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Justine Silver's best friend, Mary Catherine McAllister, has given up chocolate for Lent, but Justine doesn't think God wants her to make that kind of sacrifice. So she's decided to give up being Jewish instead. Eleven-year-old Justine pours her heart out to her teddy bear, "Father Ted," in a homemade closet confessional. But when Justine's beloved Bubbe suffers a stroke, Justine worries that her religious exploration is responsible. Worse, she must suddenly contemplate life without Bubbe. Ultimately, it's Bubbe's quiet understanding of Justine's search for identity that helps Justine to find faith in the most important place of all-within herself.

Confessions of a Closet Catholic Details

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From Reader Review Confessions of a Closet Catholic for online ebook

Cynthia says

I liked the story but would caution Jewish and Christian (including Catholic) parents that the idea presented early in the story that God of the Bible, Allah, and Buddha are the same and equal is troublesome. Children the age of the protagonist should be guided in their religious faith by their parents, and I would be concerned that my child might get the notion from this book that religious beliefs are a la carte choices. I would definitely talk with my child before handing over this book, which seems geared toward middle grades. There's plenty of time for questioning and wondering if one's religion is the right one for him/her when a child reaches a level of maturity in the teen or college years, and after careful study. However, I do appreciate the respect shown for all religions in the story. The characterizations, family relationships, and details about Jewish and Catholic life were well done and enjoyable.

Cynthia says

This was an adorable story about a Jewish girl who decides she is going to become "Catholic" for lent. Being the the realms of "interfaithness" (I know, not a word), I found it enjoyable.

Raine Rucker says

"Confessions of a Closet Catholic" by Sarah Darer Littman is a wonderful book. It can be found in the juvenile section of my local library and it's written for teens, but adults can also enjoy it. This adult certainly is. :)

It deals with everyday issues that teens can relate to: crushes, sibling rivalry, feelings of injustice, body image, and chocolate. Also, 11 year old Justine is trying to figure out religion.

Justine's family is Jewish, but she isn't overfond of the religion for various reasons, so she decides to become Catholic -- just like her best friend! But, she hasn't told her family. She's pretty sure that they won't take the news very well.

So Justine becomes a closet Catholic. Literally. She has confession with Father Ted (her teddy bear) in her closet, and holds communion in her closet. She's hidden away in her closet a cross that her Catholic friend lost at her house, a "cheat sheet" on how to say Hail Mary, and a rosary she bought.

Then her grandmother has a stroke. Justine can't help but feel that this is her fault, and that it is God's way of punishing her for questioning the faith she was raised in. She feels responsible for the stroke but she doesn't confide in anyone, because she still doesn't want her family to know that she's Catholic. The guilt builds as she watches her grandmother's recovery, and she continues to question what she believes.

In spite of the serious nature of the book it manages to remain funny. For example, the explanation in the first chapter of how she ruled out various other religions before deciding to become Catholic; she decided

she couldn't become Buddhist because when she tried to meditate she could only think about how much her butt hurt from sitting on the floor, and found herself figuring out how many zits she would get per chocolate bar.

Littman has created a very believable character that you can't help but love as she struggles to find her own identity. There are some real gems in the book (actually the whole book is a gem, so these are just extra special gems) such as the following passage that I would like to end this with:

"Sometimes, I wonder if Jesus, Allah, and God are all the same person. I imagine that J-A-G person sitting up there in heaven, shaking His head with tears in His eyes because He can't understand why His children are fighting and killing one another in His various names, not realizing that they're all praying to the same guy."

Maria Wong says

YA Multicultural Assignment:

"A Confessions of a Closet Catholic" can attract young adult readers because of its easy read and sense of humor. The book begins with an eleven-year-old girl, Justine, who struggles with what 'normal' girls at that age struggle with: self-image, boys, and parent problems. Many can relate with Justine's struggles because we all have at one point been embarrassed of our family and their idiosyncrasies. Justine is embarrassed about her Jewish heritage and attempts to convert to a Catholic. Justine secretly confesses to Father Ted and goes to mass along with her best friend's family. After a series of funny happenings, the story takes a turn when her "bubbe" (grandmother) gets ill. Throughout the story, the author does a great job illustrating the Jewish culture and the strong family values. Perhaps this book can expand young people's mind to think and learn about a different culture. Just as the book says, "Knowledge makes people more tolerant." I find this true in so many ways and would recommend this book to anyone at any age.

Dijana Vidakovic says

Reading Confessions of a Closet Catholic was an easy read. The book was simple and flowed easily. The book was about a young Jewish girl named Justine who was confused in her beliefs. Justine had a friend named Mary Catherine, who was Catholic and who gave up chocolate for Lent. Justine decided she wanted to celebrate Lent too and gave up being Jewish. During the story Justine is hiding that she has become Catholic from her family. She goes to church, says her Hail Mary's in her closet, and even gives confessions to a teddy bear. Throughout the story her family finds out and a huge tragedy happens shortly after. Her grandmother passes away, she was the one person Justine felt that understood her. She then had to make the decision of staying Jewish or being Catholic. While reading the book I was actually quite interested the whole time. It was written to where it was really understandable and relatable but the ending ruined it for me. Getting the last word in was one craft I don't believe Littman did well. I was so interested in seeing what was going to happen next and how the book was going to end, that I was strongly disappointed. The ending was very cliché. Even though I know this is a young adult book and it should end happily, everything that happened was very typical and not authentic. It felt like the author just wanted to finish the book so in a matter of two pages, she fixed every problem that happened in the book to make it a happily ever after ending. Her parents started getting along and were happy, her parents were understanding, a connection happened between her and this boy she had her eye on, her sister and her made up after they hated each other

the whole book, it was too many things someone would expect. I would suggest to the author maybe different types of endings. The author could have left some things unanswered, could have ended with the beginning, could have had some things not be that happy or pleasant, or could have draw the ending out and slowed it down. From this piece of writing I could teach my students many things. I could have a mini lesson on how to draw someone in. The opening sentence for this book is something I think most kids can relate too and would want to read. I could read them the beginning paragraph and talk about opening sentences. I could also have a mini lesson on her ending, and read them the last chapter. We could talk about what she could have done different as a class. Overall it was an enjoyable read, just could have had a stronger ending.

Tasmiea Zaman says

Confession of a closet catholic was very personal to me. I grew up around many non-Muslim peers when I went to school in Doraville, GA. I was the only Muslim up until high school and I was the only Southeast Asian girl in my class until high school. This book creates a scenario in my mind where the character speaks directly to the audience. It led me feel as if she was talking directly to me. I enjoyed laughing and crying with the character as each scenario of her life unfolds. This book led me to think about my own life and how I could compare and contrast our lives. The author did a great job at combining her thoughts to the scenarios in the character's life. The author gave a description of the social life of a religious household where the child felt different from others. The voice of the story was anxious and confused; the idea that a child thinks this much about religion and creating a story out of it is overwhelmingly magnificent if one can relate to it. The character was having internal struggle with external struggle with her mom. She was able to find peace with her grandma, again, I can relate to this because I was able to find peace when my grandpa was alive. This is a great story for any religious household that has struggles within them and outside of themselves with other members of the family.

Chelsea says

I read the book "Confessions of a Closet Catholic" by Sarah Darer Littman. The book starts off with the main character Justine Silver. Justine is a nice, Jewish girl who isn't very fond of being Jewish. Her best friend Mary Catherine (or Mac) McAllister is Catholic and tells Justine about the observance of Lent. After this, Justine decides to become Catholic and give up being Jewish for Lent (and chicken). When her Bubbe (Yiddish for Grandmother) has a stroke, Justine thinks it is punishment for deciding to be Catholic. Her Bubbe had survived through many difficult struggles. She was the only person out of her nine-person family to survive Auschwitz. After Bubbe had been hospitalized, she stayed with the Silvers. When Mrs. Silver found out about Justine's Catholic calling, she goes ballistic but Bubbe doesn't seem to mind. She supports Justine saying that if she wants to be Catholic, then she can be Catholic. Unfortunately when Bubbe dies, Justine feels as if there is no one she can turn to and has to search longer and harder on her journey to becoming either Jewish or Catholic.

I think that the title "Confessions of a Closet Catholic" makes a lot of sense with the book. As you read the book, you learn that Justine doesn't go to church because she is Jewish. So, Justine creates a closet confessional so she can ask for forgiveness. In her closet confession, her priest's name is Father Ted (also known as her six foot teddy bear). She keeps the Hail Mary written down on a piece of paper hidden in a shoe along with rosary beads, her checklist of the seven deadly sins, and a necklace with a silver cross on it that she stole from Mac. She uses matzo for the holy bread and grape juice for the wine. She keeps everything hidden in her closet so that no one finds out that she doesn't like being Jewish. I think that the

title is appropriate because it is like once Justine enters her closet she is Catholic and as soon as she leaves, she becomes Jewish again.

The setting of the book didn't really have a huge impact on the book itself. I think this is because most of the story took place in Justine's house or in her closet. The only other places the book took place in were at Mac's house, the hospital, and two churches. The author didn't spend much time describing these places so maybe that is one of the contributing factors to the setting not mattering much in the book.

The point of view in this book is in first person. Justine is the person who is narrating the book. I think that it is important that it is from her perspective because as the reader, I really got to understand Justine's emotions and how she felt. I think the author did a very good job of making sure that the reader understood how the other characters were feeling even though they weren't the ones who were talking. For example, I could feel Mrs. Silver's wrath when she found out that the nest of mice had all started because of Justine's "holy bread". I could also feel Jake's pain when the nurses at the hospital said him and Justine couldn't go visit their Bubbe (grandma) who just had a stroke. So I think that although the book was from Justine's point of view, I got to know Justine along with the other characters in the book.

The mood of my book is guilty. Throughout most of the book all Justine feels is guilt. Whether it's crushing on her best friend's brother, going to church, or not knowing who to pray to. Justine especially feels guilty about wanting to be Catholic. She feels as if her Catholic needs is what causes her Bubbe's stroke. She also feels guilty because out of the seven deadly sins, she believes that she has committed five and half of them. She also believes that she will end up in Purgatory for committing these things. One more thing she feels guilty about is not wanting to be Jewish. Her mom says in the book that her Bubbe went through Auschwitz because she was Jewish and that it is not fair to her that Justine wants to give up being Jewish in a snap.

The author of my book uses foreshadowing multiple times throughout the book. One of the times she uses it is when Mrs. Silver finds out about the rats nest embedded in her house. The foreshadowing begins when Justine is in her "confessional" talking to Father Ted. When Justine goes to take a piece a matzo she realizes that some of it had been eating. She thinks it might have been the family's dog Bijoux, but then she remembers that she keeps her closet door shut so nobody finds out about her calling. The author doesn't spend much time describing this scene because I don't think she wanted to give anything away. Later on, Mrs. Silver finds a rat in her room, and Mrs. Silver is the biggest neat freak ever. She is thoroughly shocked at the sight and immediately calls the 'Anytime Anywhere Pest Service's. The exterminators said that the nest was due to food in Justine's closet. This was just one of the ways the author Sarah Darer Littman used foreshadowing in this book.

I would recommend this book to anybody in 6th grade and up. This book teaches kids who don't know themselves that it's okay to explore different options. Although in the book Justine is dealing with her religion, you could apply this to any situation. I really enjoyed this book and there were even some tear jerkers throughout it. At the beginning, I didn't really enjoy it but then as I continued to read, I could understand Justine more because she opened up with her problems. In the end, I enjoyed this book and think anyone could read it.

Marcy says

Be proud of where you come from. If you aren't happy with who you are, then the grass will always look greener somewhere else. But when you get there you won't be any happier, because you've taken your insecurities with you. (pg 44-45)

Eileen says

A book for my 6th grade girls who are "running out of books" to read. I don't think any of them have read it yet. I will definitely be recommending this to them! On another note, I'd like to purchase my own copy (or two) to have available for my jr. high religious ed students. Gives me an idea to find more books on growing up and learning more about your faith our bishop told our youth just last week, "Learn all you can about your faith. You are old enough to do it on your own. Take the initiative and ask the adults to guide you. Ask questions." Just as Justine did!

Nathalie S says

The title of this book immediately hooked me! As a former Catholic, I enjoy immensely reading HUMOROUS books about Catholicism and other religions--which seem to fall into only 2 other categories: Jews and Muslims. So far, I haven't found any such books about protestants for example. Please disabuse me of the notion if you know of any such HUMOROUS book. I'd love to read it. In this book, Jewish teen Justine Silver wants to become a Catholic. Her Catholic friend's family seems just so much more loving than her own for example. She decides to keep Lent by giving up, not chocolate, but being Jewish. And thus it begins...This is a fun and quick read but it also offers a lot of insights and good advice for teen and really anyone. I also really enjoy learning about other cultures and religions and little quirks. So fun!

Courtney (pirogoeth) says

I feel like I understand some of what she's going through. One part is the friend. He didn't grow up in a very religious home and when he started learning about Judaism, he said it just made sense to him. That's how I feel about Catholicism. It's just right for me.

When I was in college it took me a couple of years to start going to Mass on my own. Until then it was always something that I had to get up early in the morning and dress nicely for. In Junior High and High School I started to enjoy it more because we'd have Mass during the week as a part of the school day and I was really involved.

In college it just didn't feel right to simply sit there, so I just got lazy and didn't go. Then one day I finally got up the courage to ask the person in charge of the music group at that Mass if they could use a trumpet player. From there I went to Mass every Sunday I was there because I was a part of it and I loved it. Now I almost hate having to go out of town because I won't be at the Newman Center on Sunday.

[Click here for the rest of the review.](#)

Holly Blades says

I thought this book would be a lot more about faith, but there wasn't as much as I thought, until the last like 20 pages which were the most interesting part.

Tirzah Eleora says

I'd give this a 3.5.

Things that I liked:

- 1) Justine is so darn cute! This is fairly unusual in preteen girl characters of a modern writer's creation. She's a thinker, she's addicted to chocolate, and this is how she describes a broken heart. "I feel like someone placed forty copies of 'War and Peace' on my heart. And that's the hardcover version, not the paperback." All her self-consciousness and her twelve-year-old agonies reminded me of myself at that age.
- 2) The way the author presented family relationships. There are plenty of fights in here between siblings, spouses and parents and their kids, but the author resolves these tensions in a cute and realistic way. At the end of the book things aren't picture perfect, but everyone in the family has grown to love one another more.
- 3) The family with a bunch of kids in the story was presented as being completely normal and a lot of fun. I feel like the author herself must have fond memories of a big family.
- 4) The book as a whole is light and fun read, but it still manages to be real. It deals with the death of a loved one and the searching of the human soul for truth, but it also has plenty of puppy love and every day nonsense.
- 4) The author embraces the traditions of various religious groups and churches as a good thing. She clearly believes that being formed by these traditions and belonging to a community of likeminded believers is important. This is refreshing given the modern trend of rejecting "institutions." (I'm thinking of all the "God = Good, Church = Bad" people here.)

What I did NOT like was the author's attitude towards God. She portrays both Judaism and Christianity (Catholic Christianity in this case) in a positive light but presents them both as merely two of many paths that one can take to God. "All paths lead to God for the one who seeks him with honesty" pretty much sums up her message. She promotes the idea that all religions are really just worshiping their own version of the same God and so no religion is better than any other one. While of course I believe that God can use any path to lead someone to Him, I also find this universalistic view of God to be dangerous and contrary to Christian doctrine and so I would not give this book to a child or teen who doesn't have the maturity to discern what is good and what isn't.

Shon says

I thought this book highlighted the many struggles of being young and trying to figure out the person that you are and making that fit with the person you want to be. The author brings Justine Silver is someone that many kids can relate to. She is unsure of just about every aspect of her life; her looks, her religion, her family loyalties, her religion, boys, friends, etc. The author started the book by using a lead to introduce the narrator. She starts with the narrator talking about what's going on at her dinner table. Immediately I know that the narrator is Jewish she spoke about it being Friday and her family was observing the Sabbath. The next paragraph intrigues the reader because the narrator then says that she has given up eating chicken for Lent, but her mother does not know. It makes me wonder why a Jewish person is practicing the Catholic tradition of Lent. This entices me to read more to find out why a Jewish girl has decided to participate in Lent, and how she is going to keep her family from discovering. I believe the author's use of the narrator lead

achieved it's purpose of pulling the reader in. I think that everyone has grappled with their beliefs at one time or another. The author was able to connect with a diverse population and this would make someone want to continue to read this book because it is something that they could relate to. The first three paragraphs of this book is a great example of a lead that introduces the narrator and encourages the reader to read more. I would be able to read these paragraphs to a class and show how an author can indirectly tell things about the character to help you get a sense of who they are.

sarafem says

This is an absolutely endearing story about a modern preteen Jewish girl trying to find herself and figure out what she believes in this world. This has taken its place with Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli as one of my favorite children's stories. I would recommend this to anyone; most especially to adults, open enough to read a children's novel, who experienced that period of questioning their faith and who they are and manage to reflect on the confusion in an endearing sort of way.
