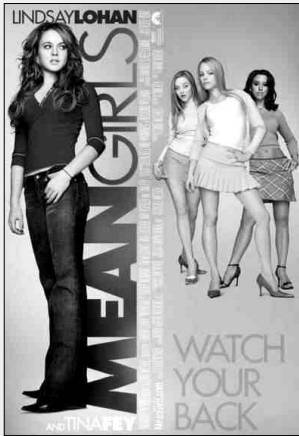


The clique – life for girls at the top gets more like a DH



Rosaline Wiseman's *Queen Bees and Wannabees*, a non-fiction account of how female American high school cliques operate – 'Girl World' – has spurred a book series and a film. *Mean Girls* (2004), starring Lindsay Lohan, was based on Wiseman's research. While adults find it funny, young girls watch *Mean Girls* like it's a reality TV show, being far too close for comfort – especially the drop-dead gorgeous and ostensibly sweet character (who is really supremely manipulative, two-faced, vindictive, arrogant, and all-round nasty).

The titles of the 'Clique' series of books by Lisi Harrison say it all: *Best Friends for Never*, *Revenge of the Wannabes*, *The Invasion of the Boy Snatchers*, *The Pretty Committee Strikes Back*, *Dial L For Loser*, *It's Not Easy Being Mean*, and *Sealed with a Diss*.

Harrison's website is captioned 'the only thing harder than getting in is staying in'. Such is the world of the top clique, run by 'the pretty committee' of four stunners, one of whom, Massie Block, is 'queen bee'.

The plot summaries for *Best Friends for Never* and (the first in the series), *Clique*, are au fait with adolescent female social psychology:

To keep her spot at the top, Massie throws a boy/girl Halloween party. But she's not sure what's scarier – that her parents are making her invite the entire grade or that they are forcing her to co-host with Claire, who by the way, accidentally steals Cam Fisher, Massie's ah-dorable crush. But all of that will seem minor once Massie realizes Alicia has stabbed her in the back and humiliated her in front of the entire school.

Claire Lyons, the new girl from Orlando, Florida has the nerve to show up at OCD wearing Keds and two-year old GAP overalls. She is clearly not Pretty Committee material and Massie, Alicia, Dylan and Kristen have no problem letting everyone know it. Claire's future looks worse than Prada knockoff. But with a little luck and a lot of scheming, she might just stand a chance.

Mean Girls has a convoluted plot of scheming and deception, and friendlessness turned to popularity and back again. The top clique contains the 'queen bee' of the whole school, appropriately named Regina. She's hated by one girl in particular for spreading rumours about her sexuality – a classic form of female 'relational aggression'.

The 'clique' novel *Sealed with a Diss* has an ultimate plotline in the alpha female having a 'secret weapon' that 'shows them exactly how boys' brains work'.