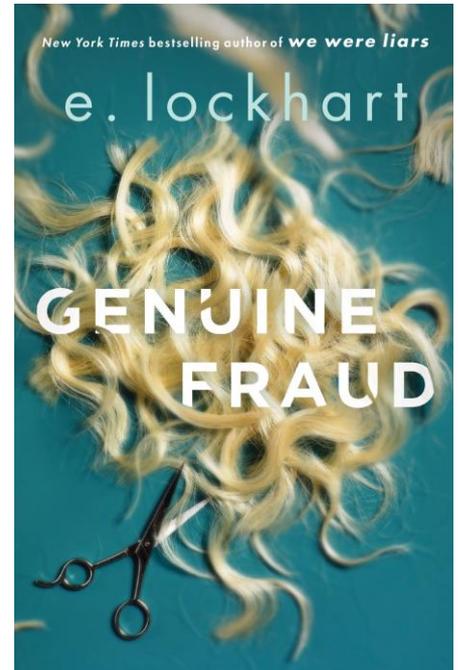


# Genuine Fraud

By E. Lockhart

September 2017 ISBN 9781760295936 paperback  
Recommended for 13 – 18 year old readers



## Summary

Imogen is a runaway heiress, a manipulator, and a cheat. Jule is a fighter, a chameleon, and a liar. They develop a very intense friendship – but then there's a disappearance, and possibly a murder, and it all starts to go horribly wrong...

In the tradition of great mind-bending thrillers, *Genuine Fraud* forces its readers to ask, 'who can I trust, where's the truth, and what the hell just happened there?' It's incredibly gripping and suspenseful, and features one of the best endings you will experience this year.

## Use in the classroom

This book is a must for the school library and will principally suit the English classroom, although it is also relevant to classes on morals and ethics. It is essentially a complex portrait of identity and obsession, with a twist at the end perfect for genre discussions.

Like other novels by this author, *Genuine Fraud* challenges genre and gender stereotypes with tough, intelligent, flawed, female characters. Students should enjoy debating the issues that are thus thrown up. As the author notes, below, there is also a strong element of class consciousness and resentment/envy.

## Style

Inspired by the master of the psychological suspense novel, Patricia Highsmith, E. Lockhart has produced a taut and clever YA novel in the mould of *The Talented Mr Ripley*.

The book is told in first-person past tense and makes good use of free indirect discourse. For example, the novel opens with 'It was a bloody great hotel', which is not only arresting but captures in the narration the reaction of the character who is experiencing the hotel.

Flat declarative sentences gradually build up to paint the opening scene, with the writer keeping the narrative voice understated so as not to distract from the action. There are sections of background and exposition, but dialogue, action and free indirect discourse are the main tools in revealing the characters.

The most dramatic literary technique – and one that breaks away from Highsmith's novel – is a daring timeshift. Lockhart tells the story backwards as a chronological countdown until the end, when another timeshift brings us back to where the story started.

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## Discussion questions and activities

1. Before reading the story, examine the image on the front cover of the novel and write a short paragraph to explain your reaction to it. What does it make you feel, what genre of book do you expect with such an image on its cover, and what sort of things do you think might occur in the novel? After finishing the novel go back to this paragraph to see whether your predictions of genre and events were correct.
2. Read the first line of the novel. Why do you think the author decided to start with this particular line? Why do you think she chose to use the term 'bloody' in the sentence? Define the term 'free indirect discourse' and decide if you think this style of narration describes the first chapter of *Genuine Fraud*.
3. E. Lockhart tells Jule's story using reverse narrative.
  - (a) define the term 'reverse narrative',
  - (b) explain the positives and negatives of using this technique,
  - (c) do you think this technique is better for some literary genres than others i.e., a psychological thriller versus fantasy fiction? Explain your answer.
4. 'At first, she texted Patti Sokoloff pictures and wrote, chatty, hopeful emails, but it wasn't long before Jule ignored Patti just as Imogen did.' (p. 205)  
Why do you think E. Lockhart decided to mention Patti Sokoloff at this point in the story? How does this mention of Imogen's mother 'unsettle' the reader's understanding of events? Give other examples in the novel where this occurs.
5. 'They're, like, the edgy orphans...Yeah. Like, in *Vanity Fair*, Becky Sharp is one big ambition machine. She'll stop at zero. Jane Eyre has temper tantrums, throws herself on the floor. Pip, in *Great Expectations*, is deluded and money hungry. All of them want a better life and go after it, and all of them are morally compromised.' (p. 32)  
Discuss how these references relate to the characters of both Jule and Immie as the story unfolds.
6. 'The important thing is this: to be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.' Charles Du Bos (p. 237).  
How does this quality differentiate Jule and Immie, and ultimately make Jule the survivor?
7. '...She also said those comic book heroes aren't simple heroes, but "complicated ones who make moral compromises in the same tradition as the orphans in Victorian narratives."' (p. 228)  
Would you describe Jule as a 'hero' in Immie's definition of the term?  
Optional question: compare and contrast Jule with one of the following famous characters: Becky Sharp (*Vanity Fair*), Jane Eyre (*Jane Eyre*), Phillip Pirrup (*Great Expectations*), Spiderman, Batman, Superman.
8. 'Going forward, Jule would become something else entirely. There would be other bridges to walk across and other dresses to wear. She had changed her accent, had changed her very being. She could do it again.' (p. 262).  
Write a short story describing where Jule goes and what she does next.
9. How does the last chapter of *Genuine Fraud* alter the reverse narrative of the rest of the novel? Why do you think E. Lockhart chose to end the story this way rather than end it with Jule walking to the waitressing job at the Greenbriar School?
10. E. Lockhart said of *Genuine Fraud*, 'it is about the American Dream and what it looks like in the early twenty-first century'.  
What do you think she meant by this statement?  
How would you compare it with *The Great Gatsby*, the classic story about the American Dream in the early twentieth century?

## In the author's own words

'*Genuine Fraud* is a novel that represents my worst self – the ugliest parts of my soul that I don't generally care to show to anyone. It is full of need and ambition and loneliness and fury. I tried to write honestly about the contradictions within me, and I think that doing so is still a feminist act.

'I have written book after book about people who one way or another infiltrate the dominant social class and then question its values. The boys club. The world of rich and well-educated people. And such is my own story. I grew up partly in and partly out of a number of privileged worlds. I write about knocking on the glass ceiling and about figuring out the codes and alliances of places I don't automatically have membership in. Jule [*Genuine Fraud's* protagonist] is very like me in many ways, and very connected to other characters I have written. She is just the darker part.

'*Genuine Fraud* is also about the American Dream and what it looks like in the early twenty-first century.'

## Author's Note (Featured at the end of *Genuine Fraud*):

'I was inspired by many, many books and films in the writing of *Genuine Fraud*: Victorian orphan stories, con artist tales, antihero novels, action movies, noir films, superhero comics, tales told backward, stories of class mobility, and books about the lives of ferociously ambitious, unhappy women. The novel I have written feels to me like layer upon layer of references. I cannot possibly name all my influences, but particular debt goes to Patricia Highsmith for *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, to Mark Seal for *The Man in the Rockefeller Suit*, and to Charles Dickens for *Great Expectations*.'

## Author Background

**Emily Lockhart** is the author of eight YA (young adult) novels including the bestselling *We Were Liars* and *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks*—a Michael L. Printz Award Honor Book, a finalist for the National Book Award, and recipient of the Cybils Award for best young adult novel.

She has a doctorate in English Literature from Columbia University and has taught composition, literature and creative writing. Her books have been translated into ten languages.

Visit Emily online at [emilylockhart.com](http://emilylockhart.com) and follow her @elockhart on Twitter.

## Other E. Lockhart books published by Allen & Unwin:

*We Were Liars* 2014, 2017

*The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* 2015

Four Ruby Oliver novels: *The Boyfriend List*, *The Boy Book*, *The Treasure Map of Boys*, *Real Live Boyfriends* 2016



Photo: Heather Weston