



Daddy-Long-Legs & Dear Enemy

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One of the great novels of American girlhood, Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912) follows the adventures of an orphan named Judy Abbott, whose letters to her anonymous male benefactor trace her development as an independent thinker and writer. Its sequel, *Dear Enemy* (1915), also told in letters, follows the progress of Judy's former orphanage now run by her friend Sallie McBride, who struggles to give her young charges hope and a new life. Full of irrepressible female characters that both recall Alcott's Jo March and anticipate the popular heroines of contemporary literature, Webster's novels are witty, heartfelt, and delightfully modern.

Daddy-Long-Legs & Dear Enemy Details

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Author : Jean Webster , Elaine Showalter

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From Reader Review Daddy-Long-Legs & Dear Enemy for online ebook

Jeslyn says

Even though Daddy-Long-Legs is the superior book of the two, this is the best format to read Webster's two classic tales of Jerusha "Judy" Abbott and her experiences growing up in an orphanage from which she departs for college and the wider world, thanks to the funding of an anonymous Trustee of the John Grier Home - who doesn't like girls. The two conditions of his grant are that his identity remain anonymous, and that Jerusha will write a monthly letter to him with a report of her performance. The letters will not be read, it must be understood, but are instead designed as an exercise that will stimulate her to become an author. From these laughable beginnings (oh yes, writing letters no one will read must be so motivating for anyone, let alone a person who is expected to become an author!) the reader is taken through this curious one-sided correspondence, delightfully loaded with Judy's observations on college, her sheltered life in the orphan asylum, money, friendships, and her ever-increasing interest in knowing the identity of her benefactor and establishing a friendship with him. Dear Enemy continues the fun, but curiously its multiple correspondents makes this one a bit less appealing than DDL - still worth the read, however.

And here again, as with so many of the books I enjoy the most, these century-old novels can still strike a chord in the 21st century.

Regardless of which copy of these stories you settle on, please note that not all contain the original illustrations - and their absence would leave a huge hole in the reading experience. Insist on a copy with illustrations! You're welcome.

Francesca Tripiedi says

Ringrazio Cristina D'Avena per avermi condotto sin qui.

Cristina cara, eri già la fonte primaria della mia ossessione di ventitré anni per Sailor Moon (sebbene, per amor di onestà bisogna ammettere che una parte del merito è da attribuire agli occhi blu di Marzio).

E ora questo.

Mi vergogno un po' ad ammettere di non aver mai letto "Daddy Long Legs" prima di adesso e al momento non riesco a ricordare com'era la mia vita prima di imbattermi in Jerusha "Judy" Abbott. E sì che l'ho conosciuta soltanto ieri a mezzogiorno! Credo che sia diventata la mia amica letteraria migliore di sempre, di certo la più incantevole che sia mai stata tratteggiata con penna e calamaio, e - ho il sospetto - quella il cui conforto cercherò più spesso. (Sarà divertente, Judy! Berremo tè e parleremo di Shakespeare fino a notte inoltrata! Io, te e Sally, che è adorabile quanto te).

Insomma, Cristina, ti devo quasi tutto quello che sono come individuo pensante. Ti strapazzerei di coccole!

Giss Golabetoon says

I first read this book as a translation when I was a teenager, I loved Judy and daddy long legs, but that was

only the first book, then I found out there's a sequel and i had to have it, I got it and i read it and never had I been more touched so deeply, the only other writer who does that to me is Charlotte Bronte and Jean Webster is a true disciple.

I can't explain the softness of the feelings she has me feel, she makes my eyes well up talking about the mundane things, she breaks my heart out of sheer love I feel for the characters she makes, she makes me relive all the romance of all the centuries, and so when I got this book as a gift in English I couldn't contain myself, I rushed home to read it and because of how much I love it, I did myself the pleasure of reading it all out loud, I had to see that I love these words at 30 as much as I loved them at 13 and I did, actually i love every word more, i love the fact that it's an epistolary novel, how Sallie sits down to write her heart out before it implodes with emotions, I think I had to do the same.

Wirepuppy says

I just remembered "Daddy Long-Legs", a book that I really loved as a young teen. My mother gave this to me when I was something between 12 and 14 because she had read it when she was younger and she thought I might like it. I read this book quite a few times when I was younger (I read it in German back then and I've never actually read the original). I just really liked the character of Judy Abott and the way she had this whole new world to explore after spending her whole life in an orphanage, how there was so much for her to learn and so many books to read. I just checked on Wikipedia and it was actually written in 1912, which is so weird, because when I was young I always thought it was written in the 50s - I guess because the edition I had was published in the 50s. I have this image in my head of Judy sitting in her room in college in this tower in her window seat, reading (and it's snowing outside). It's strange sometimes, how certain images just stick with you even if you don't remember much about the book (although I remember this one quite well because I read it so many times). I didn't have a clue at the time what the word "Communist" meant, but I was convinced that I was one because Judy wrote in one of her letters to Daddy Long-Legs that she thought she was a Communist.

It all just came back to me somehow, I'm not even sure why. But I'm definitely buying the English version sometime soon. :)

It's really cute and probably a rather a girlish book - it's an epistolary novel about a girl named Jerusha Abott (nicknamed Judy) who is taken out of an orphanage and sent to college by one of the orphanage's trustees because she is really talented at writing and he wants to offer her the chance of getting a good education, despite the fact that she's really poor and has been brought up in an orphanage. The only thing she has to do in return is to send him a monthly letter. She's not even supposed to know who he is (he never answers her letters, either), so she decides to call him "Daddy Long-Legs" because the only time she actually saw him was from far away and she only saw his back and his shadow (which had those long legs, hence the nickname).

I just loved discovering the world through Judy's eyes and I think this is well worth a read.

Amber Stokes says

Rating is for *Dear Enemy* (4.5 stars) - read *Daddy-Long-Legs* previously and separately from this collection. Greatly enjoyed both stories! Although *Daddy-Long-Legs* is my favorite of the two, currently. :) (It's possible that *Dear Enemy* will only grow in favor as time goes on, though!) Loved hearing secondhand about Judy's life in *Dear Enemy* and loved seeing the John Grier Home blossom under Sallie's tenacious and passionate care.

Potential Spoiler:

I found it very interesting to see shades of *Christy* and *Jane Eyre* in the romance of *Dear Enemy*!

Bee says

Absolutely charming!

Where has Jerusha Abbott been all my life? As a devotee of plucky heroines like Anne Shirley and Jo March, I am so surprised that I never discovered this book when I was younger. I'm happy to run across it as an adult, though. I have the two-book collection and have only read 'Daddy-Long-Legs' so far, but 'Dear Enemy' is waiting on my bedside table, so I may edit this review.

'Daddy-Long-Legs' is in epistolary novel told from the perspective of the letters between a young orphan, Jerusha "Judy" Abbott, and her mysterious benefactor, dubbed Daddy-Long-Legs from her only half-glimpse of him: his shadow on the wall making his tall figure appear even taller. As he funds her college education and 'delivers' her from life in an orphanage, she writes him on a regular basis, which was his only stipulation in putting her through school. Along the way, she gains experience and confidence and becomes quite an independent heroine. I loved her humorous, cutely-awkward outlook on life and her irreverent letters to Daddy-Long-Legs. There were a few (although obvious to me) twists & turns in the story and it has a neat little happy ending, but I absolutely adored it.

Janice (Janicu) says

A really charming classic; this is the story of Jerusha who grew up in a charity home and has just been given a scholarship to go to university. Her mysterious benefactor (who wants to be known only as Mr. John Smith) asks only one thing: that Jerusha write him every month with an update on what she is learning, but not to expect any reply. Because Jerusha saw him walking away once in the fading light and had an impression of a tall man with a long shadow like a spider, she nicknames him Daddy Long-Legs, and proceeds to write him very cheerful and cheeky letters; far more often than once a month. Here's an example: "Dear Daddy-Long-Legs, You never answered my question and it was very important. ARE YOU BALD?". This continues throughout the 4 years and of course at the end we find out who Daddy Long-Legs is.

Elaine says

At this point, I have only read the "Daddy-Long-Legs" part of the book. It was a quick, really delightfully fun read! I liked the format -- getting to know Judy and follow the story line through Judy's letters to her benefactor. The drawings were also very cute. I felt like I had figured out where the story was going fairly early in the book (and I was correct), but the journey was so enjoyable getting there that I didn't mind the predictability.

Favorite quote: "It isn't the big troubles in life that require character. Anybody can rise to a crisis and face a crushing tragedy with courage, but to meet the petty hazards of the day with a laugh -- I really think that requires *spirit*." (p. 38)

Runner up #1: "It isn't the great big pleasures that count the most; it's making a great deal out of the little ones--I've discovered the true secret of happiness, Daddy, and that is to live in the *now*. Not to be forever regretting the past, or anticipating the future; but to get the most that you can out of this very instant." (pp. 97-98)

Runner-up #2: "I think that the most necessary quality for any person to have is imagination. It makes people able to put themselves in other people's places. It makes them kind and sympathetic and understanding. It ought to be cultivated in children." (p. 70)

Okay, now I can go read "Dear Enemy" -- I'll be back!

November 1st and I just now finished reading "Dear Enemy." It also is a quick and enjoyable read. I would probably only give it 3 stars instead of 4. I still like the format of letters telling the story. This time, Judy is on the receiving end of most of those letters which were penned by her friend, Sallie, who is now in charge of the children's asylum where Judy once lived. Initially, I felt as though Sallie's personality was a carbon copy of Judy's. I wanted Sallie to have her own distinct character. A more defined and deeper character developed as the story progressed so I actually liked that about this book. I also felt like there was more substance to the story line in the final 30-40 pages and I particularly like the way it ended. I found "Dear Enemy" to also be predictable as was "Daddy-Long-Legs" but this time I was partly correct and partly incorrect. (I like to be surprised.) Sorry, I did not capture any favorite quotes this time. Still good for a few chuckles and a fun, light read.

Final comment: Considering when these books were written (1912 and 1915), I think I would put them in a Timeless Treasures category.

Suad Shamma says

This review is only about Dear Enemy:

Very disappointed. I honestly couldn't finish this book, because I found many parts of it offensive. I realize that the period it was written in, these prejudices were normal, but my mind would just not let me accept it. It made me lose respect for Sallie's character, and also for Jean Webster.

I couldn't believe no one else has noticed these things, or if they have, they're very few indeed. The strongest theme in this story is that of mental disabilities and special needs - "defective" children, Sallie called them. The way Sallie refers to them and speaks of them with such huge disregard is shocking and quite upsetting. The way they are easily discarded with because they are taking the places of more able-bodied, healthy children is really disappointing. And yes! That's exactly how they were treated and what Sallie said when she referred to finding institutions for them. Again, I realize those were different times, but my "modern", "progressive" mind could not accept it as OK. When Sallie blatantly mentions how she thinks people with mental illness, or "developmental delays" should not be allowed to procreate so that they don't allow for their genes to spread, or when she discovers one of her girls is an "idiot" and tries to find different accommodations for her, or worse! When she continuously gets angry with the doctor - her Dear Enemy - and demands that he come back and stop treating those mentally ill people he's gone to care for...no. Just no. I cannot read this and be OK with it. To interweave all this wrongness with a love story? Give me a break. It's shameful. It really ruins the whole idea of Daddy-Long-Legs for me, especially the fact that Jean Webster framed herself as socially progressive and a feminist in her first book.

Disappointing.

Zahraa says

Daddy-Long-Legs

" I like to pretend that you belong to me, just to play with the idea, but of course I know you don't. I'm alone, really."

Rebecca says

How is it that I'm 32 years old and just discovering *Daddy-Long-Legs*? Such a delicious book: girlish and feminist, secretive and frank, old-fashioned and progressive, all at the same time. How exciting to know that there are still so many wonderful books waiting to be discovered. (And so many of them freely available via Project Gutenberg!)

I feel as happy as the delightful Judy Abbott felt at the end of *Daddy-Long-Legs*.

ETA: Good heavens, I do believe that I enjoyed the second volume even more than the first! What a delightful pair of novellas.

Anne Rioux says

I have had a lot of fun discussing this book with my students in a course on the female Bildungsroman. Two of them read it as children, and although it is known today as a children's novel, it was read by adults as well when it was first published in 1912. My adult graduate students enjoyed reading it and particularly loved the heroine, Judy (Jerusha) Abbott, who is spunky and really comes into her own over the course of the novel. *Daddy Long Legs* is a novel in letters, all of them written by Judy to her unknown benefactor, who has provided her with a college education.

The book participates in a tradition of women's college novels that implicitly addressed the concerns many (male) authorities had about women gaining access to higher education. *Daddy Long Legs* celebrates college and the growth that it allows women. The big question for many readers is whether or not the heroine will continue to grow after the end of the book. I won't spoil the ending, but I will say that through our class discussions, most of my students felt that Jean Webster portrayed a progressive heroine who refuses to allow others to direct her fate.

We especially enjoyed comparing her to Jo March in *Little Women*. My students felt that in many ways Judy was able to find her voice to a greater extent than Jo. As one student put it, Judy was recording in her letters her "authentic self" rather than pursuing and "ideal self," as Jo was. T

he book is also a *Kunstlerroman*, as it narrates a young writer's development of her creative identity. There are some lovely passages in which she is reveling in her freedom to write, as Jo did. For instance, "Isn't it fun to work . . . ? It's especially fun when your kind of work is the thing you'd rather do more than anything else in

the world." It's wonderful to see a 1912 twenty-year-old girl/woman devoting herself to her writing and never once feeling guilty about it! For that reason alone, I would strongly recommend it.

Qt says

I thought this was a fun book, light and charming--I loved reading the protagonist's letters (they made me want to write better letters!) and her bubbly descriptions of college life were delightful. I had skimmed this book years before, so much of its content wasn't new to me, but I'd forgotten many of the details, and it was fun to revisit.

Carlie The Bookish Girl says

4.5 stars.

Definitely one of my childhood favs :)

Noelle says

Dearest Judy---can I call you Judy?

Forgive me for jumping ahead of myself but in my imagination we are already the best of friends. I've already let Anne, Jo and Sarah know to make room for you at our lunch table. I feel like I know you so well! Reading your letters to Daddy Long Legs (DLL) was like reading your diary and I bet it felt like that to you too, with him stubbornly refusing to reply and all. (I knew he'd cave in eventually. I mean, how could he resist? You are awesome.)

Your letters jumped right off the page showing how smart, resourceful and hilarious you are. I hate to think what might have happened to you if you hadn't written that funny paper about your life at the orphanage, cracking DLL up enough that even though he was a trustee of the very orphanage you were making fun of, he decided to send you to college. And to become an author no less! Forget being best friends, I might just want to BE you!

Getting to read all of your new and exciting experiences in the outside world was so gratifying. I rooted for you so hard, Judy! And you didn't let me down. You approached every challenge with such pluck that I couldn't help compare it to my own attitude and sad to say, Judy, but I'm often an ungrateful brat. You'll forgive me though won't you? I love to read too. And write letters! And have adventures! I already laugh at all of your jokes. You'll be such a great influence on me, I can already tell.

I heard that you had a recent opening for a penpal and well, might as well just come out and say it---I'd like to apply for the job. What do you say, Judy? Will I do?

Affectionately,
Noelle

See the full feature Maggie and I did about Daddy Long Legs at Young Adult Anonymous.

