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Five high school friends have one thing in common as they start their sophomore year: none of them have ever been on a "real" date. With homecoming looming, they make a pact and start a secret club they call the DG (Dating Game). They're sworn to secrecy--and to purity--but the club is their way to set each other up on their first dates so they can report back to the DG. Of course, they all make different choices about how to deal with their parents and how to act on their dates, and they discover that they all have totally different experiences. Still, the things they learn about boys and dating will stick with them throughout high school. Bestselling author and teen favorite Melody Carlson starts off her newest series with a good dose of fun, tackling two topics teen girls love to read about--friends and boys.

First Date Details

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Victoria says

First Date is a humorous story about five high school girls who want to get dates to an upcoming homecoming dance. I enjoyed the story but I didn't like the way the girls treated each other sometimes. I was glad to see that they treated each other better closer towards the end of the book. I would recommend to those who like to read a quick, funny, and clean book to 13 years old and up.

Kait Renee says

I thought this book was great! ? My favorite part was when Devon finally talked Emma into getting a makeover. Overall this book deserves 5 stars.

Crystal says

First date is the story of five girls, Emma, Cassidy, Abby, Bryn and Devon and their quest to go on a first date. I love Melody Carlson and wanted to read this book to see how she handled the friendship dynamic and also to see how the whole idea of girls that are Juniors going on their first date.

Overall I think this was a fun story. I really had to suspend disbelief though to think that 5 girls who were witty, smart and mostly attractive had never been on dates. Even worse was suspending disbelief that guys would listen to a teacher and decide not to date during their Junior and Senior years. Maybe things are different now and different at a Christian high school, but 20 years ago, I know we were all about dating in 11th and 12th grade.

So once you get past that let me move onto what worked for me in the story. The girls and their friendship worked. Why? Because Devon is the new girl but she's been friends with Emma forever. So when she starts at Northwood Academy she falls right into the role of Emma's best friend and becomes part of her group. But of course this causes problems. Cassidy had been Emma's best friend so now she's feeling left out. All of this is normal. Also when one or two do something in the group at least one of the others becomes paranoid and feels left out. Also normal. So I think Ms. Carlson really captured the girl group dynamic well in this novel.

Another thing I liked is when the girls decided to form their secret club and go after the boys, a couple of them needed makeovers. The nice thing is even though Devon was a little outspoken and could seem mean, she and the others could always mainly play up and fix small things about the girls. Just a little makeup that suited them or a wardrobe update. So it wasn't as much about looks as it was appearance. Here's one quote that I loved:

"Maybe I don't base my self-worth on my looks," Emma said. "I know I'm smart and I have a few talents. I'm a good artist. I'm not a beauty queen. I never will be. Besides that, it's not healthy to obsess over your appearance."

As far as characters go, Devon was a little brash and unlikeable in the beginning but as the book progresses she becomes more likeable. Cassidy seemed too goody-two-shoes, but by the end of the book she was one of my favorite characters. Emma and Abby are the sweet girls, and Bryn is the attractive one that offers competition for Devon. They all have their niche and I liked getting to know each one. I found ways to relate to each one as well. I was sometimes the loner like Cassidy, feeling a little left out. I was Emma thinking people should see me for what was inside not outside. I was Devon, looking for a good time and wanting to liven things up at times. I am Bryn now because she found ways to improve herself, by working out, updating her clothes but she's not completely obsessed with herself. And finally I was Abby because she respects her parents, has a tight-knit family and constantly wants to please them. So I think girls or adults reading this would find something relate-able in each girl. Not necessarily what I did, but there are many facets to the girls.

Concerning the plot, again suspending disbelief, it's mainly centered around the girls getting the boys interested in taking them to the homecoming dance. Along the way there are bumps. The girls learn lessons. Christianity is discussed but in a low-key kind of way. There are examples of the girls going to church and Devon's not going to church. There is talk of prayer and Cassidy consults with a youth group leader about dating. All of this worked for me. Melody Carlson is a Christian writer so all of this was expected.

What I didn't like. The whole not dating in high school thing. It was just hard to wrap my head around that. Also sometimes the secret club and the tactics the girls used just seemed a little middle school. But that was just me. These definitely weren't technical problems with the book, just things that bothered me personally. I still enjoyed reading the book.

All-in-all, *First Date* was a quick read and an interesting introduction to Ms. Carlson's new series. I will be reading the next book just to see what is up next for the girls because I really felt a connection to each one. The characters were interesting and while the plot was a little out there, it was fun.

I'll leave with one of my favorite profound statements in the book, it's a little long, but I love it:

This is when Cassidy talks to Julia, one of her church's youth leader about whether she should be dating or not since she made a personal pledge not to date in high school. Julia's answer is:

"I think you need to ask God those questions. For sure, if God tells you not to date, then you better listen and obey. But sometimes we run ahead of God and start making up rules for ourselves. Rules that aren't really from God. It's almost like we think we can impress God, which is totally ridiculous. The next thing we know we're caught up in legalism - you know where you make a rule and think God is going to be pleased with you for keeping it. That's not how it works. That's how religion works. But God doesn't want us to be religious. He wants us to have a relationship with him. Not a bunch of rules."

My Rating: 4.0/5.0

Lydia Rose says

I didn't think I'd enjoy this book when I first started it, but I ended up really liking it! Warning,

SPOILERS!!!

It's very Christian. They go to a private religious school and they talked about church and their religion a lot, but it's not over powering. It's about these five girls at school who are sort-of-friends and one of them is a busy body and loves excitement. She wants to know why none of the guys are even looking at her! They act like she's invisible and the dance is only three weeks away! So she starts a club. She calls it the 'Dating Games' and she ropes all of her friends into it. If they don't all have dates for the dance, then she quits as the leader, but for now she's in charge. Somehow they have to get the guys to ask them out.

Each girl picks one guy she wants to go after and each girl gets a different guy to work on for a her friend. They get code names and makeovers and go dress shopping... But some of the guys aren't cooperating! Once the girls know who and what their competition is, though, they step up their game slightly and it works! They start to get noticed!

I'll let you read it to find out what happens. ;)

It's actually a fun, good book and it isn't too bad for a teen book. I enjoyed it.

Marianne Daisy says

I ripped through this book. It had me hooked the first page. One of those page turners that you just can't put down (i mean why would you?) and want to finish right away. I finished it in two days. Absolutly amazing. I recommend this book to everyone.

Vera Godley says

This is the first book I have read by Melody Carlson and as I started through the first couple of chapters, I was convinced that I was not going to like this book. In fact, the more I read the more I felt that it was a waste of my time and most certainly was not something that I was going to recommend anyone else to read. However, as I remembered the target age for this book (High School: 10th grade and up), the story began to make sense to me and how it would possibly appeal to this age group simply because of the topic of dating and let's face it, most young girls are interested in dating. The characters in the book are real and you could easily see any of these girls walking up and down the halls of any high school – Christian or Public.

Devon is the new girl at Northwood Christian School. She transferred from the local public high school because of her parents' divorce and her mother wanted a "better place for Devon." Devon has no interest in the spiritual side of the Christian school and is only interested in basically one thing – guys. She can't understand why the boys aren't paying any attention to her. She never had that problem at the public school. Was everyone at Northwood a stick in the mud?

What she doesn't know is that one of the teachers at Northwood, Mr. Worthington, has given all the high boys a talk about dating and showing respect to the girls and being careful about who you date and that perhaps the young men would consider making a pact to not date and wait on God to show them whom they should date. Once Devon is told of the "talk" by Mr. Worthington, she makes it her mission to break "the pact" and the Dating Games club is borne.

She talks her best friend Emma into joining the club, as well as three other girls who are friends with Emma and tells them all that they can help each other get dates for the Homecoming Dance.

“First Date” is not a bad book, The girls in the story do develop a deeper friendship because of the Club, but I was disappointed that there was so little spiritual application until well into the book – more than half way through before the thought is introduced that if you’re a Christian, then you need to be very cautious about who you might date and how that might affect your testimony. Oddly enough, though, I remember some of these same situations during my high school years and I am sure things are pretty much the same now.

Ms. Carlson has done a good job in character development and any high school girl who may read “First Date” would/could see herself in one of the five girls of the Dating Game Club. Hopefully, however, they will also realize that it’s okay if you don’t date. That may sound a little naïve’, but one can hope. (guest reviewer: P. Howard)

DISCLOSURE: A complimentary review copy was received to facilitate this review. Opinions expressed are solely those of the reviewer. No compensation was received for this review. "First Date" published by Revell a division of Baker House Publishing.

Jesten says

It's really cute, and written well, but I feel like this isn't the best message to spread. I don't like that love is a game to these girls, and it was surprisingly religious with no indication on the cover.

Ps. I didn't know she was a Christian author.

Ashley Strawser says

I didn't finish this book. I started it, and I read about 1/3 of the book before I stopped. I wasn't impressed. At all. When I was a younger teen, I adored Melody Carlson. I loved to read her books, and I felt like I could relate to them. So when I received the email to review this book, I jumped at the chance to try another one of her books for teens, so that I could review it here and maybe give my younger readers something to check into reading.

On the first page of this book, the word "freaking" was used. While I occasionally use this word in my own life - I say it sometimes - I don't like reading it in books, and I honestly think that it is really unnecessary in a Christian book for teen girls. I was not impressed with this.

Also, not far into the book, the girls are making it sound fun to try to find dates for everyone in their group - calling it a "game". Well, as an almost 20 year old who has never had a date for the reason of not wanting to date just for fun, I didn't find this to be appropriate. I thought that it was kind-of stupid, really. There is no reason for sophomores - like the girls are in this book - to be starting a club called "The Dating Games", and trying to get guys to ask them out on dates.

I should also mention that most of the guys in this book seemed to not be the least bit interested in dating. The book takes place in a Christian school, and it mentions that the guys were given a "talking to" from a teacher in the school about respecting girls and not dating just to date. So the girls were trying to go against what the guys were feeling, trying to get them to ask them out even though guys weren't interested in dating. Some of the characters did makeovers to make them more appealing to the guys, making it seem like they didn't think they were good enough before.

Now, to be fair, I didn't finish this book, so I'm not sure how it turned out in the end. I couldn't get past the first half of this book . . . I found way too much wrong with it.

Do I recommend this to other teens? Absolutely not.

I feel girls are worth a lot more than this book is making it out to seem.

Maybe this wasn't Melody Carlson's intentions while writing this book - I think it was more for fun than anything - but I didn't appreciate it, and I don't think a lot of parents of younger teens would appreciate it either.

Danielle says

Devon Fremont - Madelaine Petsch

Emma Parks - Elena Kampouris

Cassidy Banks - Madison Davenport

Abby Morrison - China Anne McClain

Bryn Jacobs - Madison Iseman

Harris Martin - Tom Holland

Isaac McKinley - Noah Centineo

Lane Granger - Colin Ford

Kent Renner - KJ Apa

Jason Levine - Booboo Stewart

Mrs. Parks - Jennifer Aniston

Mrs. Banks - Mariska Hargitay

Callie Banks - Anna Cathcart

Mrs. Jacobs - Nicole Kidman

Tara Jacobs - Billie Lourd

Mrs. Morrison - Danai Gurira

Mr. Morrison - Anthony Mackie

Natasha Polak says

Reading this book makes me wish I'd had some sort of dating club with my friends back when we were in high school! It also makes me think about my own high school experience and some similarities that existed when I was a junior and had planned with two of my friends to do a group date, too! It was a memorable experience, and I'm happy to say that it was because of homecoming dance that year that I met the man I would later marry :-)

In First Date, Melody Carlson brings together 5 unlikely girls who turn out to have more in common than they thought. Their views on guys and interaction with their parents were all so believable and I found myself wanting to read more to see what would happen next! It also gave me a foreshadowing of how I want to be for when our daughter and her friends want to start dating. I never thought I would start enjoying YA books as a middle-aged woman, but it's actually kind of fun to reminisce and also get caught up in enjoyable plots. I will be reading more!!!

Victoria says

I think this would be a cute series for a Christian teenage girl to read who is hoping to start dating. A group of girls that attend a Christian school decide that they will start dating boys that they may or may not have a crush on already. Some of them aren't too keen on the idea while others really want to date badly.

A "game" of sorts is created between these girls where they just want to find good guys that can take them to the homecoming dance. We learn a bit about who each girl is and what their personalities are like. The book is also very much about friendship and working together. There is talk about faith in God too, but it isn't focused on a lot. It is more in the background.

As a woman who has only dated one guy (to whom I am married), I found some of this to commend some bad ideas. For instance: what is wrong with these girls? They can't approach a guy themselves at all to get a date? They can't try to talk to them and have their friends talk to other guys for them to get their dates? This mentality and way that many girls do things is terrible. Maybe I'm just crazy because I was always one to approach a guy to say, "I like you." The thing is that these girls are just trying to go on a date that may not even last longer. That is weird to me, maybe because I had a mentality where if I were to date someone, it was to work towards an eventual marriage (and I started dating my husband less than a month before my 17th birthday and now I am 31).

I definitely felt like I was back in high school with some of this, as a lot of people I knew who were dating or trying to had lots of drama with their own friends. This made me chuckle a bit.

I read this book basically because I have read some of Melody Carlson's books and enjoyed them in the past. This was not bad, but I think it was a bit too short.

Amber Whitlock says

First Date is the first book in The Dating Games series by Melody Carlson. Carlson is my favorite author, so I've read most of her books. Considering her teen series that I've finished, this isn't my favorite. That being said, I did enjoy it. I only had minor complaints. I'd say The Dating Games probably won't be near as good as the Carter House Girls or Bloomberg Place, but it may be better than the On the Runway series.

First Date follows a group of high school girls who decide to make a game of dating. The thing is, none of them have ever been on a date before, and the boys at their christian high school aren't showing any interest. A teacher gives a speech to the boys every year challenging them not to date and to respect the girls. Most of the boys take this challenge seriously. So this group of girls decide they're going to somehow get dates to the homecoming dance. Carlson has always been able to write teens in a very realistic way, and she doesn't disappoint here! I could definitely believe these girls exist--there's the struggling christian, the athlete with overprotective parents, the new girl from a broken home, the beauty who secretly wants friends, and the down-to-earth girl who is caught between old friends and new. The group dynamic works well--we see these girls forge friendships and improve each other's lives. There's not a super strong faith element to this book, but it's definitely evident throughout. As the girls band together to get each other dates, there are inevitable misunderstandings, backstabbing, gossiping, and intense situations. My few complaints included a couple of

words that were used that I don't think a teenage girl would ever say (miserly, apropos), a couple of redundancies, and a few comments that made me think they were being too hard on parents (starting a sentence with 'despite being a mom...'). Apart from those minor things, I enjoyed the book. I was especially impressed with the way a situation was handled towards the end of the book. One of the girls has lost a grandparent and feels guilty. The things another character said to help her through it astounded me! I was impressed.

Overall, I gave this book three stars. It was enjoyable and believable, but I've liked several other Carlson titles more. I'd recommend this book for high school girls (but be aware that there's a lot of superficiality in this story).

*I received this book free through netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Danyelle says

Devon has just transferred to the Christian Northwood Academy and is bored not only with school but with the environment and the lack of attention boys give her. So determined to make her junior year something to remember, she decides to try and get her and her new friends to get dates to the dance coming up and break the daze everyone seems to be in.

Devon, Emma, Cassidy, Bryn, and Abby are completely different from each other but they all have one thing in common: none of them have been on a "real" date. So determined to get a date to homecoming, the girls decide to make a pact and start a secret club they call the DG (Dating Games) that has just one objective - dates for the dance. If only it turns out as easy as it sounds.

As the girls overcome insecurities and try and nab dates, they learn a lot about themselves and each other. However, just when it seems like everything is going okay, the girls seem to get on edge and start bickering amongst themselves turning what was a good idea into a disaster. If they can get along long enough they might just grab dates to homecoming, but if they can't they might just fail in their main goal.

Can the girls get dates to homecoming or will their differences tear them apart? Is the DG a good idea or is it a bad thing waiting to happen? Can DG be something good for them all or will it turn into a disaster? What will each girl learn along the way about themselves and the other girls in their group? Can the girls combat dating and still keep their values or will they sacrifice them to get a date?

Melody Carlson has been a favorite Young Adult author of mine ever since I discovered her a few years ago and ever since then I have looked forward to her ingenious stories and engaging storyline. So far there has never been a book by her that I haven't liked and this book was no different. In fact, I found this book dramatic but fun and an awesome idea on how to date for teens.

The concept at first sounds a bit weird and I couldn't help but view the club, at first, like Cassidy. However, the more the story progressed and the more each girl's limits and values came to light, I started to change my views and by the end of the book I felt that this is an incredibly genius way to date safely and smartly for teens. Not only do the girls group date, awesome idea, but they share about their dates and experiences so that the other girls in the group can assess whether said guy is good or bad for them. It's genius! I might have

to initiate this for myself someday.

Each character in this book are different, some in more ways than others and I thought it was really neat how the author played upon each character's strengths and weaknesses and made each one part of the story. I also liked seeing the transformation in the characters, some changed quite a bit and some definitely need some work but all changed somewhat and it was nice to see how each changed and grew, though I would've liked to have delved more deeply into their lives just a bit.

I always say it but Melody's grip on teens and the way they think astounds me every time. Though a bit of her slang could be updated, the overall tone of the book is very teen-like and I always feel like a teen wrote it whenever I pick up one of Melody's books. I think this newest book's club is a genius idea and something teens everywhere should consider doing, particularly since girls love talking about their dates anyway. I absolutely loved the teen tone and felt it hit the nail on the head as far as relatability goes.

Melody Carlson has written over two hundred books and though I haven't read that many from her, I still know that her writing is amazing and her style is completely teen. I love her books so much and even though I won't be a teen for much longer, I feel like I will read her books for years to come, even as I venture into a new chapter in my life. This author's books come highly recommended, particularly this one.

Overall, I really liked this one. I would've liked to have delved more deeply into each character's life, but I still really liked this book and the idea of a dating club stuck with me and I can't wait to see what other hiking the group will get into. This book is perfect for fans of Young Adult fiction. This book is perfect for teens and YA friendly adults, though it's probably best to keep it out of children's hands just yet. I give this book a four and a half out of five.

I received a complimentary copy of this book in exchange for this review. All opinions expressed are my own.

Ashley Osborn says

I love reviewing young adult fiction, so of course I jumped at the opportunity to read First Date by Melody Carlson! Most of the young adult fiction I read is aimed at ages 13-18 and I would say that this book definitely fits that category.

The story centers around 5 teenage girls who have formed their own clique at their school despite the fact that they are not especially fond of all of the members. The girls: Devon, Abby, Brynn, Cassidy and Emma all come from unique backgrounds and family styles.

Devon's parents separated when she was young and she has a track record of being wild and irresponsible. Abby is the only daughter of a racist African American family who is very vocal about the fact that they disagree with an African American dating or marrying a White person. Brynn has a great family life, but since her older siblings have all moved away to college or have gotten married, her life feels empty and lonely. Cassidy has grown up in a Christian home her whole life, but lately has been feeling far away from her faith. She doesn't really know where she stands with "religion" or how she feels about sharing her Christian faith with her non-Christian friends. Emma's parents just recently divorced, and she lives with her mother while she struggles to make ends meet.

Devon and Emma used to be close friends, but after Devon moved away a few years ago, Emma grew closer to Cassidy. When Devon moved back to town, she was eager to share her dating advice and created a dating game/club called "The Dating Games". The goal of the game was for each girl to help another girl find a date for the homecoming dance which was only 3 weeks away. They had 10 rules for the club which varied between "Helping other DG members find "good" guys" to "Not being jealous of a fellow DG member's boyfriend." The girls all agreed to the rules and began "working" on guys for their friends.

Despite the fact that all of these girls go to a Christian school, throughout most of the book, none of these girls are living a Christian lifestyle. All of their decisions are made primarily based on social status, good looks and their ability to "snag a guy". All of the girls in this book were fairly shallow, excluding Cassidy. The characters were quick to point out the other girl's flaws regarding their appearances, and even gave 2 of the girls makeovers because they felt that no guy would ever take a second glance at them without highlights in their hair or brand new clothes.

The girls all end up with dates for homecoming, and have a great time. All except for Devon, who finds herself in a bit of a problem because of the type of guy she has chosen. At the end of the book, the girls discuss shutting down the DG club or whether they should continue. All of the girls decide they should continue in the club, and even announce that they should start looking for different dates for the Halloween party.

It seems The Dating Games is exactly that. A big game. I don't mean to sound harsh to the author. As a writer myself, I know how difficult it is to write a good story. But this would not be a book I would allow my daughters to read. The story was just so superficial and shallow. The girls were so self centered and dating was just a big game to them. This is not how I want my girls (or sons if I ever have one) to think about dating. I want them to focus on the personal qualities of their future mate. Not how expensive their clothes are or whether or not they have colored hair and wear makeup.

There was little or no spiritual content at all in this book except to say that Cassidy was a Christian, and that Devon "used to be a Christian." I would expect a Christian young adult book to have quite a bit more spiritual content.

I am sorry to say that I was not a fan of this book. I rate it as 1 star.

This book will be available October 2013 at your favorite bookseller from Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group.

I received this book for free from Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group to give my honest unbiased opinion.

Halee says

Hmm...This book was interesting. Honestly, I was expecting this to be good, because Melody Carlson is usually pretty good! Despite the fact that I knew this book was all about dating, still, I thought there might be a redeeming factor to it. Eh, there wasn't. I was disappointed. If you like "just for fun" books that are pretty light, this will be great for you! Seriously!

BUT, if you really only like books with some sort of messages or lessons....This book was very meh.

I just couldn't see the good in this book. Yes, it was entertaining. Yes, it was clean with really no negative element to it.....But yeah.

The positive take away: I got one book closer to my GoodReads goal!!! Yay!!!

The negative take away: I'm still, like, 50 books away from completing my GoodReads goal. Boohoo.
