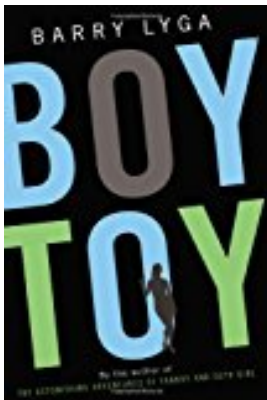


# [PDF] Boy Toy

Barry Lyga - pdf download free book

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**Books Details:**

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Author: Barry Lyga  
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Language:  
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**Description:**

**From Publishers Weekly Starred Review.** When Josh was a 12-year-old seventh grader, he was sexually abused by his history teacher, the young, beautiful (and married) Eve, who manipulated him into believing they were in love. Carefully crafting a narrative structure, Lyga flashes between that traumatic time and the present, when Josh, now a senior (at the school where *The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy and Goth Girl* took place), learns that Eve is being paroled. The author handles heavy material with honesty and sensitivity, capturing both the young Josh's excitement and his realization that his pleasure brought its own sort of guilt. Years later, he still struggles: he flies into rages (he punches a baseball coach in an opening scene), and he experiences flickers, brief moments which feel like actual immersions in the past. Josh also has trouble pursuing

Rachel, who seems like a perfect match, because he cannot trust his physical instincts; he is, as his psychologist puts it, afraid to do anything at all because it might be the wrong thing. Details like Josh's obsession with calculating baseball statistics round out his character; the statistics speak to his intelligence and, more tellingly, to his attempts to control his world. Even his inevitable face-off with Eve proves a revelation. Readers may find the ending too neat, given the extent of Josh's problems, but in their richness and credibility the cast—Eve included—surpasses that of the much-admired *Fanboy*. Ages 16-up. (Sept.)

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**From** Whenever a book for young adults moves the bar sexually, it demands a closer look. Rainbow Party (2005), a treatise on oral sex by Paul Ruditis, does that in a crude, sensationalistic way. Brock Cole's *The Facts Speak for Themselves* (1997) is a finely crafted novel about a girl whose affair with an adult suits her purposes until a murder intervenes. Now comes Barry Lyga's novel, also about an affair, but here the boy is 12, and the woman is his teacher. The story is told by 18-year-old Josh Mendel. A fine mathematician, an equally able baseball player, he suffers from flashbacks he calls flickers. Readers are shocked into the story during the midst of one of his early flickers. He's at his friend Rachel's house, and the kids are in a closet, kissing. Then something happens, something ugly, though readers are not sure quite what. Move forward five years. Josh has not spoken to Rachel since, but now that graduation is drawing near, she reaches out to him. He's tempted but is held back by the memory of his relationship with his history teacher, Eve Sherman. Josh explains to the reader, sometimes in shocking detail, just what transpired. Under the guise of needing Josh to take some tests for a graduate-school project, lovely Eve begins bringing the boy to her apartment. Eventually, the test taking tapers off, and the kissing begins. Then things go further, much further. It is only after the incident in the closet, where it is eventually revealed that Josh ripped off Rachel's panties and started to do things Eve taught him, that the truth of the student-teacher sexual relationship becomes public. Once again, the story fast-forwards, and Josh, in his first-person narrative, chronicles his evolving relationship with Rachel and his tribulations on the baseball diamond as he tries to take back control of his life. When he is unable to perform sexually with Rachel after the prom, he breaks down and recounts the details of Eve's trial: how he refused to testify against her, how he believed he was in love with her and she with him. Then, in the final pages, Josh confronts Eve, who is now out of prison. Facing her, as well as the anger, fear, and confusion their relationship stirs in him, finally allows him to be free. A story about a pretty teacher seducing a boy has a "ripped from the headlines" quality about it. Perhaps the most famous real-life case is that of Mary Kay Letourneau and her 13-year-old boyfriend (whom she later married), but there have been others. The 2006 movie *Notes on a Scandal* brought a similar scenerio to the big screen. Nor is this the first YA book to deal with student-teacher relationships. Melvin Burgess' raunchy *Doing It* (1996), which discusses sex in a dizzying array of contexts, comes to mind, but in that book, the boy is an older teen and the teacher 20. Eve Sherman is twice the age of Josh, and while the story accurately chronicles the way children are often groomed by their predators for sexual activities, the descriptions of what goes on between the two of them are sometimes so graphic that they border on soft porn: "She dropped to her knees and unbuckled my belt, then skinned down my pants, and underpants. I was ready for her already, and she dived down, darting her head like a starving bird. . . . She stopped. "Watch me," she groaned. "Watch.' With the sexuality of a boy at the core of the story, the writing supporting it should be meticulous; otherwise, the author's exploration of a risky subject can easily be reduced to a gimmick. Brock Cole got it right in *The Facts Speak for Themselves*, where he so compellingly transcribes young Linda's unemotional voice as she describes everyday details and shocking events in equal measure. Lyga, author of the popular *Fan Boy* and *Goth Girl* (set in the same high school as *Boy Toy*), fashions a heavier burden for himself: he tries to tie so many plotlines together, the story staggers under the weight of the storytelling. The baseball subplot, complete with Josh's antagonistic relationship with his coach, sometimes seems like it belongs in another book. Another story thread about Josh's parents'

devolving relationship is a distraction. Much more successful is the character development throughout. As in his previous book, Lyga's cast feels very real, and he knows how to play the characters against each other. Josh's interactions with Rachel and Eve dovetail neatly, and Lyga astutely laces Josh's feelings about his mother into that configuration. The book ends with a revelation that is surprising, if not quite believable. What will seem believable for readers is Josh's emotional journey. This is someone who has experienced sex and has experienced love, confused the two, and now, thanks to Rachel, knows the difference. Teens, who think they know so much about sexuality, may see the subject in a new way here. And if they garner the same understanding Josh does, Lyga's vivid use of sex scenes just may be worth it. Cooper, Ilene

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