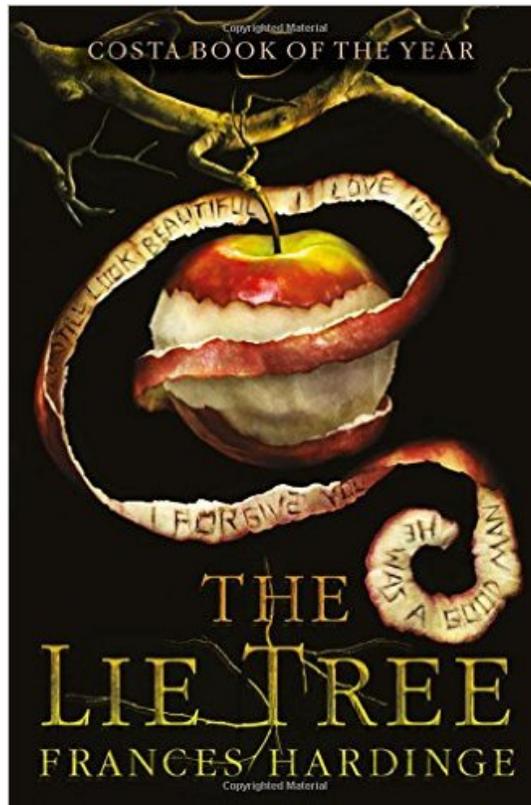


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## Review of *The Lie Tree* By Frances Hardinge

Adult/ Educator Reviewer: T. Hunter Strickland  
The University of Georgia, Athens, GA  
Student Review: Brantley Power, 12<sup>th</sup> Grade



Hardinge, F. (2016). *The lie tree*. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams.

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**Adult Review: T. Hunter Strickland**

**T**he *Lie Tree* by Frances Hardinge was surprisingly good. Set on a small island off the coast of Victorian England, the Sunderly family follows Reverend Erasmus Sunderly, the protagonist's father, to an archeological dig that he has been invited to be a part of. Faith, his daughter and the protagonist of the book, is stuck in her training to be a proper lady by her mother, Myrtle, while her true gifts and desire have her wanting to pursue science and archaeology like her father. In a world where there are not female scientists, Faith meets resistance to this desire everywhere she turns.

When her father mysteriously dies and Faith is the only one who suspects murder, it is up to her to follow the clues and discover who the murderer is. The clues found in her father's journal lead her to a mysterious plant that her father brought back from the Orient. The tree has special powers as well that her father was trying to unlock. When the tree is told a lie and that lie is spread further in the community, the tree bears a fruit that gives whoever consumes it in the knowledge of a powerful secret. Faith has to decide if this tree can be used to find her father's murderer, or if it is too dangerous itself.

This book well exceeded my expectations. The writing is well done, and the story keeps readers guessing the whole way through. I would see great value in pairing the reading of this book with the reading of canonical texts during a Victorian unit. Students that are interested in mysteries, fantasy, and strong female protagonists would enjoy *The Lie Tree*.

**Student Review: Brantley Power**

**T**he *Lie Tree* by Frances Hardinge is a truly fascinating book. The Sunderly family, the main characters, are introduced in the beginning of the book. The family consists of Erasmus, Myrtle, Faith and Howard.

Erasmus Sunderly is the mysterious father of the family who has secrets and a tainted reputation. He is an esteemed archaeologist that many look up to. Myrtle, the mother, is a very vain character that ultimately has a loving heart. Faith, the main character, is not the typical fourteen-year-old girl of the time period. She is inquisitive, independent and very clever when most girls of the time were worried more about looking for a husband. Howard, the youngest child, is the only surviving boy of the family who the family hopes will inherit Erasmus' intelligence.

The novel begins with the family traveling to Vane, where they will be moving. They formerly lived in England, but were forced to move due to Erasmus' reputation. His reputation was questioned when one of the fossils he "discovered" was tampered with. Faith, however did not know this until she was given the opportunity to sneak through Erasmus' personal papers. Upon doing so, she learned of her father's allegations and decided it was her duty to protect him and help him in any way possible.

To the Sunderly family's knowledge, no one on Vane knew of Erasmus' lack of respect. They get to the island, unpack and go to the dig site, where Erasmus is to help discover fossils. When the family arrives, Erasmus is offered a ride down on a contraption to see deep into the caves, however, at the last moment Faith and Howard were lowered. A chain snaps and the children almost plummet to their deaths when they are barely saved by the gentlemen standing by. This was thought of an accident but as the plot thickens, the motives will be uncovered.

Erasmus continues to act bizarre and sneaks off rather often to check on a secret specimen. Faith

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notices this and one day decides to find out the cause of her father's strange behavior. She examines the plant and has no suspicions about it until one night, she walks into her father's library and he is acting strange, drugged by Opium. Erasmus was in a trance like state and Faith was very concerned for him. Later that night, Faith went with her father by boat to move the plant and eventually retired to her room, although her father was on edge and carrying a pistol. The next morning Erasmus is found dead, which looked to be by suicide. Faith knew her father would never commit such an act and decided to find who murdered her father.

Painful weeks went by which included the Sunderly family being shunned by many due to the thought of suicide. In these weeks, Faith found her father's papers and read them. Her reading uncovered the truth of the plant, the change in her father's reputation, and what she needed to do to find the truth. The strange specimen, Faith uncovered, was called the Lie Tree. To this tree, one must whisper lies that are believed by many. As the lie grows, a fruit on the tree grows, which uncovers a truth no one knows. Faith decided to feed lies to the tree and find out what truly happened to her father. Faith was the perfect example of a strong female, fighting

to succeed in a man's world and definitely proved girls rule!

I personally loved *The Lie Tree*. The novel was a perfect mixture of fantasy and action, making it a great read for almost anyone. It was really great for me to see a strong female main character who did NOT back down in a world where it is easy just to be silent. Faith is strong, clever, eager to learn, and extremely witty. I loved Hardinge's writing style because she wrote properly and eloquently; however, it was still simple enough it did not hurt my brain to read it. The content was also very interesting and left no room to even try to imagine what the ending could be. I think *The Lie Tree* is a fascinating novel and would be loved by many. I suggest young adults and up read the novel because there is death and deceit, which is more mature content. It is great for young people and adults because everyone can find a way to relate to the novel.