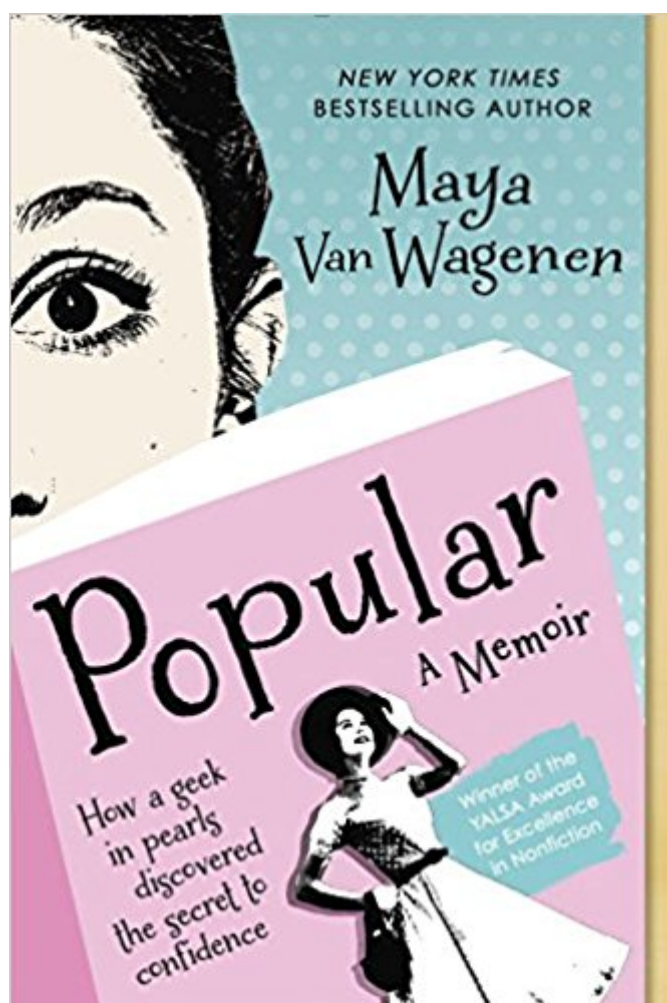




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# Popular: How A Geek In Pearls Discovered The Secret To Confidence



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #22,879 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in Books > Teens >

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

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* --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

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. "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 "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* — “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 —

I belong to a Young Adult book group (I'm just about to turn 50 but I still love reading kid lit and YA novels... good ones). And this is a GREAT one. My friend who has a 14 year old daughter told me about this book so I looked into it. Love that it's a memoir. Love the theme and I wish I had this book when I was in school. I suggested it to our book group and we decided to all read it. I thought I'd read it and pass it along to my friend's daughter, but I think I'll have to keep it. I'll definitely would enjoy reading it again. I'll buy another copy to give to my friend's daughter. Again, I can't tell you how delighted I am with the whole thing. Her awesomely supportive family, the whole idea of how she followed Betty's 1950's book to the letter (vaseline on the eyelids and wearing panty girdles! Who knew they still even made panty girdles!), and Maya's utter bravery. Wow. I could not have done that at her age. I'm not sure I could do it now. What I didn't realize when I first heard about the book is that she told no one that's what she was doing, following the advice of this 1950's book. No one except her family knew, not even her best friend Kenzie. Where it REALLY got me was the month of April's theme: "A Popular Attitude". And then everything starts tying together. It's a wonderful lesson for anyone at any age. No spoilers here (that's a pet peeve of mine) but you will NOT be disappointed. I am so thrilled for Maya. It was a wonderful read. And such a satisfying ending. There's not one little thing I didn't adore. Can't wait for the movie. Also, kudos go out to whoever designed and illustrated the book cover. Love. Love. Love.

I read it before I gave it to my daughter. I did laugh out loud, it brings us all back to 8th grade. It's very relate-able. And as you read, you think. It's often said that we learn through our children. This puts the things into perspective in a fun way. Great book for any middle school girl (regardless of their "popularity"). Update - my daughter is 80% through and loves the way Maya writes, she doesn't always read what I recommend but this time she did!

I rarely give a book 5 stars, so when I do it must be good. *Popular* by Maya van Wagenen was like a

non- annoying reality tv series- it had a diverse amount of emotions and the people could be seen changing over time. The one thing I disliked, however ,was that it had that often used, changed mindset ending. At the end, Maya says she now knows that popularity isn't" clothes, hair, or even possessions. When we let go of these labels we see how flimsy and relative they actually are. Real popularity is kindness and acceptance. It is about who you are, and how you treat others." That was a beautiful set of sentences, but I'm sorry that's just not how it works, as much as we like to believe it is. In my school especially, an I'm sure in other schools, the popular people AREN'T nice and DO have fancy possessions. In the end, I applaud Maya's willingness to try this insane experience and open herself up to new things, because it's extremely hard. "Popular" is a book that resonates with so many people going through the unfair popularity trials of MS , including myself. Her humorous wit also made me connect to her even more, and made the book enjoyable to read. I would recommend this book for anyone in middle school/ early HS, especially someone going through the whole "why does it seem like nobody likes me" and " Why does popularity seem based on such fickle things" phase. A great, non fiction, easy to connect to, book."This is the time to remember that I'm the protagonist in my own story, facing every challenge with grace and wit."

My 11yo 6th grader is an avid reader. Here is her review:--- "Maya is an unpopular girl finishing her 8th grade year with an interesting experiment. She is reading "Betty Cornell's Teenage Popularity Guide", a book from the 1950s. She's hoping the experiment will help her find confidence and discover the true meaning of popularity. As a middle-schooler myself this was a fun book and it teaches some important lessons. Some of the things she does are so funny, especially compared to how we are now. It is emotional and was written very well, I felt like I could relate to Maya. It remind me of a realistic Dork Diaries, with Maya's honesty and silliness. I think it is a great book for all Middle School girls to read!"

I couldn't help falling in love with Maya and her family as she goes on this "journey" to be popular. She has a way of telling a story that makes you feel like you are experiencing it right along with her. I laughed at her witty, sarcastic comments and felt her sadness when she experienced pain. It has been a treat to read her honest, heartfelt memoir.

What a cute book this was ! This was a memoir about a girl in Middle School who wanted to learn to be more popular , Her dad found an old copy of a book from the 1950's .written by a young girl back then about ways to be popular, from the way you dress, to making friends, etc .Maya decided to try

to use this book in today's world and follow it as closely as she could for one year, to see if it helped her to become more popular in school .It was a really quick read and an enjoyable book, bringing back lots of memories of school , friends, clothes, etc ..If you want a light read that is a really feel-good-story , and teaches us ALL how to be more popular, give this a try, You won't be sorry !

This lovely book was so honest about the perils of middle childhood. The author writes with such a lack of self consciousness and without a touch of guile. Her sincerity gives the book flavor.

Such a cute book! I found myself cheering for Maya the entire way. This was so cleverly constructed and her humor, given her age, was amazing. I laughed out loud during several parts. She has such a strong and engaging voice! I love the confidence and inner strength she found, and I hope there's a follow up book as to what she's up to now!

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