

## **The Grace Year**

**Kim Liggett**

**Reviewed by: Rina Guo, 16**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity**

[www.bethestaryouare.org](http://www.bethestaryouare.org)

In Garner County, every once a year, there is a Veiling Day; a day where the fates and futures of all the sixteen-year-old girls in the county are chosen and decided by the men, who will pick wives among some girls and leave others unwanted and disgraced. But more importantly, Veiling Day is the start of a girl's Grace Year. When a girl reaches her Grace Year, the white ribbon of her hair (symbolizing innocence) is replaced with a red ribbon, symbolizing blood and sin. During a girl's Grace Year, they are considered dangerous and magical; capable of luring men into disaster and driving their wives into jealousy. That's why when a girl turns sixteen and her hair is braided in red, she's banished out to the far forest beyond the county, to go wild and release all her witchcraft out of harm's way. After a year, the idea is that they will come home as purified women, rid of all their cursed magic, and ready to fulfill their overall life-achieving purpose of being obedient wives and mothers of sons. The actual details of what happens during the Grace Year is forbidden to speak of. But every year, a handful of the Grace Year girls never make it back home and those that do, come home shaken and scarred with rumors of poachers and men on the outskirts that prey on the unlucky.

Tierney James is approaching her Grace Year, but she secretly confides with her best friend, Michael, that all she wants is to get over with the year and then lay low as a field worker, unmarried but truly free. Tierney is defiant and tomboyish, and most of the girls and boys stay clear of her, which only makes it more shocking when on Veiling Day, Tierney is presented with a veil and a husband...who happens to be Michael. Without much time to resolve her confusion and also mask the pain of betrayal by her closest friend, Tierney James is soon ushered out with the other Grace Year girls, far away from the county and deep into the forest to face their doomed fates. The wilderness soon becomes a battlefield, filled with madness and murder as the curse of the Grace Year seeps in like a poison, making girls turn against girls as they all struggle to survive the harsh environment. By the betrayal of the other girls and the kindness of an enemy, Tierney slowly learns to understand the Grace Year for what it truly is ...and also why she plans on putting an end to the deeply twisted and fabricated tradition.

This book is suitable for readers age 15-20. There are some violent, graphic and mildly suggestive content.

I hands-down loved this book. I was almost not going to read it, but I'm so glad I did. The author is just fantastic. I loved the writing and narration of the story. Despite all the chaotic imagery and violence Tierney faces, she has such a strong and stubborn will to survive. The most genius thing I loved about this book was the plot and the writing. First of all, the plot was incredible. It was never predictable or cliché, and somehow seemingly insignificant details or subtleties always came around in the end to add greater drama and twists in the plot. Every page had me hanging on every word, and I could not find myself able to put it down. In a way, I feel regretful that I'm actually done with the book, because I'll never be able to relive reading the whole story and experiencing all the wonderful surprises and weight of the words for the first time again. From the start to the end, the storyline was brilliantly crafted and perfected in the most magnificent way. Secondly, the writing. Kim Liggett's writing style is amazing. Certain words and phrases can really hit you hard at times and leave you breathless. You could truly feel

the weight and emotion of every line, and you could envision Tierney's experiences and thoughts as if they were your own. The symbolism embedded in the words, also tied the story up so powerfully. Among everything else, somehow, I'm left feeling awed and strangely empowered after finishing this book.

In all, this was such a fantastic book. The story delves in the genres of dystopia, fantasy and Horror, each in a small way. *The Grace Year* deals with complicated relationships, superstition, lies, and overall, feministic empowerment. It reminds me of a combination of *The Lord of The Flies*, *The Hunger Games* and *The Handmaid's Tale* all in one.

**Recommended Titles:**

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

The Perfect Nine: The Epic of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

The Once and Future Witches by Alix E. Harrow

The Lord of the Flies by William Golding

The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories by Charlotte Perkins Gilman