

Reviewed by Combs Book Club April 2016

The Bees by Laline Paull

An unusual and interesting read focussing on the complexity and division of work within a bee hive. The main character a female bee (Flora 717) whose status on hatching is defined by her body structure. From being identified initially as a lowly sanitation worker Flora is waylaid by a bee of superior rank and given the opportunity to progress through the system, somewhat haphazardly at times rather than by calculated choice. Descriptions can be graphic, particularly on the outcome of bees who have either outlived their usefulness or who are born with slight deformities. Strong emphasis on hierarchy and slight feminist overviews. Some gripping pages but overall a book which was generally easy to read touching on emotions which whilst not easily attributed to bees did help in connecting to the main character.

Although the majority of members of the Book Club found the book enjoyable not all were convinced and felt the book erred on the side of fantastical. Others were keen to research bees further to clarify some points in the book. Overall the Book Club gave the book 7/9.