



The Long Way Home

Ann M. Martin

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Four girls. Four generations. One family.

The second entry in the beautiful new series from Ann M. Martin.

Dana is Abby's daughter -- but she's always been much closer to her father, Zander. He's a celebrated New York author who encourages Dana's artistic talents . . . even if he sometimes drinks too much. Dana is on his side in any argument, regardless of whether he's wrong. And then her father dies.

After years of moving, often with her mother and three siblings, Dana is angry at Abby, and wants nothing more than to leave her family and get back to New York City. She moves in with her young, bohemian aunt Adele, determined to study art, attend school, achieve independence, and avoid all the mistakes her mother made. But can she leave her family and Maine behind?

The Long Way Home Details

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From Reader Review The Long Way Home for online ebook

Katie Fitzgerald says

The Long Way Home is the second book in Ann M. Martin's four-part series, Family Tree, which follows one family through four generations. Protagonist Dana is the daughter of the main character from the first book, Abby, and her story takes place between 1955 and 1966, with an epilogue set in 1972. Dana leads a charmed life in New York City for much of the book. Her parents obviously adore her and her siblings (twin sister Julia, brother Peter, who has Down Syndrome, and later, Nell), and though her father has a definite drinking problem, it doesn't interfere much with Dana's day to day life until she is nearly a teenager. Difficulties approach as Dana enters middle school and high school, however, forcing her to strike her own path toward becoming an artist, even if it means leaving her family to join her aunt's Bohemian Greenwich Village lifestyle.

Like the first book, this one is easy to read through in one sitting. The characters are not always likable, but the story is still compelling because it draws connections and comparisons between the past and present that cause the reader to really think about the ways families interact and what each generation passes onto the next. I was glad, early on, that Dana's life was not as depressing as her mother's, and I have to admit I was disappointed when, in the second half of the book, tragedies and difficulties began to strike all over the place. I could understand a little bit why Abby's life was so complicated, since she grew up during the Great Depression, but I found Dana's life-changing experiences to be a bit more contrived, as they seemed to come from the author's desire to keep things interesting, rather than a particular need in the story for more dramatic tension. Martin has always been great at conveying the small everyday moments in her characters' lives, and that is truly all I wanted from this book. I hate seeing history turned into a soap opera so unnecessarily, and I sincerely hope the second half of the series shies away from that approach a little bit.

My biggest disappointment with this book is that Fred, Abby's disabled little brother who is sent away by her abusive father in the first book, is never mentioned. I felt his presence throughout the book, as Dana's own little brother has developmental disabilities, but I really wanted his situation to be discussed and I was sad to see each of the characters in the older generation avoid the subject. I really hope Fred is not just left dangling as an unresolved thread, and that one of the girls in the next two generations is able to uncover something about him to satisfy my curiosity. I imagine that Martin does have something planned for the second half of the series, but it's hard to wait to see how it will be handled!

Despite its flaws, I enjoyed this book, and I'm eagerly looking forward to reading the rest of the quartet to see how all the pieces of the puzzle come together. It's clear already that these books are best read in order, and reviewed as a unit, rather than as individual stories, but even so, this book was an interesting exploration of life in New York City, and in Maine, in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Gabrielle S says

This was disappointing. I understand the premise of these is that we are meeting four generations of women and so Dana is Abby's daughter but Dana is frankly a spoiled brat. Abby's story had a heart but this felt rushed. Dana's relationship with her twin was perplexing and confusing. Her relationship with her mother was never explored and I think it is a bit much to make the heroine of the previous novel practically a villain in this one.

I know this could have been better because the first one was. I will be reading the next two but I hope Francie is more likeable than her mother.

Ashley says

I feel bad giving one of Ann M Martin's books any less than 5 stars, but I suppose I should be kind of honest. And honestly, I didn't love this book as much as *Better to Wish*, the first in the Family Tree series. I felt like I liked Dana enough, and I thought parts of her story seemed interesting ... but I don't know. Maybe because Abby, who was so cool in the first book, seemed like a different person as a mother in this book. Or maybe it was because Dana didn't really have any ties to her immediate family - though I liked her relationship with her aunt Adele, and I hope she's in the next book, too.

Again, there were the familiar AMM-isms scattered throughout this book. For example, when Abby and Zander would have conversations with their eyes. Parents are always doing that in AMM land.

I'm really looking forward to the next book. One, because Francie will be growing up in the early 80s, and that will be tons of fun, and two (view spoiler)

Logan Hughes says

I keep devouring these books so I should probably give them more than 2 stars. They're interesting in the moment but leave me feeling hollow and empty, as if there's been a lot of drama but it hasn't really amounted to anything, like life, I guess.

This follows the format of the first book with each chapter occurring about 6 months after the previous chapter. It takes the main character from age 7 to 18.

Dana is the daughter of Abby from the Book #1, *Better to Wish*. Abby's story chronicles her family's ascent from poverty into upper middle class in small-town in Maine in the 1930s/40s, ending her story striking it out on her own in New York City. Dana, then, grows up in New York City in the 1950s/60s. She starts her life glamorously, but once again family fortunes change, and the family finds itself back in Maine. Dana, a budding artist, has New York City in her heart and can't adjust to life in Maine. She's like Stacey + Claudia - Quality.

Because I just can't like Dana. She's serious and sullen. There's no fun about her. She's the daddy's girl of a raging alcoholic, and while that's somewhat understandable, it's also incredibly tiresome, especially when she blames her obviously saintly mother for everything that goes wrong.

Again, I question the choice of daughter to base this around. This time, the book follows the interesting rather than boring sister, but it surprises me that the book is following Dana, the iconoclast who is clearly going to cut her family out of her life and move to a completely new area with her bohemian husband, rather than Julia, the close-to-home daughter who will clearly spend the rest of her life living close to the previous generations. But I guess Ann M. has a plan. Maybe Dana will mellow in her old age. But even in this book, it causes its problems; Dana spends so much time away from the rest of the family. (view spoiler)

Some kinda neat things about this volume:
(view spoiler)

Some weird things about this volume:
(view spoiler)

Amy Anton says

main character was a brat

Genevieve says

While I enjoyed the first one quite a bit, this one was just not as enjoyable. Danica (main character) was not very likeable. I also just want to say for the record that not everyone that wasn't completely enamored with John F. Kennedy was a cold-hearted, ignorant bigot like Danica's grandfather. It felt like that was the idea though.

Jennifer says

Good, but not as captivating as the first book in the series.

J says

Wow. The author's secular liberal view of life is beaten into this book, especially the last few chapters again. I can't express how much I disliked it. The daughters achieve exalted academics excellence, but seem void of affection for each other, much less God (who is never really mentioned, except in context of mean,

prejudiced religious people). They spout liberal theology and rebel against authority figures, including parents. Again, there is no strong father figure or decent relationship between parent and child. Is this the “modern” life the author envisions for children?

It is one thing to have a liberal viewpoint, but the author didn’t even try to rationalize hers. She just assumes all decent people automatically share her views and insults others without guilt or second-thought. It is sloppy work. What are the chances of two mentally challenged brothers being born into each generation? Or two generations of women each being the lone witness to the death of a significant person by drowning?

There were so many things I could critique, but this book isn’t worth any more of my time.

Barbara says

I'm enjoying this series and look forward to the next two generations. In this one, Dana, one of the twin daughters of Zander and Abby, the focus of the first book, adores her father despite his imperfections. The talented Zander is a writer, and the family enjoys a sophisticated life in New York City until an accident changes everything. Despite Abby's best efforts to make a go of living and working in New York, she is forced to move the family to Maine where she takes on menial jobs and moves the children from school to school. Dana resents her mother and always preferred her father, and when she has the chance, she heads back to NYC to live with her aunt Adele. Readers will be glad that Dana has the chance to polish her own artistic talent in the right schools, but they will also be puzzled by her distance from her mother and twin sister Julia and wonder at the trade-off in her life. As world events, including the Cuban Missile Crisis and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy swirl around the family, they face their own small and large tragedies, just as the previous generation did. The author provides just enough snippets about Dana's life to keep readers engaged, but it is hard to summon much sympathy for her.

Kim says

I don't think I've ever encountered a juvenile protagonist so determinedly self-absorbed and judgmental. I thought perhaps she'd mature or grow up a little in the course of the book, but no such luck, and since the rest of the book didn't do much to illuminate the experience of growing up in 50s- or 60s-era New York, I'm not entirely sure what I was supposed to get out of this particular installment of the Family Tree series. Here's hoping the next book has a little more to offer....

Alyssa Nelson says

The Long Way Home continues Ann M. Martin's Family Tree series. Abby is now a mother and the focus has turned to Dana, her daughter, who's chafing under her twin sister's insistence that they both be the same and share everything. While she loves her sister, Dana wants more space and more freedom to be an individual. The family is well off, thanks to Zander and his success in publishing; however, that all goes away after a family emergency and the debt catches up to them, forcing Abby to move her family from their beautiful house to an apartment, and then back to Maine. Dana has to make a decision as to whether she wants to stay with her family, or follow her dreams to be an artist and live in New York.

Much like the first book, this book spans a lot of years and is more like a series of moments, with each chapter capturing a pivotal moment, and then moving onto the next year or so. I don't think everyone would enjoy this, but Martin is a genius at being able to show character growth and change that way; I was given just enough detail to connect with Dana at each stage in her life before moving onto another interesting event that happens in it. I also like how Dana is so different from Abby and has such a different outlook on life, and I love how New York is portrayed in this story. Looking at the city through Dana's eyes makes it magical and wonderful.

This book deals with hard concepts, much more so than the previous one, I feel, but maybe that has something to do with Dana's character. While Abby had a difficult life, she was mostly optimistic; in this book, Dana resents her family for their misfortunes and bad judgment. However, a lot of the bad stuff that happens is much more present and immediate than in the previous book; it deals with death, poverty, and the scary reality of growing up during the Cold War, among other things. It ends on a mostly happy note, but I definitely wanted to read something a lot happier after I finished this because of the mood of a lot of it.

I really like the concept of this series, following a family through the years, focusing on someone of each generation as the time passes. It's a good way to show the lasting affect of the choices you make, and also shows how life and family and relationships change as you get older. I very much enjoyed reading this and would definitely still recommend this to fans of middle grade literature. This book still fits under the historical fiction category, so I'm interested to see how Martin handles the next one, with the character being placed in a more modern time.

Also posted on Purple People Readers.

Aleece says

Abby's daughter Dana is much closer to her father, Zander who is an author in New York City and encourages Dana to do what she loves, art. When tragedy strikes the family they are forced to move out of New York and back to Maine where the family keeps having to move every time they begin to settle into their new lives. Dana has had enough and wants to follow her dreams without even thinking about her family and what they want. So she moves back to New York and lives with her Aunt Adele and goes to art school. Dana is a very unlikeable character and gets everything she ever wants to the point where her self-centered attitude really leaves you with no pity for her but for the rest of her family and her twin Julia who always seems to be left behind in everything.

I received this advanced copy from Scholastic Press through Netgalley in exchange for my honest review

Amanda Caldwell says

This is the second book in Ann M. Martin's Family Tree series. I loved the first book. The second book... eh, it didn't really live up to Better To Wish. I really like this series because it's one of those middle grade series that deal with more adult content and the characters lives and emotions are very complex. Things often don't work out for the best, you know?

In *The Long Way Home* we find the main character of the first book, Abby, married to Zander Burley (her poet neighbor from the first book). Zander is now the author du jour in New York and the family is living comfortably. However, Zander also has a bit of a drinking problem. He's not a mean drunk, just goofy, but Abby does not approve. They have three children. A set of twins, Dana (this book's main character) and Julia, and a younger boy who has down syndrome. Dana does not like being a twin it seems, she tries to avoid her twin, Julia, and just wants to be an individual. Julia is a bit sweeter and really embraces the whole twin thing, wanting to wear the same clothes and do all the same things.

When an accident on the Staten Island Ferry forces the family to cut their budget and move back to Maine, Dana quickly becomes extremely homesick for New York and begs her mom to let her live with her Aunt Adele who lives in the city working for a costume designer. Abby agrees and Dana moves back. It turns out the way home wasn't so long after all. I'm assuming that's where the book's title is derived from, but there was absolutely no struggle with Dana returning "home" and she only spent a chapter or two in Maine.

I wasn't a big fan of Dana, I found her weak and not likable at all. I think Julia would have made a better main character. I also didn't like how Abby turned out so weak- relying on men to support her. She was hardworking, trying to support her children after the Staten Island Ferry tragedy, but I just felt like she was so smart and had been through so much in childhood that she'd turned out to be a better woman and mother. She was a total pushover to her children. Her daughter asks her to move a few states away to live with her aunt and Abby says yes right away and then later Dana has the audacity to tell her mom that she gave up on her when she was the one who was a total brat and Abby was probably happy to be rid of her because of her crappy personality!

Anyways, I also felt like the book was a bit rushed and forced which is rare for Ann M. Martin from my experience. It just didn't seem like the care given to *Better To Wish* was given to *The Long Way Home*. I still look forward to reading the next in the series, which will be about Dana's daughter. I am giving *The Long Way Home* 3 out of 5 stars.

I received an Advanced Reader Copy (ARC) of this book courtesy of NetGalley and Scholastic, in exchange for an honest review.

Becky says

If you have to "like" a heroine to "like" a book, then this book may be in trouble!!! Dana, the heroine of Martin's second book in the Family Tree series, is many things but likeable doesn't come to mind. For better or worse, each chapter reveals Dana--or almost always reveals--in conflict with someone. And it may be unfair, but I always found myself identifying more with the other characters, able to connect with what they are feeling, how they are seeing the scene. Dana comes across as self-centered, inconsiderate, proud, and worst of all: whiny! Dana has a poor relationship with her mother. She has a better relationship with her father, but, perhaps that is because they are so much alike. Her father is, inconsiderate, proud, and selfish too. Her father has a drinking problem, a big problem. And Dana hates her mother for speaking up about it, for telling him NOT to drink, for telling him NOT to party, for being honest. For the record, she isn't talking about her husband negatively in front of her children, but Dana has a (bad) habit of eavesdropping. These are conversations spoken when Dana should be in bed asleep. Perhaps because I connected so much with Abby in the first book, I hated to see her in this bad marriage.

Like *Better To Wish*, *The Long Way Home* has its share of drama. *Better to Wish* is set in Maine; *The Long*

Way Home is set in New York City and briefly in Maine.

I think the biggest problem I had with Dana is her general philosophy: because I am oh-so-talented, because I have THIS INCREDIBLE GIFT (she's an artist), I can treat people horribly and they just have to make allowances for me because that's just how I am.

Manybooks says

Because I did not really all that much enjoy Ann M. Martin's first instalment of her Family Tree series (Better to Wish), I was rather majorly leery about even continuing (and I really only decided to continue because I was indeed a trifle curious about Abby and how the author has narratively shown her life, Abby's life, as progressing). However, while I most definitely did therefore not in any way expect to suddenly and massively love the series, I also did not really expect to so vehemently despise the second novel, The Long Way Home as much as I have.

For aside from the same issues that have plagued Better to Wish (constant doom and gloom, including Zander, Abby's husband, dying in an alcoholism-induced accident, a son born with Down Syndrome, debts, constant and vicious family squabbles, and sadly, a similarly disjointed and distracting writing style as the first novel), the main protagonist of The Long Way Home, Abby and Zander's daughter Dana, is really and for all intents and purposes simply and utterly a nasty, totally and in every way unlikable, unlovable little monster and spoiled brat. Yes, Dana is very much artistically talented and has for that reason obviously been made much of and totally spoiled by her artist/author father Zander (and both seen and approached by him as the preferred child, often to the point that Dana's twin sister Julia has been pretty much patently ignored). But Dana's constant enabling and condoning, her excuses for her father's alcoholism and outrageous behaviours, her utter refusal to even remotely consider that he is a problem and that he has serious issues with substance abuse, and the fact that Dana also totally blames her mother, blames Abby for Zander's death (and prior to his death, for his often outrageous behaviour), even once it is clearly shown that Zander, that her father himself was and is responsible for what has transpired, and that she keeps this up even at the end of The Long Way Home, all this (including Dana's rather at best somewhat cavalier attitude towards her twin sister Julia) really does annoy, frustrate and personally chafe (especially and for me most importantly, since there is also NEVER really ANY kind of even hinted at major criticism of Dana by the author, by Ann M. Martin, and even though Dana goes through many different experiences, with regard to her hero-worshipping attitude towards Zander and her nastiness and blame casting towards Abby, towards her mother, no maturation, no sense of even remote understanding is depicted).

Now while I do at least consider the possibility that Ann M. Martin might have very mildly and with much understatement indicated that Dana's blindly loyal support and enablement of Zander's, of her father's alcoholism and problematic behaviour patterns are an issue, and not altogether laudable, this really does not ever come through in any way even remotely strongly enough for me, and with enough authorial intent and a critical eye. And since Dana is also the main protagonist of The Long Way Home, the negativity of her portrayal, or rather the author's generally rather uncritical depiction of Dana's excuses and enablements of her father, makes her in many ways, makes Dana actually more often than not appear to and for me as annoyingly one-sided, as flat and as much of a stock like cardboard character as her bigoted grandfather Luther. And although I honestly do not think that this was the author's intent, that Ann M. Martin has indeed wanted to depict Dana as perhaps a bit flawed but as ultimately a character to be appreciated and understood (like her mother, like Abby), I am sorry to say that I just cannot appreciate Dana, that she is at least in this novel, in The Long Way Home, so much of a proverbial thorn in my side that I have really not at all enjoyed

reading about her and am therefore only granting a one star rating to The Long Way Home (and whether or not I will actually finish with the series, whether I will continue on with the *Family Tree* remains to be seen, as I have certainly not been all that impressed to date).
