

*Twilight* has been polarizing ever since it became big—is it okay to have a stalkery guy in an idealized relationship, or should we let teens enjoy fluffy romance? Vampires sparkling: sexy or the worst interpretation of vampire lore ever? And, most importantly: Team Edward or Team Jacob?

It's inevitable that re-reading *Twilight* is a reminder of how outdated some of the tropes are, and Deborah Stevenson's original *Bulletin* review is right to insist on the book's lack of action and slow pace in its high page count. This novel is no work of literary mettle, but it's important to consider the cultural milieu and target audience: to a teenage girl, getting to know the workings of Forks was immersive, an escape from real life teenage burdens; many of Bella's impulsive, highly criticized actions are just what a teenage girl would do if faced with a vampire lover; and Edward's insistent presence was a comfort in a culture where it was uncritically cool for teenage boys to be aloof and unreachable.

Additionally, *Twilight* invoked an uncommonly strong fandom culture that pushed people to the extremes of parody and fanfiction that became published works (looking at you, *50 Shades*), and undoubtedly kick-started a number of writing careers. Conversations about idealizing healthy relationships created a push for authors to stray from depicting toxic relationships as an end-all in their stories, and further discourse about letting teenage girls enjoy fluffy stories was part of the newest wave of feminism wherein we acknowledged that society hates when teenage girls are enthusiastic about anything. To new readers, *Twilight* is not all that great. But to readers who passed the series around the back of middle school classrooms like illicit porn, *Twilight* is the novel to which all other YA romance will be compared.

- Natalie Berglind, Reviewer

