

# PAPER AIRPLANES BY DAWN O'PORTER



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From School Library Journal

Gr 10 Up—In this captivating and at times gritty debut, O'Porter presents a funny and poignant coming-of-age friendship of Flo and Renée. It's 1994, and the 15-year-olds are each facing their share of troubles on the small British island of Guernsey. Flo's parents have split up, and she's dealing with a critical mother at home and an incredibly domineering best friend at school. Renée is an extroverted troublemaker at school, but feels like a stranger in the home she shares with her bulimic younger sister and emotionally unavailable grandparents. The girls bond over the shared experience of familial tragedy and become close friends, exchanging notes on paper airplanes and finding in each other the support they crave. Readers will be drawn into the story, which moves quickly through alternating first-person narrations, which also serves to reveal potential cracks in the teens' bond. By the end, each girl comes to learn the importance of friendship and forgiveness and that the past, while not forgotten, doesn't have to define you. Though their behavior can be frustrating at times—Flo not standing up to mean girl Sally; Renée secretly having sex with Flo's older brother (in a scene that is entirely more heartbreaking than risqué)—readers will root for the pair and will also eagerly await the sequel.—Amanda Mastrull, Library Journal

Review

"Dawn O'Porter was a teenager in her past life. Well, duh! How else could she have gotten this bitch-perfect, debut novel so right! Paper Aeroplanes is spot on! This teen friendship, is brutal and beautiful, flawed and forgiving. The angst and anguish of adolescence are made safer by her talented hand. Wish she had written this when I was 15!"--Jamie Lee Curtis

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About the Author

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Renée and Flo are the most unlikely of friends. Introspective and studious Flo and outspoken, wild, and sexually curious Renée have barely spoken in their years of going to school together in Guernsey, a small British island off the coast of France. And yet, when tragedy strikes, it is only wild child Renée, who lost her mother at a young age, who is able to comfort a grieving Flo. The girls form an intense bond that sees them through a host of deeply relatable, wince-inducing experiences—drunken snogging; a séance in which clueless friends offer to summon Renée's mother; dating a guy for free fish and chips. But toxic mean girls and personal betrayals threaten to tear the girls' delicate new friendship apart.

In this gripping debut, Dawn O'Porter shines an unflinchingly honest, humorous light on female friendship, lost innocence, and that moment when you are teetering on the threshold of adult life.

### Praise for Paper Airplanes

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--Jamie Lee Curtis

"Poignant and edgy, this exploration of lively female friendships rises high."

--Kirkus Reviews

- Sales Rank: #2723015 in Books
- Published on: 2015-09-08
- Released on: 2015-09-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.13" h x .75" w x 5.38" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

One of the best YA contemporary novels I've read in a long time!

By Cait

Received a copy from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

4.5 stars. Quick, compelling & easy read. One of the best YA contemporary novels I've read in a long time. Loved the honesty and the humor with which Dawn O'Porter approached female teenage issues and friendship. Both Flo & Renee were extremely likeable and easy to relate to. "*Paper Airplanes*" is a great reminder of how difficult those years can be emotionally and physically. More importantly it reminds us how important a strong & loving friendship is and what that actually means. This is a MUST read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

and the friendship that develops between them after they both suffer great personal losses

By ItsJaneLindsey

*Paper Airplanes* is the debut novel from columnist/journalist Dawn O'Porter, set on the small British island of Guernsey in 1994. The story focuses on two girls, Renée and Flo, and the friendship that develops between them after they both suffer great personal losses.

I was really intrigued to read this novel. Usually contemporary is far from my favorite genre, but the idea of a uniquely British friendship story (set in the 90s at that!) drew me in. I appreciated that Renée and Flo went through struggles and setbacks that were portrayed realistically - one of this novel's few strengths.

It was...ok. O'Porter did a great job of representing some of those completely unique moments of being a teenage girl, and also the way families cope - or rather, don't cope - with loss. However, that's where *Paper Airplanes'* strengths end. The rest of the novel was underwhelming, to say the least. The whole subplot with Renée and Flo's brother Julian felt cheap, because it exploited both the "having a crush on your friend's sibling" and "losing your virginity" tropes, and badly at that. Renée's "relationship" with Julian isn't exactly believable, and it gets to glossed over at the end that I had to wonder what was the point of it even happening. Sally's entire storyline (spoilers: she's awful and ends up preggers!) similarly felt pointless and

verged well past cliché. And since I'm putting my cards on the table here - the ending really took the cake. All this happens to and between the girls, and then miraculously everything is great! Flo's mother becomes present and starts taking care of her family, Renée's aunt shows up and magically solves all of her problems. It was just...too much. For a book that starts out as such a true depiction of being a teen girl, it ends on a cookie cutter note that felt completely lacking.

This book is a great example of what I have trust issues when it comes to contemporary YA.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

O'Porter creates two authentic, honest, and gorgeously flawed young women

By ChinacatSun76

A US release of a book that's been well-received in the UK (first published in April 2013), *Paper Airplanes* is one of the most engrossing pieces of YA fiction I've read in recent memory. Dawn O'Porter creates two authentic, honest, and gorgeously flawed young women who live and breathe within the pages. Dealing with the (sometimes soul-crushing, sometimes soul-lifting) realities of female friendships, both teens and adults will recognize parts of themselves in Flo and Renee in this character-driven story.

Flo is a dedicated student, suffering from social invisibility and self-doubt at the hands of a shrew-like BFF who constantly puts her down and belittles her. Renee is a girl with a somewhat undeserved reputation around school, desperate for love that she can't get from her lukewarm boyfriend, her anorexic sister, or her financially struggling and out-of-touch grandparents who took became her guardians when their mother died. When they bond over the death of a parent (Flo's father dies early in the book) the two girls seem like an unlikely pair at first, but over the course of the novel Flo and Renee develop a friendship in secret that eventually becomes larger than either of them. As there often is, both minor and devastating secrets are kept, and the two girls must decide what "true" friendship is.

O'Porter expertly captures the highs and the lows of the teenage experience in a way that will appeal to teens and adults alike. And even though the novel is set in 1994, the experiences ring true to 2014. I actually found the 20 year throwback refreshing (no technology!), and she includes enough small details to establish the time period, but not make it the focus. The same can be said about the setting location, an all girls school in Guernsey; she includes just enough Brit-centric details (ex. crisps) to remind the reader of the setting, but not so many that it becomes cumbersome or an obstacle to understanding. The universality of women's friendships is at the center of the novel, and a somewhat foreign (to a US audience) time and place actually help reinforce that universality.

--ARC kindly provided by publisher

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