

Title: *The Lake House*
Author: Sarah Beth Durst
Genre: Mystery

Reviewer Name and Grade: Allie H., 10th grade

Date Reviewed: July 21, 2024

The Lake House by Sarah Beth Durst is a mysterious novel that follows the story of a girl named Claire, whose parents send her to a summer camp at a remote lake house in the forest. Claire worries about *everything*. In every situation, she always assumes the worst will happen, and does her best to prepare for it. Her mind has always been prone to spiraling into negative, anxious attacks that might even make her faint, and despite her parents' encouragement to get outside and make new friends, she has always felt more comfortable in her room, alone, away from the judgment of others. However, there is no way for her to prepare for what happens when she reaches the camp. When she and two other girls, Mariana and Reyva, arrive a day late, they discover the lake house burned to the ground. There is no one else at the camp, but that's not all. Soon after arriving, they find a dead body with gunshot wounds in the woods. There must be a killer on the loose, and it's possible that the girls will be the next victims if they're not careful. They have to find escape or rescue from the wilderness, but simultaneously have to hide from the killer. It all may sound impossible, but everyone always seems to underestimate teenage girls. They all have different skills, with Claire's ability to plan for the worst, Reyva's training in martial arts, and Mariana's skill with cars and machines, as well as her ability to bring the three of them together. With resources from nature, their luggage they brought, and the burned-down lake house, they might just manage to make it out alive. However, not everything is as it seems, and some people's motives might not truly be how they appear.

Did the plot keep you interested?

Yes, the plot was quite interesting, with different conflicts that the characters had to face simultaneously, as well as some twists.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was just right. There were exciting, fast paced scenes that were balanced well with slower, calmer ones.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book is appropriate for grades 7-10. It is not a particularly challenging read, and there is minimal explicit content.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to someone who likes mystery or adventure. If you enjoyed reading any books about people surviving in the wilderness, you might like this, too.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

I think it would be helpful for teens to know that this book is not part of a series. If you are looking for a standalone novel, then this might be a great choice, but if you are looking for a book with a sequel or sequels, then you may want to consider something else.

3 stars: It was okay, I had hoped for better.

This book had an interesting plot for the most part. There were several layers to the conflict, and it kept me interested. However, I found the dialogue to be slightly unrealistic, and I didn't find the main character to be particularly likable. However, it was not a very bad book overall.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Amanda T., 8th Grade

Date Reviewed: September 16, 2024

“The Lake House” by Sarah Beth Durst is a suspenseful young adult novel centered around three teenage girls who are trapped in a remote and eerie location. The story begins when Claire, the main protagonist, arrives at an isolated lake house retreat for girls with anxiety. Claire is shy, cautious, and haunted by her past, which includes a traumatic event that still affects her deeply. Her parents send her to the retreat in hopes that she’ll heal. The setting, a secluded lake house surrounded by woods. Creates an unsettling atmosphere that foreshadows the danger ahead. The other main characters are Reyva and Jackie, two girls with their own struggles. Reyva is bold and confident, using her strength and determination to cover up her vulnerabilities, while Jackie is more laid-back and sarcastic, using humor as a defense mechanism. The three girls meet at the lake house expecting a therapeutic retreat, but things quickly take a dark turn. Strange occurrences begin shortly after they arrive, and they soon realize they are completely cut off from the outside world. The staff has disappeared, and sinister forces seem to be stalking them. The isolation heightens their fear, and the story shifts from a mental health retreat to a survival thriller. The girls must rely on their wits, as they are being hunted by a mysterious, malevolent presence that lurks around the lake. Tensions rise as they work together to figure out how to escape, and their relationships deepen as they share their personal struggles and fears. Key events include the growing realization that they are trapped, the discovery of clues about past disappearances at the lake house, and their efforts to outsmart the unknown enemy. The girls’ fight for survival tests their resilience and their ability to trust one another. In the end, the novel explores themes of fear, trauma, and the power of friendship, as the girls confront not only external threats but also the inner demons that brought them to the lake house in the first place.

Did the plot keep you interested? Yes, the suspenseful plot kept me engaged with its mix of mystery, survival, and psychological tension as the girls tried to escape the lake house.

Was the pace of the book too slow, too fast, or just right? The pace was just right, balancing tense moments of action with quieter, introspective scenes that deepened the characters’ development.

What grade level is this book appropriate for? This book is suitable for grades 8-12, as it tackles themes of trauma, anxiety, and survival in a way that resonates with teens.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to? I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy suspenseful thrillers with strong character development and psychological depth, especially those interested in survival stories.

Other helpful information for teens Teens should know that *The Lake House* deals with mental health issues like anxiety and trauma, but it does so in a way that emphasizes resilience and the importance of friendship.

5 stars: I’m really glad I read this book; it was awesome! The suspenseful and eerie atmosphere of the remote lake house kept me engaged, and the character dynamics added emotional depth to the survival plot. Claire, Reyva, and Jackie’s personalities were well-developed, and their growth throughout the novel was compelling. However, some parts of the mystery felt a little predictable, and the supernatural elements could have been explored more. Overall, the balance of psychological tension and friendship made it an enjoyable read.