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***Homeroom Diaries* by James Patterson and Lisa Papademetriou, illustrated by Keino**

Publisher: Young Arrow, Random House

RRP \$19.99

This entertaining chick lit is set in modern times at North Plains High School, an ordinary high school in Portland. It is written as a diary by the main character, Margaret, who everyone calls Cuckoo because she was admitted to a mental hospital a while back. Cuckoo was depressed about her mother leaving home and she now lives with Mrs Morris, her foster mother. The many comical black-and-white illustrations make it an enjoyable read.

At North Plains High school there are a few main groups such as the Jocks who hate the Nerds, the Barbies who hate the Goths, and so on. The students don't like to mingle much, and typically the groups tend to dislike each other. Cuckoo and her friends, Katie (Brainzilla), Hana (Eggy), Paul (Zitsy), Peter (Tebow) and Beverly (Flatso), call themselves the Freakshow. They don't really fit into any of the groups, so they stick with themselves.

Basically, the Freakshow's goal is for all the school groups to get along, so they try to find a way to make this possible. Cuckoo and her friends go through many problems that high school age students go through, such as in fitting in with others, making friends, and figuring out interests for others.

Cuckoo develops occasional crushes on boys she meets. One is an imaginary 'friend' named Lawrence, a character from a book she read during her depressed episode. Lawrence appears throughout her diary, in her doodles, doing numerous things from dining with Nicki Minaj to dancing at a ball.

Homeroom Diaries is similar to the illustrated Tom Gates series, at a slightly more teenage level. It is a light and easy read, so it would interest those people who don't enjoy reading as much as others.

Reviewed by Year 8 student, Hayley Tanner

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