

## Beta reading report by [Hayley J Dunlop](#)

**Novel title:**

**Author name:**

**Date of report:**

**Summary:**

*I finished this in a marathon reading session last night. I literally couldn't put it down and found myself looking forward to reading it over the last few days, which underscores the quality of your writing and the story you've told. You should be incredibly proud of what you've achieved with this book and I can't wait to see what happens with it next.*

**In detail:**

### First three chapters

There was never not the urge to keep reading the opening chapters. That said, I do wonder if there's a way we could enter the novel in a more surprising, hooky and impactful way. One idea I had was to xxxx

I would LOVE to be more in xxx's head in this scene at the very start of the novel, so that we're right alongside him as we see his turmoil and trepidation...and his guilt (which we only find out more about later).

The characterisation of xxx got stronger and stronger as the story went on, and I'd love to see more hints of this at the very start, so we have no choice but to keep reading to find out what's happened to them to make them act like this.

I think the conversation between xxx and xxx about xxx could do with being edited down as there's a lot of 'telling not showing' going on. As it stands there's a lot of information about this to take in within the very first chapter, which you could intersperse throughout the novel in smaller, more digestible chunks.

### Plot

The tension between xxx and xxx was great, but I feel the plot could be tightened in a way that keeps them apart from each other for longer. Perhaps you could consider delaying the xxxx scene and add in more dramatic elements and crossed wires before that point? Also see my comments re the character of xxx as a way to potentially achieve this.

### Characterisation of principal cast

As mentioned above, I connected more and more with xxx as the story progressed, and think we could do with being in his head a little more towards the start.

I wasn't clear on how xxx ended up living here and where her wider family was from originally. I would've loved to have known more about her back story, and why xxx seems to be filling the void where her family should be. I only remember one or two instances where she mentioned her childhood.

### Characterisation of supporting cast

No issues keeping track of who all the characters were.

xxx and xxx were ace - so different yet so alike. I really loved the dynamic between them.

Obviously we're not meant to like xxx but I was glad of the drama when he returned. I think you could explore his return a little more - why did he \*really\* leave? What does he hope to achieve by returning? Why does he choose to return now? And would it be more powerful if he actually returned sooner? I think a few small tweaks could add real depth to his character. As readers we're never going to like him, but it would be good for us to \*understand\* him a bit more. Right now he feels quite two-dimensional as an antagonist.

### Surprises

I really wasn't expecting xxx. It was incredibly impactful, as was xxx.

The xxx scene was so, so touching. As was the little sensory touches that you wove through this beautiful chapter. That scene was probably my favourite part of the book - such tenderness and love.

The xxx also surprised me A LOT!!!

### Dialogue

It was so readable and genuine. But I'd advise adding in a little more interiority when the characters are chatting to each other so we can get into their heads a bit more, and let us as readers into the subtext of each scene, rather than just witnessing their conversation.

I'd add in a few more 'she said' and 'he replied' etc as well, just to make sure it's always clear who's saying what.

### Emotive reactions

I didn't cry but I felt very moved by the xxx chapter and the xxx scene towards the end.

I laughed a lot.

### Location and setting

I wasn't hugely clear where the story takes place. I could've done with a few more details about it and why she's decided to make it her home.

It would also be good to understand what time of year the story takes place, perhaps with some subtle weather cues, just to make the setting feel all that more real.

### Thematic threads

Grief: I thought this thread was beautiful. The different kinds of grief that all the characters are experiencing was handled really well.

Intimacy: I thought the way you explored all the different types of intimacy between xxx and xxx was fantastic. Never have I read something which didn't shy away from xxx and showed the reader xxx. I honestly think that, for this genre, this is groundbreaking and sets it apart from its competitors in the same literary space.

You mentioned to me that you were wondering whether you should make more of the fact that xxx. You touch on this already, which I liked. But personally I felt like it might be a bit overkill if you took this any further as it might take away from some of your more emotive themes mentioned above.

### Ending

Loved the ending. It ended exactly how I was hoping and everything was tied together really nicely.

Personally, I'm not a fan of epilogues but I know for this genre they are common and loved by readers. I thought yours were lovely and satisfying, but I felt that they could've been condensed / merged.