta-love, because it took a few meetings before the really heavy feels started coming into play, but it really didn't do it for me. It is somewhat understandable that Lynn falls for a cute boy, since she is so isolated living in the middle of nowhere with her mom, that really, any boy would be attractive to a 16-year old girl with the incoming surge of adolescent hormones, but **Eli just doesn't seem worthy of Lynn's attention** He is a city boy, he grew up in a safe, economically sound home that can afford to pay for water and the comforts of city living. He has never known need in his life until now. He can barely protect himself, he does not know how to survive at all, and in fact, he and his family nearly died until Lynn comes to their rescue. It makes no sense that Lynn would fall for such a soft boy, such a **weak, inferior specimen of what passes for masculinity.**

Overall, the beginning and end of the book compensated for the weaknesses towards the middle of the novel. This book is unwavering in its gritty portrayal of survival, and I highly recommend it for fans of a well-written survival-based dystopia.

Kat (Lost in Neverland) says

OH
OHH

OHHHHHH

I FEEL LIKE I JUST HAD AN ORGASM.

OH THAT WAS GOOD.

REVIEW TO COME. ~~no pun intended, oh god~~

Lynn and her mother live in a world where water is a precious resource. Together, they watch over their pond from thirsty scavengers, shooting them down whether they're human or animal.

A tragic accident leaves Lynn on her own for the first time in her life. She must protect the pond from the dangers in the South and the threat of a new family living by the stream nearby.

In a world not far from our own, McGinnis weaves a story that instantly draws you in with simple writing that flowed over the page.

The ending was absolute perfection and that's probably why I'm ignoring some of the issues I had with the rest of the story.

Extremely likeable characters and sudden plot twists keep you reading with intrigue.

Lynn is someone you would not want to fuck with if you ever came across her. Her mother raised her to be a killer and that's ultimately what she grows up to be, and a badass one.

Stebbs is one of the quiet but loveable characters that you can't help but like. I would go into other characters but I'm not sure if they would count as spoilers or not.

A couple problems I'd like to put out there;

I found it really unrealistic that Lynn's mother never told her what sex was.

Sure, she's never seen a man besides Stebbs and the ones she kills in her life, but what if she got caught by one of the men from the South? She wouldn't even know what was happening to her.

I would think, since her mother distrusts men so much, she'd make sure to tell Lynn what happens and what they are capable of. That whole bit with Lynn being 17 years old and not knowing what sex was is very fishy, and seriously unrealistic.

I thought it was one of those stupid YA novel things, where the girl has to be 'naive' and 'innocent' regarding sex and blushing at those kinds of things.

I'm so sick of seeing that. Can we have girl characters that openly discuss sex without blushing or being regarded as the 'sluts' of the book?

Just, fucking hell.

The lead-up to the ending was a bit too quick for my taste. This is the one part that I would have actually liked it to be drawn out and more dramatic.

(view spoiler)

Other than those few points, I really loved this book. It took gender roles and fucked them in the ass, making the female character the badass fighter while making the male love interest, to be honest, useless and what-

how-does-a-gun-work-derp character. That's usually the girl in that position and I'm so glad it was switched around for once. ~~Even though I did find the romance between Lynn and the love interest severely forced.~~

Finally, someone who can accurately write about a realistic post-apocalyptic/other world novel without all the 'love conquers all' crap (looking at you, Champion).

Unique, brilliantly executed, and simply fantastic, I'm hoping McGinnis will come out with more books in the future and possibly even a sequel to this one.

Evie says

Mindy McGinnis' "Not A Drop To Drink" is one phenomenal debut novel. It's a gritty survival story with a beating heart - meaningful, moving and intelligent. A no-nonsense depiction of a post-apocalyptic world in which the rivers have dried up and the thirst, hunger and desperation are all that's left.

This is a powerful story. A rare gem among YA books that can be enjoyed by teens and adults alike. Filled with incredible insights, memorable quotes, and emotionally affecting moments, it gripped me right from the very first page and left me.. changed. Heartbroken, but satisfied and hopeful. This story really pulled on my heartstrings. At times I had tears in my eyes and had to pause and take a deep breath, and remind myself that "this is only a fictional story". Because it was all too easy to forget that. This story felt so real, so honest. Brutal yet utterly beautiful. Most of all, it felt terrifyingly plausible. A fictional scenario that could become our own grim reality in a blink of an eye. There's no doubt in my mind that this is a book I won't ever forget.

The writing was exceptional. I inhaled it all. I loved McGinnis evocative descriptions and sharp dialogues. I enjoyed how straight-forward and raw the narrative voice was, it really spoke to me. And it definitely fit the story well, giving it an extra edge. There are passages in this book that will make you pause and wonder about certain things, from more practical things, like how you'd react to certain situations, to more abstract ideas, like friendship, love, fear and what it does to you, isolation and how it affects you. This story is filled with memorable life lessons.

I loved all the characters, I really did. How could I not? They're so real, so different from the usual flat, angsty teenagers and nonsensical adults that rule the YA universe. McGinnis' characters are brilliantly fleshed out, with distinct character traits, skills and personalities. Full of complicated - often conflicting - emotions, fears, hopes and dreams. You genuinely care for these people. Especially the heroine, Lynn, who is a girl that will make your heart ache. She entered the adulthood at a very young age, had to learn how to survive, fight off people who would come and try to steal water from their lake, be tough, even merciless. To stay alive she had to learn how to kill. Her life was virtually joyless. Even with her mother still alive and there to keep her company, she was devastatingly lonely. But then horrible things happen. Her mother's death, the unexpected friendship with the old neighbor, the arrival of strangers with unknown and possibly bad intentions- Lynn has to face all that, change her old way of thinking and adapt to this new situation. And her personal growth, inspired by so many gut-wrenching and heart-pounding events - is immense.

Not A Drop To Drink is filled with breathtaking action and it makes for a fast-paced, captivating and deeply

moving read. The plot, the action, the setting and the evocative writing - all that is fantastic and top-notch. To me, though, this is most of all a phenomenal character-driven tale. It's a story of survival, yes, but it's also so much more. It's about letting go and finding your own voice and way of life, it's about opening yourself to the world and allowing yourself to trust another human being, it's about fighting for what's yours but also fighting for what's right, it's about so many things.. you will be blown away and reeling from it for a very long time. Don't wait another moment, pick it up.

Jodi Meadows says

My official comments:

Deftly written, Mindy McGinnis's NOT A DROP TO DRINK is a frightening picture of a potential future without fresh water, which left me ridiculously grateful for my working faucet. This post-apocalyptic survival tale is about so much more than just survival. I loved it.

My unofficial comments:

This book.

Be ready for it.
