

## My Latest Grievance (Sound Library) by MIA Barron,Elinor Lipman



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**Author:** MIA Barron,Elinor Lipman

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## Reviews of the My Latest Grievance (Sound Library) by MIA Barron,Elinor Lipman

### 1. Justie

I liked this book. Yes, some of the characters are a little broadly drawn, but the patter of the narrator (a 16-year-old girl who lives with her parents in a college girls' dormitory) is delightful. Frederica, whose

parents are professors and "houseparents" at a small girls' college in Boston, is adept at sizing up the adults (and young adults) who surround her. She lovingly puts her parents down in a way that rings true for a precocious teen who's grown up around teen and 20-something females. Her parents are the type of progressive, post-hippy, educated, social scientist parents in the 70s who want to raise their child as an equal. Sometimes it backfires. I enjoyed this book so much more than "The View from Penthouse B" by the same author. It's a quick, light read and makes me want to read more of Elinor Lipman.

## 2. Wetiwavas

This was the first book of Lipman's that I read, and I bought it based on the reviews that I have read here. While everyone else seems to be big fans of her work, after reading this book I am left wondering what all the hype is about.

This book was about as satisfying as a glass of tap water. Far from being "precocious" and "witty," the narrator Frederica comes off like a garden variety brat. What exists of a plot is weak and uninteresting, and we are left to meander along with the dry, dry characters hoping for something good to happen. I'll save you the \$11.16: Nothing happens!

I guess Lipman is writing what she knows about since according to her author's blurb she has experience working for a university (the setting of this novel) and came of age during the same time as our little Frederica, but come on lady, if this is the best story you have inside you, I feel bad.

Another reviewer likened reading this to eating candy. I liken it to chewing a piece of gum that lost its flavor really quickly. Ptoeey.

## 3. Humin

I've read all of Lipman's novels--all are good and some are great. This one is exceptional--perhaps my favorite, although there will always be a

special place in my heart for *Then She Found Me*.

The protagonist, Frederica, is Eloise at the College--not University, because the school where her intelligent, progressive professor parents teach is definitely small and not particularly selective. Her parents belong to a finer educational sphere, but they toil without complaint, not just as educators but as union reps.

Why are they not at a better school? Fate and the fact that Frederica's father is still paying beaucoup alimony to his ex-wife and cousin. When Frederica discovers the existence of this former wife in an unexpected way, she is fascinated by her, and their ever-morphing relationship is at the heart of this fine novel.

Lipman treads some of the themes she has explored in the past--societal prejudices against cultural Judaism, campus life, marital infidelities, and everyday narcissism. Yet her characters shine through with their own unique light; I was particularly admiring of Frederica's parents and I think the author is, as well. Occasionally, Frederica's arch dialogue is just a bit too precociously clever, but her heart and mind are grounded in healthy and--dare I say it--traditional values.

If you have enjoyed Lipman's work in the past, I suspect you won't grieve over the cost of *My Latest Grievance*, but consider it money and time well spent.

#### 4. Wat!?

Elinor Lipman's novels are a delight to read, and I eagerly await the publication of each of her books. She is a master of comic prose, witty dialogue, and improbable plots that make the reader squirm with discomfort, as her characters teeter on the brink and often fall into the precipice of socially unacceptable behavior. I find myself thinking, "Oh no, she's not going to go there", and then I gleefully wonder how is she going to do it. One thing is certain: her plots are never predictable. "*My Latest Grievance*" is narrated by precocious 17 year old Fredericka Hatch who is the very observant only child of David and Aviva Hatch. They are socially liberal, politically correct parents who teach at a small eastern women's college where they live as houseparents in a dormitory. David is also the faculty union president and handles co-workers' grievances against management. Their dormitory apartment is the only home that Fredericka

has ever known, and she has been treated since infancy as a college mascot. Fredericka knows everyone and everything that is going on. She is smug in her belief that her parents share everything with her. Then, one day she receives a pearl necklace from Laura Lee French and learns that Laura Lee was her father's first wife. Although Laura Lee's initial motivation is unclear, she insinuates herself into their lives by applying for and getting a job as housemother in a neighboring dormitory. Laura Lee is embarrassingly flamboyant, self-involved, histrionic, and above all a sexy manhunter who sets her sights on the college president. To put it mildly, Laura Lee is the antithesis of David and Aviva French, and her indiscretions snowball into a veritable avalanche of repercussions. Snappy dialogue and Fredericka's sardonic observations make this a quick and entertaining read. However, it's not quite as satisfying as Lipman's earlier works: "Then She Found Me", "Isabel's Bed" or "The Inn at Lake Devine". The ending of "My Latest Grievance" is not romantic but equitable.

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