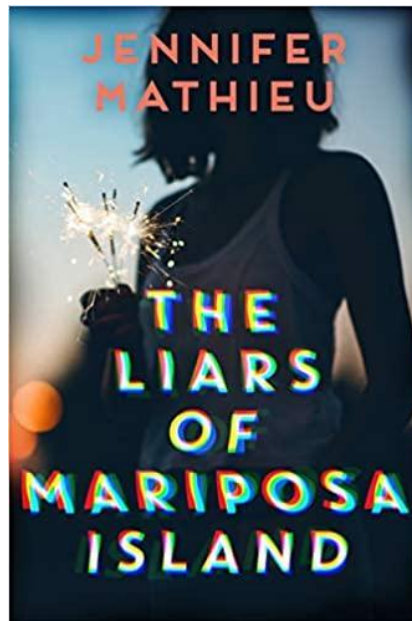


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Review of *The Liars of Mariposa Island* Written by Jennifer Mathieu

Educator Reviewer: Rhonda Pawlik
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Mathieu, J. (2019). *The liars of Mariposa Island*. Roaring Book Press.

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Adult Review: Rhonda Pawlik

The story begins in the perspective of Elena Finney, a 16 year-old living with her mom and brother on Mariposa Island, Texas. The setting is the summer of 1986 and Elena has to sneak around just to go out with friends. Elena opens up about how her brother Joaquin gets into explosive arguments with Mami (the name they call their mother). Elena says "Better to ignore her, hide from her. Agree with her even if you don't." As she knows how to survive her Mami. The reader can infer some type of abuse is happening and Mami must be abusing alcohol. Elena discusses a babysitting job she has with the Callahans every summer and her brother doesn't like it. Elena uses this babysitting job to sneak out with a boy she meets at the beach and to visit her friends. Elena feels trapped at home and must lie just to be able to get out of the house like a normal teenager should do.

The next section of the book takes you back to a perfect life of Caridad in Miramar, Havana Cuba during 1957 as a teenager.

You learn that Mami was Caridad and throughout the book you realize that Mami lives in the past and can't appreciate the present. You also learn more about Joaquin, the brother of Elena that just graduated from high school with his dream to leave Mariposa Island for California to find his dad. He meets a girl which keeps him on Mariposa Island a little longer than what he wants.

Throughout the book you realize how abusive Mami is to her children and accept Elena and Joaquin's lies just to survive each day. The book stays true to the experiences of teenagers in 1986 which is very similar to today.

The reader will get easily attached to Elena and Joaquin and want them to escape the abuse of Mami. The reader only knows Mami as a young teenager and it is hard to accept her due to how she treats her children. The plot has many twists and turns which keeps your interest. I feel the book is appropriate for 15 years of age or older as alcoholism, abuse, drugs and sexual content are issues throughout the book. I highly recommend the book as the characters are well developed; the twists and turns keep your interest and the character development entices the reader to feel a part of the story.

I feel this book is important for an increased awareness of what some children go through and children who are reading may be experiencing similar abuse and realize that it isn't right. This book can spark a lot of conversation and would be a perfect book for a book club to discuss.