



Tides

Betsy Cornwell

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When high-school senior Noah Gallagher and his adopted teenage sister, Lo, go to live with their grandmother in her island cottage for the summer, they don't expect much in the way of adventure. Noah has landed a marine biology internship, and Lo wants to draw and paint, perhaps even to vanquish her struggles with bulimia. But then things take a dramatic turn for them both when Noah mistakenly tries to save a mysterious girl from drowning. This dreamlike, suspenseful story—deftly told from multiple points of view—dives deeply into selkie folklore while examining the fluid nature of love and family.

Tides Details

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From Reader Review Tides for online ebook

Alison says

Tides is a really quick read (at least for me I read it in about two days). It is a really innovative blend of traditional selkie folklore and contemporary teen life/issues. I didn't know anything about selkies before reading this book, but am definitely intrigued now!

Lottie Eve says

Upon finishing Tides, my breath was taken away. I am still having trouble coming up with sentences that will actually do this novel justice. Cornwell beautifully captures the salt water waves of the ocean, the magical, fantasy beings called selkies, the ties that bind a family, and love. Tides is a book that feels as real as it feels dreamy.

One of the many notable qualities of the contents of Tides is the perfect melding of everyday life and fantasy. Cornwell takes time with the problems of the characters that many people have in their mundane lives: wanting to accomplish a dream and the frustration that comes with not quite reaching it, bulimia, conflict inside a family, and supporting your loved ones but not knowing how to. The author also puts a lot of focus on family, especially how a group of people can still be a family even if not blood related. Another major focus is loving someone completely regardless of gender. These themes are all handled with care and sensitivity that is very awe-inspiring.

The story of Tides does deal with the main fear of the selkies, having their skin stolen, that many stories of the same kind deal with, but Tides delivers it in such of a refreshing way that I have no complaints about it. Couple that with the wonderful contemporary element and I downright loved the story. The mystery is suspenseful, albeit a bit predictable since the reader can probably guess who the culprit is right off the bat, but still highly absorbing and quite emotional at times because of the terrible effects the culprit had on the selkies.

Pacing is far from fast in the beginning. There are many characters to introduce and relationships to establish, as this is a character driven story, before all the suspense and mystery kicks in. But when the mystery and suspense kick in, the pacing changes greatly, though not abruptly. I didn't even notice the change until I thought back on it.

Cornwell writes her characters with amazing depth, each one having their own set of problems to face and conquer and a distinct personality. Which is impressive considering that Tides has a lot of characters. While characters like Noah, Lo, Mara, Maebh, and Gemm take the stage, the more minor characters are also written remarkable well. I could relate to all of them in some way and could emotionally connect with them.

I was absolutely touched by all the relationships in this book. The author definitely knows how to write family, friendship, and romance and doesn't hold back in this novel. I adored the loving, romantic relationship between Maebh and Gemm, the sibling relationship Noah and Lo shared, the romance between Mara and Noah, and the relationship the selkies of the pod had together. Saying that this aspect of the story is top-notch doesn't even begin to describe it.

Cornwell's prose is exceptional with its soft, peaceful feel and power. The words flow nicely and beautifully emphasized the wonder of the ocean and shore. I could hear the waves of the ocean hitting the rocks on the shore. I could feel my feet in the water. The atmosphere was perpetual and comforting, which is something I consider brilliant.

Using multiple point of views in a story is very tricky considering that it can cause characters to be under-developed, and the writer also has the risk of not being able to make the different point of views distinct from each other. Fortunately, Cornwell doesn't fall into that trap. She pits to use many, many point of views with skill. Transitions are smooth, choices are distinct, and no character is under-developed.

When I read a story I really love, I find it hard to form words with my fingers or mouth. But with *Tides* I can speak and type just fine— I just can't stop pouring and rambling my out my feelings about it. *Tides* is an insightful, gorgeous novel that is full of heart. Saying that I recommend this book would be a massive understatement.

Liviania says

I have a secret fondness for selkies. They aren't deadly, like some mythological creatures, and they're most well known for being kidnapped and stuck with horrible men, which is not a great fate. But there's something about the folklore that resonates with me.

The two young people at the center of *TIDES* are Noah and Mara. Noah is working as an intern at the Marine Science Research his last summer before college and living with his grandmother (the lighthouse keeper) and younger sister (who needed to get away from their parents). He can't wait to move on and go to college in the fall. Mara is a selkie whose sister Aine was kidnapped years ago. Now, the Elder of her group is afraid to let the youngest selkies grow and Mara and her brother are stuck perpetually babysitting. She wants to be a leader and is chafing under the rules that keep her close and powerless. Then they meet.

TIDES is a quiet, lovely novel that builds to an action-packed finish. It's morality is fairly simple, but explored in interesting ways. It shows the ways that people can hurt each other, accidentally and on purpose, as well as how they can forge new connections and become stronger. I liked *TIDES* had a plot that came together neatly, even though the focus was on character.

Almost every character in *TIDES* has their own motivations and goals. Even the grandmother Gemm has a lovely (lesbian) romance that's given a fair amount of detail. There are also differences between the humans and selkies, culturally as well as physically. Perhaps my favorite moment that illustrated the difference was when Mara first meets Lo and muses about how she does and doesn't look like Noah and decides that they do look enough alike to be siblings. Then a human immediately mistakes them for not-siblings since Lo is adopted and Chinese. I did feel that Lo's eating disorder was overcome somewhat quickly, but I liked that it never completely disappeared from the story despite not being the focus. It's not a disease that shows up much outside of issue books.

I think *TIDES* will appeal to fans of classic fantasy novels like *A RING OF ENDLESS LIGHT* by Madeleine L'Engle. It has that quiet, intimate appeal. It's also a good choice for YA fans looking for a slightly older protagonist. Noah definitely doesn't have high school worries. I thoroughly enjoyed *TIDES*, and think I would've even if I weren't fond of selkies.

Rachael says

Bittersweet and Magical: A Review of Tides by Betsy Cornwell Soon-to-be college student Noah Gallagher expects a boring summer with his sister and grandmother and working a marine biology internship. Then he meets Mara, who's beautiful, mysterious and shares a chemistry like never before, only to find out she's a selkie like those in his grandmother's tales. Soon, Noah embarks on a quest to save Mara's kidnapped selkie sister. TIDES isn't the most exciting or quick-paced book, but it's definitely a beautifully written novel. The language flows extremely well and has a mellow, peaceful sort of feel that's both pleasant sounding and intriguing. The world Cornwell creates is especially beautiful, making you feel as if you can actually feel and see the island and ocean! However, because of this the plot moves more slowly, focusing more on building the world and sweet romance. In fact, Noah actually doesn't start investigating the kidnapping until after over half of the book. I was also a bit disappointed to see not as much focus on Lo's bulimia, as it was resolved pretty easily. Still, TIDES is a very well-written story, complete with a heartbreaking and bittersweet ending. Cornwell's world and language is beautifully crafted, and definitely an author to watch out for! Younger fantasy readers or fans of selkie lore definitely should check this book out.

* I received a free copy of this book for review purposes. This did not affect my opinion of the book.

Aisha says

I never heard about this book before i saw it at Barnes & Noble.
I bought it for two reasons.

1. Betsy Cornwell is a new author. So I bought it to support new authors (everyone should break out of their comfort zone every once in a while and stray from the path of mainstream writers).
2. I picked up this book solely on cover appeal.
The cover is this gorgeous shade of shiny green, and girl swimming with the seal sparked my curiosity. (One of the prettiest books on my shelf)

Thankfully, this book was really enjoyable.

In the book, Noah aspires to be a marine biologist and is excited when he earns an internship with the marine biologist he has look up to all his life.

However, it's on the Shoals Isles. So he and his sister Lo, who is struggling with some demons of her own, go to live with their grandmother while Noah completes his internship.

Soon, Noah find out that there is many more secrets that lie beneath the ocean surface. He and Lo, learn about selkies.

And they find out that they are real and are closer to them, than either thought.

Side note: Selkies are creatures that are able to transform from seals to human by taking off their seal skin.

I loved this book for so many reasons. The concept was so different from the normal mermaid stories, and it brought to light, creatures that I've never heard of.

More importantly, this book discusses real social issues, such as eating disorders and same sex relationship.

Lastly, the ending was well done. It left the reader to assume what happened with the characters and their futures. The conclusion was open ended, but not in an confusing, "what the flip happened" kind of way.

This is a summer read that YA readers will love.

Alice Kaltman says

Simply put, Tides is a beautiful book. But it is far, far from a simple book. It is a complex and ingeniously crafted gem that blends magical realism and topical issues in a deft and fluid manner. Finely drawn characters grapple with self discovery, commitment and true love. They are, everyone of them, flawed and loveable, be they selkie or human. Cornwell knows how to write about adoption, eating disorders, prejudice, same sex love, and abuse without heavy handedness. Her ingenious description of the transformation from selkie to human back to selkie form come off without a hitch. Her sense of place is palpable. You can almost smell the salty air drifting off the page during her descriptions of The Shoals, the islands off the coast of New Hampshire where most of the action takes place. A splendid book to curl up with on a rainy day with a cup of tea or something stronger. Can't wait for the sequel!

Akoss says

Tides is a quiet book filled with secrets, Selkie folklore, love and a hint of magic.

Unfortunately for someone who is used to stories starting with a lot of drama or action this one was a bit slow to start. However the secrets woven into the pages and characters kept me from putting it down. Somewhere around chapter eight things started to heat up.

The writing took some getting used to but it wasn't a deal breaker. The sentences were often long and sometimes the dialogue was a bit wordy but once I was sucked into the story all that no longer mattered. What stuck with me most was the atmosphere of the islands and the ocean. The author's descriptions will spark your imagination and make you long for a vacation on an island somewhere. Everything from the feel of the ocean on a bare skin to the cold weather at night was so vivid. I hated to leave that world when the story was over.

I loved how deep the author went with the relationships between the characters. Lo and her brother Noah, Gemm and Maebh, Lo and Ani, Noah and Mara. At the end of the day love was love and that was that.

I also enjoyed how elaborate the Selkie folklore was and all the details she gave on their way of life through Mara and her pod. I must say her scientific twist toward the end was the cherry on my cake.

If you are looking for a perfect read on a summer vacation make sure to bring a copy of Tides with you.

Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten! My copy was an ARC I got from the publisher thanks to

winning a giveaway.

Diversity Rating: 3 - Closer to Reality

Racial-Ethnic: 2 (Lo is Chinese)

QUILT BAG: 4 (Lo and Noah's grandmother is gay and in a relationship with one of the selkies)

Disability: 3 (Lo is recovering from bulimia)

Intersectionality: 2 (See: Lo)

Winning a giveaway feels ridiculously good, doesn't it? I think the only way you lose that exhilarated feeling of winning is to enter and win giveaways all the time. And maybe even then, you might not. I dunno, I'm not a regular giveaway winner. But Tides is one of the few books I've ever won from a giveaway! I got it from the "retweet and win" style giveaway the publisher's account @HMHKids held right before the book's release date.

Yeah, that was in 2013. I'M SO SUPER PUNCTUAL, I KNOW. I heard good things about it back then and I'm happy I finally got to read it.

Even though it's been four years since Tides came out, I've remained blissfully unaware about the book's content. The paranormal creature featured being selkies was a delight, seeing as they've severely underexplored in YA books and their mythology is a stealthy kind of horrifying. Being forcibly bound to whichever human picks up your skin? Yeah, that's terrifying. It fondly reminded me of Feather Bound by Sarah Raughley, one of my favorite novels. In fact, Feather Bound may well have drawn from selkie mythology!

Anyway, the fact selkies are at the heart of the book is revealed quickly. Like, within the first 50-100 pages kind of quickly. It doesn't force the reader to wallow in mystery and instead sees siblings Lo and Noah bond with the selkies that live around their grandmother's island home. Their grandmother Gemm is closer to the selkies than even they are, seeing as she's in a relationship with Maebh, the Elder of the selkie pod. GAY SELKIES!!!

Also, it gives me a small boost of joy every time there's an elderly QUILT BAG person who doesn't die for the main character's development or function as the one-note quirky character. Their mere existence can be encouraging to QUILT BAG kids by telling them yes, you WILL survive and you'll grow old like anyone else. With such high suicide rates among queer people and especially queer teens, it can mean a lot to a queer kid to see that someone like them makes it to old age.

The characters are delightful and I love the romance between Noah and Mara, the teenage selkie who likes to hang out on land while the rest of the pod stay in the sea (sans Maebh, who's sneaking onshore to be with Gemm). Since the disappearance/kidnapping of one selkie named Aine a few years before, they've done their best to remain in the sea.

The book's small cast makes what happened to Aine obvious, but the reveal of what's been going on is chilling. I'd say it strays into the realm of body horror, even. However, the book feels overly linear somehow? It took me so long to finish Tides once I started it because it couldn't hold my attention. It moved from point A to point B to point C in a way that simply couldn't grab me.

But the most important thing: Lo and Aine are definitely gay even though they're not. I DON'T MAKE THE RULES, I JUST STATE THEM.

Tides is an underappreciated gem of a YA novel. I don't know if I'll read any of Cornwell's other books because they never interested me, but I'll be looking out for a copy of Tides I can add to my personal shelf. I prefer to replace my ARCs with finished copies, especially when I love the book!

Wren [t(he)y] says

This review can also be found at <http://fortheloveofbooksreviews.blogs...>

Noah and Lo head to their grandmother's house on an island for the summer. Noah is excited to start his internship at a center for marine biology, and Lo continues to struggle with an eating disorder. When their grandmother's friend reacts strangely to a story about selkies, Noah brushes it off. And then he meets Mara, who happens to be a real life selkie.

Becoming friends with Mara is unexpected, but a positive addition to his summer. His grandmother's friend turns out to be more than a friend, and he hopes that his mentor at the internship will give him a job other than organizing papers for his work. As the summer goes on, relationships change, and secrets are revealed. No matter the outcome, Noah and Lo will not leave the island the same as they were before.

I knew that I was going to enjoy this book from the very start, from the prologue. The prologue sets the stage for the story, on the islands, the Isles of Shoals, and of course, in the water. The writing style immediately drew me in, with the beautiful description of the setting, that made me long to walk along a beach or lake, to experience the beauty of the water and of islands and bright summer days. This description did not lose its quality, as throughout the novel, the water and islands were once again discussed with great detail, which provided me with amazing visuals as a reader.

The third person narration was a great choice, with multiple perspectives used throughout the book. I think that the use of multiple perspectives brought a lot to the book because it gave the reader glimpses into what was going on in Mara's head, in Lo's thoughts, and in the minds of other characters. It provided insight on what they were struggling with.

Lo and Noah faced different issues, including an eating disorder and the promise of college in the future. However, it was not only the human characters who faced their own problems, as Mara's hopes to lead her "pod" provided a coming-of-age story-line, and her fears over her brother leaving reflected the fears of real people in every day life. Noah's grandmother and her friend, who turns out to be a little something more than a friend, brought up the societal issues and pressures revolving around love and sexuality, which was further explored when their pasts together were explained in detail, which provided some great back story and a background for their own sweet sub-plot.

There was a bit of romance within the book between Noah and Mara. While it seemed genuine and refrained from the addition of a love triangle, it was very predictable. I think that was one of the short comings of this book for me. It was extremely predictable, as I guessed the majority of the events and reveals correctly, which was a bit disappointing.

Overall this was a great read, with beautiful descriptions and a bittersweet ending. I recommend this to those looking for books which explore real-life issues while including paranormal or fantasy creatures. If you're interested in young adult novels that take place on islands or near beaches, this is a great pick for you.

Victoria says

This YA novel feels a bit at odds with itself. The age of the main characters with Noah nearly in college, and his sister, Lo, in high school seems like this is targeted toward the older end of the YA market, but the simple writing style and cover art makes this feel more appropriate for the younger end of the market. And it's a story about selkies - changeling seals who can trade their seal shapes for human ones (but at a risk!), which is initially what caught my attention. In second grade (I think), I read a book by Sylvia Peck called *Seal Child* and became enthralled with selkie stories ever since.

The book has the cadence of a story meant to be read aloud, and though the book flits between several different characters' perspectives, none of them fully come to life. The plot and romances (between young and old characters) follow predictable paths and the story holds no surprises. Despite the selkie premise, the book does not really provide enough depth or detail to even make the magical part of the plot sparkle. Ultimately, this is a shallow story that perfunctorily touches on some key YA issues (anorexia/bulimia, adoption, same-sex relationships), but never fully deals with any of them. The book promises magic and mystery, but fails to deliver either of them.

usagi ?? says

4.5/5 stars!

Selkies. They're quickly becoming the new mermaids of the YA paranormal world, and I'm happy to see that happen. Two books alone this month ("*Ashes on the Waves*" being the second, along with this one) are being pubbed with selkies as major characters, and I couldn't be happier. "*Tides*" is a gorgeous story filled with not only magical realism, but also tough stuff issues that aren't couched in their usual terrible filling of bullying, suicide, or other such destructive behaviors, but treated with love and kindness, giving the reader hope if they're in the same situation. If you're looking for some absolutely wonderful new magical realism from a debut author this summer, "*Tides*" is definitely your book.

I guess my only issue with this book was the underdevelopment with some of the more minor bits of the main cast (Ronan and the younglings being the ones that come to mind the most) since especially the latter of the above two become really important to the plot near the climax of the book (though I won't spoil as to how). I wanted to know more about the Pod, and why they became so fractured aside from Aine's disappearance - that seemed too simple an explanation for me, and I just wanted a little more on the entire fracturing of the pod, as well as how much strength it takes to go back to Ireland within a selkie body. Stuff like that. Little more development on the characters and some of the finer points of the selkie body (in terms of what we don't know from the legends/folklore) would have been nice, but I'm happy with what I got.

Otherwise this is an amazing little book. It's not very big or exciting or loud with its prose, but more of a laid back, summer-y beach book one can sink into when you need to get away. The characters and world are pretty thorough and sturdily built, and the sensory imagery is lovely and starkly written. I could feel everything that was written, and for an author to really nail it when it comes to sensory stuff (especially when most of their book takes place in water) really makes me happy.

There's also the GLBT angle - that came totally out of nowhere, but I melted a little when it did. Especially considering the age group of the two women it pertains to. I was really touched that the author thought to include that, and also included the message that the GENDER of the person you're with doesn't really matter - just the person themselves. It's quietly sewn throughout the novel, but by the end, it becomes very loud and clear, and that made me very happy. No one talks much about the older GLBT set or what they've had to face (especially ones that have lived pre-Stonewall - kids, if you don't know what that is, search for it on wikipedia), so this was really refreshing in that sense. The only other book this year that talks about earlier LGBT action and rights is "Two Boys Kissing", which I'll have a review for soon. But I'm glad that "Tides" managed to balance two romances and two types of romance and make it all mesh and play nicely together in such a good way.

The world was absolutely absorbing and by the time I got to the final page, I definitely didn't want to leave. "Tides" is a wonderful standalone, full of danger and adventure and learning to live in harmony not just with other people in terms of who they are, but learning to co-exist with all creatures everywhere, big and small. Cornwell is definitely an author to watch, and I can't wait until her next book. She does magical realism right.

"Tides" is out June 4, 2013 from HMH in North America, so be sure to check it out then! It's made my best of 2013 list, and rightfully so - it's absolutely beautiful. It's also the perfect beach book, so be sure to give it a chance!

(posted to goodreads, shelfari, and birthofanewwitch.wordpress.com)

Kaleyjewel says

Lemme just tell you. I saw this book online on the website tumblr and loved the book cover and the concept, and added the author. I was given the opportunity to read her book in exchange for an honest review and here it is:

This book is unlike anything I have read for many reasons. This book doesn't just follow on the story for young love, but old love as well, which I am a huge intergenerational fan of this! The subject of bulimia is not a pretty subject to discuss, but it presents its in this book, just like real life. Speaking of real life, this one of the few that show bisexuality, in such a natural way. The very way the book is written as though you can hear the waves creating up the shore as you read. This book breaks the mold and I cannot wait for the sequel!

Hannah says

I picked this up a while back because I needed something by a local author for a book challenge, and this was conveniently located on an office display.

It's a YA urban fantasy romance from back when mermaids were trying to be the new vampires.

The book was better than I expected because I was expecting manatee selkies and the high school student who saves the day by doing all the science ever, but I was pleasantly surprised to find competent writing and

a high school student whose marine biology internship dreams were crushed by failing for 3 months straight.

However, it came off as over-written and it all ended with a scientist being evil for the sake of evil, which is a trope I absolutely hate.

Also, they weren't manatee selkies. :(Just regular Irish selkies. I may not have been rooting for the love triangle/tropes aspect, but manatee selkies would have been a welcome diversion in any case.

I believe the sequel is supposed to be *Compass*, and with *Mechanica* (another steampunk Cinderella) out and doing reasonably well, maybe that will see the light of day.

Siavahda says

Oh, wow. This is so gorgeous! I don't even know where to *start*!

Tides manages to be perfectly on the line between dreamy and beautifully realistic. It's more than the subject matter - the incredible selkies! - it's the way Cornwell uses language; poetic and ever so slightly magical. I would have devoured this book for the writing alone! But there was so much more to keep me occupied.

Like the characters. Oh good lord, the cast! I'm so glad Cornwell switched between the POVs of a good handful of the cast - I can think of a dozen books where the authors don't manage to pull it off, but here it works beautifully. I loved getting a closer look at each of the fabulous characters. Noah, the young man about to go off to college, staying with his grandmother for a summer internship; Lo, his (adopted Chinese) sister, struggling with her body; Mara, the strong, adventurous selkie girl; Ronan, another selkie who is eager to leave the pod to find the rest of his family; and Maebh, the Elder of the selkie pod, in love with Noah and Lo's grandmother.

(Why yes, there IS a positive lesbian relationship in this book! And it's lovely and sweet and REAL, and I heartily approve!)

For such a short book, the characters manage to develop quite a bit. By the end of the story Noah has been reminded of what really matters (not, to be fair, that he was some horrible career-obsessed-to-the-exclusion-of-all-else kind of person to start with), Lo has come into her strength (and a gorgeous strength it is), Mara has what she's always wanted, as does Ronan, and Maebh has put her fears away. I still think it's incredible that Cornwell manages to get as much plot and development into *Tides* as she does - without anything feeling rushed. It's wonderful!

Especially wonderful are the female characters. I have to say this: there aren't many strong girls in fantasy. (In YA anywhere, perhaps). I don't mean 'strong' in the sense of kicking ass (although Mara is very much able to beat Noah, and anybody else, into the ground if necessary!) but strong as in sure of themselves, and confident, and just - very real. Lo, for example. Lo struggles with bulimia, and her shame over her weight at the start of the book is something that I, and probably many teenagers (and even, sadly, adults) can identify with. But with the help of her family, and friends, and most of all HERSELF, she comes closer and closer to triumphing over her illness, and seems to have done so by the end of the book. Mara, as I already said, is strong in the traditional sense as well as a very feminine one: I loved that she wasn't afraid to dress up and be typically girly, while also being very able to handle physical confrontation and her sister's kidnapper. Gem (Noah and Lo's grandmother) and Maebh, too, are fully developed, with their own story within and before

the book (I'd love to see a prequel all about them!)

Cornwell definitely has a gift for creating characters that jump right off the page.

I can't possibly encapsulate everything I loved about this book (BECAUSE I LOVED EVERYTHING!) but one more thing I have to say: I am a huge fan of worldbuilding. Nothing makes me swoon like all the tiny details that tell me an author has really thought about their secondary world, or their magical race, or whatever. YA is particularly bad at worldbuilding, as a genre, and I'm often disappointed. Not so here. Tides at no point overwhelms or infodumps the reader with information about the selkies; instead, here and there, we have a little gem of detail skilfully woven into the narrative, such as the bit about selkie naming traditions, and little snippets of selkie culture. This, more than anything else to me, says that Cornwell is someone to watch - rest assured, I'll be snapping up everything else she chooses to write!

Can't recc this enough. Gone straight to my favourites shelf!

Sarah Porter says

I got to read this early. It's very sweet and moving with lovely writing, and it made me cry at least three times!
