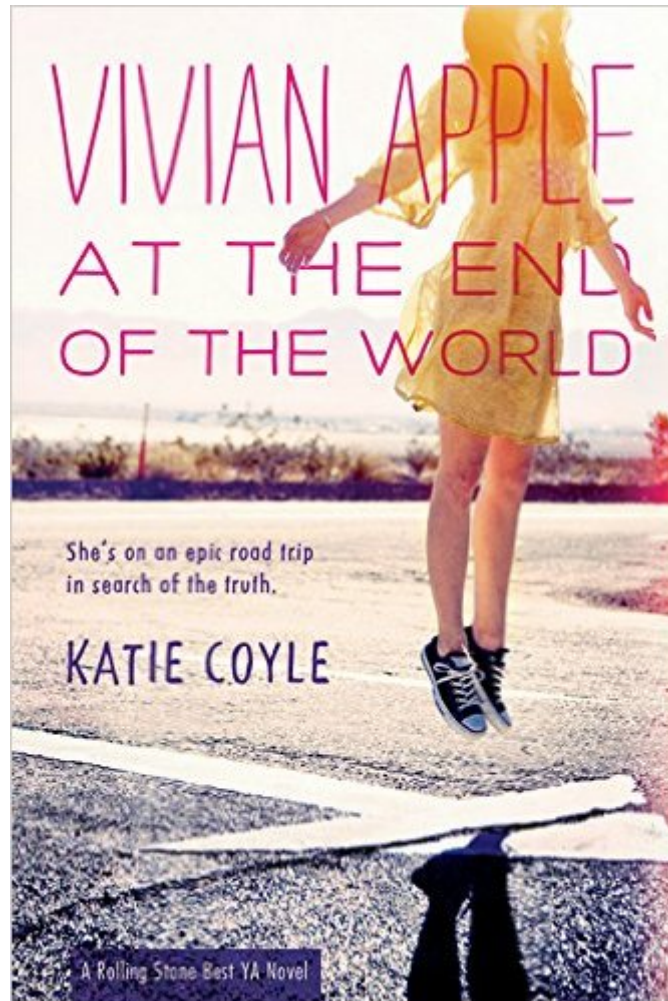


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# Vivian Apple At The End Of The World



## Synopsis

Seventeen-year-old Vivian Apple never believed in the evangelical Church of America, unlike her recently devout parents. But when Vivian returns home the night after the supposed "Rapture," all that's left of her parents are two holes in the roof. Suddenly, she doesn't know who or what to believe. With her best friend Harp and a mysterious ally, Peter, Vivian embarks on a desperate cross-country roadtrip through a paranoid and panic-stricken America to find answers. Because at the end of the world, Vivian Apple isn't looking for a savior. She's looking for the truth.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars See all reviews (57 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #233,060 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Alternative Family #14 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Social Issues #78 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Violence

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

**A Conversation with Katie Coyle** The author of *Vivian Apple at the End of the World* answers a few questions about road trips, Twitter, her ideal Rapture Eve party, and what's next for Vivian.

You have a large following on Twitter. How would you describe your book in 140 characters?

*Vivian Apple* is about best friends, road trips, belief, cute boys, climate change, and a regular girl learning to tap into her inner badass! This book depicts a panic-stricken America. Do you think

society is heading in that direction? To some degree, unfortunately, I think we're already there! To create this alternate United States, I drew upon a lot of the things that scare me about the one I live in. I believe in climate change and I believe its effects might be catastrophic. I also think it's easier to pretend it's inexplicable, to shroud it in mystery, than to face the challenge head-on with the intent to overcome it. A lot of the book is about the ways we as humans try to console ourselves during times of crisis. We buy things and deny things, and we isolate ourselves within our individual families or groups rather than working together to find solutions. Much of the book is about Vivian coming to understand these truths about the world around her, and herself, in order to help put things right. In the book, the evangelical Church predicts the Rapture. Describe your perfect Rapture's Eve party. I think my Rapture's Eve party would pretty closely resemble the one Vivian throws with her best friend, Harp. I'd try to surround myself with people I love, and I'd dance a lot. Hopefully there'd be baked goods present as well. If the world's going to end, I'd like to eat as many baked goods as possible before it does.

You empower your characters to stand up for their beliefs. Was that an important message for you? Absolutely! Personally, it took me until I was out of my teens to really speak up for myself, my ideas, and my convictions. Part of the problem for me was how much I internalized the sorts of things that are assumed about teenage girls—that they are silly and dramatic and, on the whole, not very smart. I didn't want to be accused of being any of these things, so I tended to keep my mouth shut. At the beginning of the book, Vivian is a lot like seventeen-year-old me; she so desperately wants to please other people that she's terrified of making waves. Writing her transformation over the course of the book was kind of a way for me to go back in time and shake my teenage self and say: It's okay! Speak up! Act out! You'll never please everybody, so you might as well be true to yourself. Vivian Apple embarks on an epic road trip with friends. Any good personal road-trip stories? Well, I've also traveled from Pittsburgh to San Francisco via car, with my now-husband, two years ago. We had a pretty amazing trip, and got to see Yellowstone and Mount Rushmore (as well as the presidential wax museum outside Mount Rushmore that plays a part in Vivian Apple). Before that, I'd say my most memorable road trip was when I was nineteen, and drove from New Jersey to Boston with three of my best friends to visit Salem, Massachusetts, and see the band Harry and the Potters play. We had a really great time, we learned a lot of facts about witches, and we also nearly killed each other, which is kind of inevitable on any road trip taken with the people you love most.

Vivian Apple packs a sledgehammer. What three items would top your packing list? 1) Pliers. A sledgehammer is flashy but in most scenarios would not be of much use. Pliers, however, come in handy all the time. I have a friend who used to (and maybe still does) regularly carry around a set of pliers in her purse, and it got us out of quite a few scrapes. 2) A book. I never go anywhere without a book. 3) Trail mix. It doesn't matter if you're going on a run-of-the-mill road trip or whether you are venturing into apocalyptic territory to uncover frightening truths; you're going to need the protein. How did it feel to hear that your book had won the Guardian/Hot Key Young Writer's Prize in the UK? Do you know the scene in *That Thing You Do!* when Liv Tyler hears the Wonders on the radio for the first time and goes running, screaming, through the streets, collecting the members of the band as she goes, and they bounce around the store turning all the radios on and kissing each other and dancing with cardboard cutouts, and then at the end Tom Everett Scott shouts, "I am Spartacus!"? That was how it felt.

As a debut novelist, what has been most surprising about the publishing process? Truthfully the most pleasant surprise has been discovering the huge number of readers out there! I think we hear a lot about how people don't read books anymore and how Western civilization is crumbling because of it, but part of this process has been coming to understand the vast numbers of passionate, creative, smart readers who are out there snatching up every title that interests them, reading them, reviewing them, and spreading the word on their Tumblrs and their YouTube channels. It's been really delightful to witness! What's next for our sledgehammer-wielding heroine? By the end of the book, Vivian has learned some surprising things about herself and the country she lives in, and she's also inadvertently made some powerful enemies. In *Vivian Apple Needs a Miracle*, she'll have to figure out how to navigate this new, dangerous world with her new bolder self. Also there will be more puns and makeouts.

I really wish I had ended up enjoying what started out as an imaginative and fresh twist on the dystopian/post apocalyptic genre more than I did. The premise is fantastic -- a kind of YA version of Tom Perrotta's *The Leftovers*, in which 17-year-old Vivian Apple returns home from an ironic party thrown by her best friend, Harp, to "celebrate" the Rapture as predicted by the Church of America, its prophet, Beaton Frick, and its horde of Believers, who now include her own parents. What Vivian finds shakes all her certainties: there is a hole in the ceiling through to the roof above her parents' bedroom, and her parents are gone. And so are thousands of other Believers -- but only some. Cue

months of uncertainty, as some Believers pin their hopes on a "second boat" to Paradise, while others grimly prepared for Armageddon. In the midst of all this, Vivian flees from her grandparents in New York, repulsed by their coldness, and embarks on a cross country road trip with Harp and Peter, a boy she had met at the Rapture party. She just wants to find out what happened, and has a hunch that the answer lies in California. The problems for me start there. The reason for that hunch are incredibly flimsy, as indeed are a lot of the plot elements here. Katie Coyle had a great concept for this novel, and some imaginative ideas for her characters, each of whom is distinctive and believable: Harp, the rebel who is more shaken by events than she will admit to anyone, and Vivian, who finds new strength and determination in her self-imposed quest. But the plot is full of holes, starting with the nature of the church and the "Book of Frick" -- it's as if Coyle has tossed in some of the most bizarre elements of fundamentalist Christianity and various cults, and dialed them up several notches, without trying to make them believable. (Part of the theology includes a vision that Frick has involving a discussion with God over Frappuccinos in Starbucks, after which God "burns all the baristas' eyeballs out" as part of his fury with secular morals. Okaaay...) The best dystopian books are those that don't require a gargantuan suspension of belief on the part of readers, or whose authors spend a lot of time carefully laying the groundwork for their alternative worlds so that the reader just accepts the dystopia. Coyle doesn't pull that off -- we're asked to imagine that mass shootings, terrorist attacks, freakish weather events and so on (essentially, what we have already) is enough to transform the country as a whole into a mass of Believers within three or four years. Sorry, but that's where I got lost... The final 50 pages is a rushed jumble: the three friends make all kinds of discoveries at the end of their road trip; major, transformative ones. By the time I had read through one "reveal" after another, I was exasperated. It was just too much. While clearly this is a novel that won't appeal to those with a strong traditional religious faith (the cult church's theology is wacky and poorly explained; Vivian and her friends are agnostics or secular humanists or whatever label of that kind you care to use), for me, the book's problems lay in the author's over-reliance on dramatic events and colorful details to cover up the holes in the plot. I ended this book puzzled about what points (if any) Coyle was trying to make, or whether she had just decided to write an adventure story that happened to have this backdrop. Is it about religion, cults and belief? About friendship and what we owe to those we love? Is it about corporatism? The feisty Vivian Apple has a lot to recommend her as a character, and I can see this novel appealing to teens who believe that adults are either callous or hopeless. (Certainly, most of the adults portrayed here, with the exception of Vivian's high school teacher, Wambaugh, fall into that category, including all her remaining family members.) The high level of snark in the dialog will be especially appealing, I

imagine. For me, Vivian's personality and the witty dialog weren't enough to cover up the holes in the plot, and especially the multiple abrupt shifts of direction in the last 50 pages (as the plot got more and more exotic and strange) that left me bemused and underwhelmed to the extent of not even being curious about what might happen in a sequel.

I couldn't resist the idea of an Armageddon road trip and Vivian at the End of the World (originally published as Vivian Versus the Apocalypse) did not let me down--I read the book straight through because I couldn't bear to stop. Sixteen-year-old Vivian had been on the meek side--she was the sort no one notices, including boys--but she's not a blind follower so when natural disasters start piling up, a new religion's prophecies predict the end of the world, her free-thinking friends are attacked by paranoid wanna-be-saved hordes, and her parents are apparently raptured away to heaven through the ceiling of their bedroom, Vivian makes the choice to chuck her passive persona, get some answers, and DO something. That DOING something involves a car journey from Pittsburgh to California with her best friend and a good looking guy they've just met, battling weird weather extremes, rescuing a pregnant half-believing former classmate, hoping their limited money supply doesn't run out (gas is over \$13 a gallon and rising), dodging desperate converts looking earn paradise points by smiting nonbelievers, and falling in love. This is the first book of the series and it's full of wonderful characters I can't wait to meet again. Though the new religion of the story is a rabidly patriotic End Times doctrine, people on all parts of the belief spectrum are ultimately treated by the author with sympathy and respect. There's some violence and plenty of action and suspense, but the tone isn't as grim as in The Hunger Games or Divergent--which are both series that I enjoyed, but even with the seriousness of Vivian's situation there's more fun in this book. For instance, Vivian's blossoming first romance doesn't diminish the tension, but it does allow for some witty repartee.

Holy crap. Vivian Apple rocked my world! I read this book in just a few hours because I couldn't put it down. One of the things that really stood out to me and drove my need to devour this book was that it could really happen. With most dystopians and post-apocalyptic novels, I can go to bed knowing that society is still far from breaking down to that length. But with Vivian Apple at the End of the World, it could happen. A religious cult catering to America's thirst for everything patriotic and religious? Half-way there right now. The road trip aspect to this story was really appealing. The mash-up of so many great things--road trip, religious cult, end of the world, coming into your own

skin, and a strong friendship--are what made this book so great. It's the quintessential Young Adult novel. While it has all of these things, I never felt like they over-powered each other. Everything co-existed harmoniously and were woven together in such a way that only made the book that much more amazing. Vivian Apple was such a great character. The way that Katie Coyle writes her is so great. Her growth is fluid and admirable, and I have so much love for her. She's strong and determined without being a Mary Sue. That's so rare in YA, y'all. The other characters are all really wonderful, too! I want to know more from Harp, Vivian's best friend. She was such a rich character, and I enjoyed her so much. There's even a hint of romance to make my sappy heart happy! Katie Coyle has managed to put nearly everything I love about Young Adult in this book and tied it up with a neat little bow. It was an amazing read, and I cannot wait to get my hands on the sequel. I need more Vivian Apple in my life!\*\*I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

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