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[Look to the Hills: The Diary of Lozette Moreau, a French Slave Girl](#)

Posted on 02 April 2019 By Elizabeth Percer

## {READ EBOOK} í An Uncommon Education ? eBook or E-pub free

This is a beautiful novel, sort of Leif Enger meets Willa Cather with a pinch of Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* thrown in. It's also not at all what I expected. I wanted to read it because much of the story takes place at my alma mater, Wellesley. I also love coming-of-age tales. I guess I expected something less exquisite. It's hard to explain. Basically, I expected something good, something solid, something that I would adore because of the Wellesley connection, but not something that I would talk about endlessly to anyone who will listen, which happens maybe once every few years. In short, this lovely, evocative novel totally took me by surprise. I really love how Naomi's coming-of-age is a long and winding road, with all sorts of wrong turns and dead ends. We all have events in our lives that define us and shape who we are, but for Naomi these events come off as infinitely indelible and profound. There is one thing involving her family, in the very beginning of the book, and then something else involving a close friend several years later. It makes perfect sense that these events make Naomi who she is at least until she goes off to Wellesley, and then something starts to shift. She begins to define herself not in relation to the people around her, but as her own person. Not in terms of the things that have happened to her, but in terms of the choices she makes for herself. This is a magical moment in anyone's life, I think, and Elizabeth Percer so perfectly captures this process of self-realization in the very setting. I

experienced it myself that it takes my breath away It s murky, it s confusing, it s heartbreaking and intoxicating and scary as hell It makes no sense and it makes all the sense in the world I also love that this is the most important thing Naomi takes away from Wellesley Her education is about 1 part academic and 9 parts everything else yet another thing I identify with and suspect a lot of people do. The actual story is compelling, too, of course, and delightfully written I laughed, I cried, I paused at times, a finger absently marking my place, smiling to myself and staring at the wall and thinking of nothing and everything all at once It s possible I m biased and that the book means to me than it will to the average reader who didn t come of age in the same place and in much the same way as the protagonist but I m inclined to think that this truly is a bit of magic I m also famously sentimental, so take this all with a grain of salt. First off, I think that this writer has a lot of talent The language that she uses and the sentence structure are all great I just didn t like the story or the characters. We start off with Naomi Feinstein as a child, who is the apple of her father s eye He makes an extra effort with her, as her mother suffers from depression Her mother spends most of her time alone, as she doesn t want her moods to affect her daughter Of course, the removal of her mother from most situations affects Naomi. Naomi and her father spend a lot of time at the historical home of Rose Kennedy Her father admires Rose Kennedy immensely and wonders what her life might have been like had it been common then for women to obtain positions of power He doesn t want his daughter to suffer the same fate and encourages her to realize her dream of becoming a doctor by attending Wellesley. I couldn t help but compare this book to another book about an all girls school, Commencement by J Courtney Sullivan I didn t care for that one, either Look, I know that teens and young adults are supposed to be angsty, but very few people in my teenage young adult years didn t laugh and smile at least some of the time. The idea of a secret Shakespeare Society could have been so much fun than it was made to be Instead, it proves to add to the girls intense mood swings and seems to be a darker version of any sorority than any I ve known. There wasn t anyone to root for in this book other than Jun, who seems to be kind to most people, yet suffers an assassination of character against which she chooses not to fight I understand her reasons why her Japanese culture would not allow her to exist with honor as she truly is but it seems as though the bad guy wins no matter what. Overall, I would skip The storyline tries too hard to create something that just isn t there. A jumbled mess I was really excited to read this book because of one descriptive sentence The event marks Naomi s introduction to Wellesley s oldest honor society, the mysterious Shakespeare Society, defined by secret rituals and filled with unconventional, passionate students. I was disappointed to discover that this book wasn t about a secret society at all those books are like catnip to me , but rather a dull coming of age novel with no real plot, uneven pacing, an unsatisfying conclusion, and an annoying protagonist If you enjoy navel gazing, self absorbed narration, you might like this I, however, wanted dangerous rituals and secrets and classics majors killing farmers in the

woods hee And as a side note, the author s habit of ending each chapter with a Very Important Sentence annoyed me I ve seen this device used well before, but not here It just felt like I was being banged over the head with SYMBOLISM. I almost never give a book so few stars, because I m pretty good at anticipating what I ll like, and ditching anything I don t after 50 or so pages But An Uncommon Education was a tricky little thing I should have liked it, maybe even loved it There s a tiny picture of Shakespeare on the front cover, for crying out loud, and the heroine was weird, compelling, unexpected The story began with a fascinating and heartbreaking friendship between two outsiders and continued at a Northeastern Liberal Arts college Sounds tailor made for me. Ms Percer is a talented writer and goes to great pains to show us that she is awfully, awfully clever , but this book just did not work It read like a young girl s unedited diary, and I don t mean that in a hilarious way The interesting and fun parts of the story involved the youthful friendship between Naomi and her first love, a neighbor and kindred spirit As the book and the heroine progress, things just fall apart I don t think I ll ever hear the word Wellesley again without rolling my eyes, and I m afraid I have to blame Ms Percer for that Not recommended, no matter how much you like smart girls, classical literature, or coming of age stories. Also reviewed at Oh Paper Pages At ALA Annual last year, I saw people with copies of An Uncommon Education, and I was saddened that I missed out on meeting Elizabeth Percer My disappointment has vanished now that I am able to help celebrate the paperback release of this wonderful book An Uncommon Education tracks the life of Naomi, a girl who experiences loneliness and loss so profound that she carries the mark throughout her life When Naomi s best friend is suddenly ripped from her life, she is unable to cope and her unresolved feelings follow her to university Naomi is a wonderful narrator She is consistent, believable, and real I could hear her voice so strong and so loudly As the story progressed, I could hear how her childhood nervousness transformed into careful observations Her mature handling of situations marks Naomi s development from childhood to adulthood, and I was astonished at certain points of the story at how she dealt with surprising revelations The one character that held my attention was Teddy Though we spend quite a bit of time with him at the beginning of the story, he hangs on every page like a reluctant cloud His relationship with Naomi is extraordinary, and their love for each other is so meaningful that it has become one of the love stories that I will treasure the most They spun around each other like twin flames Too seldom are people fortunate enough to find someone who loves unconditionally and deeply What Elizabeth did with Teddy and Naomi is incredible She did not trivialize young love She gave it power and meaning. Elizabeth Percer held my heart in her hands and gently squeezed it throughout the story I am the type of reader who will experience events right alongside the characters They become my friends, and I love and cherish them With Teddy, I felt so dreadfully sad His story unfolds slowly like a child unwrapping a treasured present and it is so beautifully written that I felt hopeless and lost How amazing that a writer can convey a story so exquisitely while simultaneously

evaporating cheerfulness in the world It is apparent that Elizabeth has a talent of tenderly describing events and unpacking them to show readers how her characters end up I was riveted, and I will automatically buy any book that Elizabeth writes She is a talented writer, and I am certain that she will receive great admiration for her work.I highly recommend An Uncommon Education by Elizabeth Percer It is a lovely story and the writing is perfect Simply perfect. An Uncommon Education is a wonderful coming of age story.Too often in life I will hear someone say All my problems will be over once something happens The teenager thinks going to college will change them the college kid thinks a real job with a paycheck will, the young employee thinks marriage, then children, then empty nester, retirement, and so on The real truth about life is we never get rid of our problems, rather we just trade them in for new ones The only constructive thing a person can do at any sage of life is to address their problems head on and befriend them It is through this you can find some sort of peace Naomi Fienstein is a young woman severely troubled by life A disinterested mother and a secretive father beset with ill health When her father has a heart attack right in front of her she decides that she can fix this She will dedicate her life to medicine, specifically to the heart But her problems mount at school as she is without friends, a social outcast who is picked on Her first love, the neighbor boy suddenly moves away and she is left alone She deals with the loneliness by literally running away from it taking to the streets to run Eventually life will be better when she gets to college, her problems left behind When meeting her freshman roommate her father comments how she is Naomi from down the street, symbolically demonstrating that for all her running, all her planning she has yet to travel very far Because at the end of the day her life is still with her Her dad does not open up about his past, her mother does not magically change into a caring person, and she still spends most of her time at the library An Uncommon Education is a wonderful coming of age story It shows a young woman who is forced to see herself for who she really is, and to stop letting others define her Be that her father, her peers, or the mentors in her life The turning point in her life is her inclusion into Wellesley s oldest college group the Shakes A college club but definitely not a sorority dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare She is immediately pressed into playing Laertes in Hamlet Much like her, Laertes is a child who acts against his own interests when he will not look at the whole picture, the truth of the situation He continues down the path created by his father and King Claudius until ultimately all is lost Fortunately Naomi springs to life from this role, finally making true friends, making an ever so small connection with her father, and finally experiencing life on its own terms An Uncommon Education is a fantastic look at growing up, a child breaking free of their own limitations and finding happiness in their situation Befriending her problems and turning them into opportunities.

# An Uncommon Education

A NOVEL

"A moving and bitter-sweet coming-of-age story about  
love, loss, friendship, ambition, and the power of memory."  
—J. COURTNEY SULLIVAN, *New York Times*  
bestselling author of *Meine* and *Commencement*

Elizabeth  
Percer

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Things I loathed about this book 1 The plot ranges from nonexistent to stupid When I

finished the book, my only reaction was what exactly was the point of that? 2 On almost every page I wanted to yell no one would ever do that and/or no one would ever talk like that ESPECIALLY a college student. Suspension of disbelief not achieved. 3 The writing is cringeworthy, like when an author thinks she's saying something REALLY insightful, so it's kind of sneaky, and you're like, oh, maybe this is good writing, but then 30 seconds later you're like, most of these words are clichés and the rest of them don't mean anything. 4 The characters are so poorly drawn that their motivations are impossible to understand because they are unrecognizable as actual human beings. I could go on but I'll save it for book club. I wish I could get back the week of my life that I spent reading this. When TLC Book Tours gives me a good adult lit fic book, they give me a good one. Maybe it's because I don't read much in the genre, but I so appreciated and needed the story that Percer presented in these pages. It wasn't too pretentious despite the high-end college setting, the very intelligent heroine who narrates starting at a young age feeling like a friend rather than an alien. Thinking of this book makes me think of good words: quiet, peaceful, meaningful, and subtle. It's the kind of story that I could not put down because it was so full of life, so full of little observations that you would not appreciate if you were looking for something that was masquerading as something serious, complex. An Uncommon Education is complex because it takes life's simplicity and meshes it well with the issues, the troubles. There's just enough here to really and truly savor the story. {READ EBOOK} [An Uncommon Education](#) - For Fans Of Prep, Dead Poets Society, And Special Topics In Calamity Physics Comes An Elegant And Remarkably Insightful Coming Of Age Debut, In Which A Young Woman's Serendipitous Discovery Of Her College's Underground Shakespeare Society Leads To An Unforgettable Series Of Transformations When Naomi Finds Herself Among The Shakes At Wellesley, She Finally Lets Herself Embrace The Passionate Inner Self She's Always Kept Locked Away But When A Sudden Scandal Unfolds, She Will Be Forced To Learn The Limits Of The Relationships That Have Sustained Her An Intimate And Enthralling Narrative, Elizabeth Percer's Debut Novel An Uncommon Education Marks The Emergence Of A Stunning New Literary Talent Boy, was this a hard book to get through? I decided at about 40% I had to power through and finish it. I couldn't stand the narrator Naomi. Her child observations were laughable. Even though she was supposed to be some kind of genius, no kid would ever have the thoughts she had. Further, from child to young adult to adult she changed very little. She was so shy it seemed she didn't even talk to her friends yet she was in plays. Her growth as a character was so stagnic I felt the need to try and dig deeper but at the end of the day, there was not much there. The few good characters that made their way through the book were left half-developed and ultimately in the end, I felt, abandoned completely. Way too much reflection and very little plot.

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