After The Fall

**Overview**

Born November 8th 1982 to a literary family, Lauren Oliver (Laura Suzanne Schechter) was encouraged to live expressively and imaginatively from a young age by creating her own stories, painting, and performing. With an upbringing in surroundings such as these, coupled with two parents both knowledgeable in literature and a house full of books, it seems as though Oliver had received from a young age the ideal push towards her career as a writer. Oliver, with a passion for reading went on to study Literature and Philosophy at the University of Chicago, subsequently returning to her home city of New York to attend a creative writing course at NYU. Her Father, aside from being a professor, is himself a published writer of true crime and has written essays on popular culture. Although this may have been a helpful and influential factor towards her career, it is by no means indicative of a lack of personal identity as a writer.

Perhaps to consolidate her individuality, she chose to publish her work under the name Lauren Oliver instead of her birth name, publishing books that are mainly targeted towards young adults and children, all of which are highly imaginative and incorporate fantastical features. Having worked for Penguin Books in the young adult’s division, where she would have gained valuable insight into what was selected and declined for publication, Oliver left to focus on writing her first book *Before I Fall.*

**Before I Fall**

Starting off her career with *Before I Fall* (2010)to positive reviews, Oliver demonstrates her considerable talent, insight and ability to catch the attention of young readers, as she delves into the seemingly perfect world of popular girl Samantha Kingston after her death in a car accident. *Before I Fall*, written in first person from the perspective of Samantha, incorporates Oliver’s distinct tone and style of blending fantasy and reality as we join Samantha through the experience of reliving the day of her death seven times, able to change how she lives it due to the process of discovering what is truly valuable to her. We find that her popular and snobby friends led by the cruel Lindsay are not really the ones she appreciates and as the book progresses, the minor and ostracised character of Juliet who originally commits suicide as a result of being bullied by Sam and Lindsay and their friends, is respected more by Sam as the book progresses. Sam’s eventual release from reliving her last day is due to her sacrifice of herself to save Juliet.

Through her many references to, and well informed understanding of popular culture and the mind-set of the audience with whom she successfully connects, Oliver provides some sort of moral guidance to young adults who are themselves experiencing the sort of superficial happiness Sam experienced through what teenagers see as important. In the years of 2009-10, teenage suicide in the USA due to bullying became a focus of media attention, and Oliver – perhaps aided by her Father’s in depth knowledge of popular culture - shows her relevance here, as this is a continuous problem. She also uses this opportunity to include theories that she likely encountered in her studies of Philosophy, such as the Butterfly Effect and Chaos Theory, encouraging her readers to understand that their actions affect others, and life is meant to be approached fully and individually. *Before I Fall*, purportedly partly written by Oliver on her blackberry, is currently part of plans to potentially adapt into a film.

**Delirium Trilogy**

Oliver’s second book *Delirium* (2011), the first in her Delirium trilogy, has been translated into over 30 languages and has achieved the status of international bestseller. Building on the high standard set by *Before I Fall*, *Delirium* was rated the best book of the year by numerous literary reviews, and has been included in NPR’s list of 100 Best Ever Teen Novels. Set in a dystopian alternate USA where love has been declared a dangerous disease, necessary to be treated by what is called the ‘cure’, the book’s protagonist, Lena, finds herself falling in love with Alex as the date of her treatment comes ever closer. The second book in the series *Pandemonium* (2012) follows Lena as she searches for ‘The Resistance’, and continues on with them, and having escaped the cure travels through the wilderness of America to complete their self-appointed mission of freeing everyone from the ‘cure’. *Requiem* (2013), the last instalment of the trilogy, concludes the story by entwining the two previously separate stories of Lena and Hana.

The trilogy was the root of 3 novellas spanning the period of the story but from the perspectives of 3 different characters. Fox had announced plans in 2013 to adapt this trilogy for a TV series, but later declined to adopt the pilot show.

**Panic**

Oliver’s recent release *Panic* (2014) seems to be one step further from the ideas and blend of fantasy and reality that formed the basis for *Before I Fall,* following the same direction towards adventure fiction that the Delirium trilogy first moved in. At first glance it appears to share some similarities with the Hunger Games trilogy that proved so popular, but it can also be seen as unabashed study at small town desperation, and the lengths that teenagers will go to to seek approval and acceptance. Despite any differences, Oliver’s talent for developing fully realised and believable characters remains; and she still explores uncomfortable themes, presenting them directly to her audience who share many feelings and drives that the characters in Oliver’s parallel fictions do.

**After That All**

Oliver has already demonstrated her relevance as a young adult writer throughout her career, and for a person who is a self-professed lover of cosiness and slippers, she shows a willingness to approach difficult subjects that perhaps other writers of her genre shy away from, whilst approaching them in a unique style. After having already had interest from film production companies to adapt her work for the screen, it does not seem long before her work, which has held the attention of young adult readers since her first publication, will be televised and further popularised. Her work has shown her acuteness to contemporary movements and attitudes of her audience, and that she is capable of being a trustworthy and moral voice for young adults to look towards.