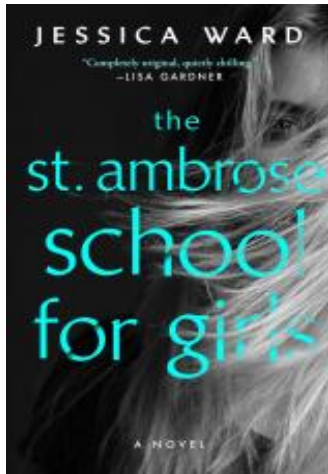


The St. Ambrose School for Girls

by Jessica Ward



About the Book

Heathers meets *THE SECRET HISTORY* in this thrilling coming-of-age novel set in a boarding school where the secrets are devastating --- and deadly.

When Sarah Taylor arrives at the exclusive St. Ambrose School, she's carrying more baggage than just what fits in her suitcase. She knows she's not like the other girls. If the shabby, all-black, non-designer clothes don't give that away, the bottle of lithium hidden in her desk drawer sure does.

St. Ambrose's queen bee, Greta Stanhope, picks Sarah as a target from day one and the most popular, powerful, horrible girl at school is relentless in making sure Sarah knows what the pecking order is. Thankfully, Sarah makes an ally out of her roommate, Ellen "Strots" Strotsberry, a cigarette-huffing, devil-may-care athlete. Also down the hall is Nick Hollis, the devastatingly handsome RA, and the object of more than one St. Ambrose student's fantasies. Between Strots and Nick, Sarah hopes she can make it through the semester, dealing with not only her schoolwork and a recent bipolar diagnosis, but Greta's increasingly malicious pranks.

Sarah is determined not to give Greta the satisfaction of breaking her. But when scandal unfolds, and someone ends up dead, her world threatens to unravel in ways she never could have imagined. *THE ST. AMBROSE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS* is a dangerous, delicious, twisty coming-of-age tale that will stay with you long after you turn the last page.

Discussion Guide

1. On page 9, Sarah's mother drops her off at St. Ambrose: "Then she waves at me with her cigarette and I step back to watch the Mercury pull away." Do you remember the moment your family first dropped you off at school (whether high school or college)? What sights and sounds stand out most in your memory? What feelings did you have?

2. Sarah and Strots appear to be an unlikely duo upon their first meeting, with Sarah's social awkwardness a direct contrast to her roommate's sporty confidence. How do you predict their relationship will evolve throughout the book?
3. On page 75, Sarah tells Strots about Greta's bullying, and contrary to what she expects, Strots believes her wholeheartedly. Sarah is floored: "This is such a relief that I blink fast." Think of a time when you have found solace in a friend's comfort, or been able to provide comfort and support to someone else during a difficult time. Why are bonding moments like these so important, especially during teenage years?
4. How do the dynamics of the Mountain Day football game reflect the character dynamics in the book as a whole? For example, what does Sarah's game-ending play reveal about her relationship with Greta and the rest of the characters?
5. Sarah lives with bipolar disorder, and her narration lays bare the thought patterns that wind through her darkest moments. What was your experience reading these pages and stepping into Sarah's world?
6. The CVS employees have a tremendous effect on Sarah's life, from Margie's and Roni's kindness with the clothing dye to Phil's intervention on a later trip. What does their influence suggest about the importance --- and prevalence --- of community in the book?
7. Nick Hollis, an authority figure in the dorm, exhibits questionable behavior toward the girls on his floor, while providing Sarah with a trusted outlet after a dark moment. How does his character change as the book goes on, and how does Sarah's view of him change as she learns new information about him?
8. Tera Taylor, Sarah's mom, returns to St. Ambrose in chapter 15. How do her interactions with Sarah compare and contrast with her actions on drop-off day? What does this suggest about Tera's character as a whole?
9. There are a few characters in this book whose actions have harmful consequences. Who would you characterize as the book's true villain, if there is one?
10. The book contains a surprising, whirlwind ending. As you neared the end of the book, what were your predictions for what would happen? How close were you to discovering the truth?

Author Bio

Jessica Ward is a pseudonym for the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author who writes as J.R. Ward and has over 20 million copies in print. She enjoys spending time in the Adirondacks and lives in the South with her family and her dogs.

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