



Popular: Vintage Wisdom for a Modern Geek

By Maya Van Wagenen

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New York Times Bestseller

A breakout teen author explores the true meaning of popularity and how to survive middle school in this hysterically funny, touchingly honest contemporary memoir.

“I was inspired by [Maya's] journey and made a point of saving a copy of ‘Popular’ for my sister, who starts middle school this fall. Maybe if I had read it when I was her age, it could have saved me from a world of hurt, or at least put that world in perspective.” —Maude Apatow, *New York Times Book Review*

Can curlers, girdles, Vaseline, and a strand of pearls help a shy girl become popular?

Maya Van Wagenen is about to find out.

Stuck near the bottom of the social ladder at “pretty much the lowest level of people at school who aren’t paid to be here,” Maya has never been popular. But before starting eighth grade, she decides to begin a unique social experiment: spend the school year following a 1950s popularity guide, written by former teen model Betty Cornell.

The real-life results are hilarious, painful, and filled with unexpected surprises. Told with humor and grace, Maya’s journey offers readers of all ages a thoroughly contemporary example of kindness and self-confidence, along with a better understanding of what it means to be popular.



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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up—The bright and perceptive Van Wagenen wanted to boost her popularity in middle school. As a self-defined "Social Outcast, the lowest level of people at school who weren't paid to be there," the eighth-grader had quite a climb ahead of her. Her modus operandi was intriguing: she used a 1950s teen etiquette book that her father found at a thrift store as a guide to climb the social ladder. The clash of eras and cultures is funny—the author wears a girdle, hat, and pearls to class; learns how to apply makeup; improves her posture and poise; and tries a diet. But the best lessons she learns from Fifties teen model Betty Cornell's *Teen-Age Popularity Guide* are about how to talk to and understand the people around her. Bravely visiting all the various cliques in the lunchroom and making conversation with her secret Sunday school crush, she becomes even more sensitive and aware—and yes, more popular. Van Wagenen's tone is personable and polished. Even though she has many typical tween obsessions and concerns, her writing is surprisingly mature. While overall this light memoir provides plenty of fun, it has a grittier backdrop than the cover and description might suggest. Van Wagenen's school, in Brownsville, TX, near the Mexican border, commonly experiences lockdown drills and warnings against gangs, and she casually mentions that smoke from a drug war in Matamoros, Mexico, is visible from her house. The part-Hispanic teen also occasionally sprinkles in Spanish words. With a DreamWorks movie option in the works, this entertaining title should be in demand.—Liz French, Library Journal

Review

"I was inspired by her journey and made a point of saving a copy of 'Popular' for my sister, who starts middle school this fall. Maybe if I had read it when I was her age, it could have saved me from a world of hurt, or at least put that world in perspective."--Maude Apatow for the "New York Times Book Review"

""Popular "taps into a feeling shared by Bradbury and Bieber enthusiasts alike -- the need to fit in during middle school."--"USA Today"

"An interesting and earnest memoir." --"Kirkus Reviews"

"While completely appropriate for middle school readers, "Popular "is even more entertaining for adults. Van Wagenen is a uniquely gifted talent with a gem of a first novel" --"VOYA"

A New York Times bestseller!

Maya Van Wagenen is a Time magazine Top 16 Most Influential Teen of 2013

and a Huffington Post Most Fearless Teen of 2013

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"Everyone's happiness project looks different, and I was utterly charmed by Maya Van Wagenen's honest, funny, and thought-provoking account of her efforts to become 'popular.'"

--Gretchen Rubin, #1 bestselling author of "The Happiness Project"
"Geeky and dorky, but never wimpy, Maya Van Wagenen is as powerful and honest as she is quirky and funny--and startlingly gifted. She's the real deal, folks, a teenage John Green for the next generation. Stunning." --Margaret Stohl, bestselling co-author of the Beautiful Creatures series
"Maya Van Wagenen's memoir, "Popular," would have been wonderful to read as a kid, and so reassuring to Nerdy Teenage Me. Her year-long experiment in popularity is timeless; the intelligent and humane way she gets to the heart of the matter is uniquely her. Funny, determined, and wry, Van Wagenen has written a wise, heartfelt guide for other kids eager to keep up." --Rachel Hartman, bestselling author of "Seraphina"
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"While completely appropriate for middle school readers, "Popular" is even more entertaining for adults. Van Wagenen is a uniquely gifted talent with a gem of a first novel" --"VOYA"

About the Author

Maya Van Wagenen is sixteen years old. When she was eleven, her family moved to Brownsville, Texas, the setting of "Popular." When not hunched over a desktop writing, Maya enjoys reading, British television, and chocolate. She now lives with her parents and two siblings in rural Georgia. She is a junior in high school .

Users Review

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