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When her mother died in a fire, eight-year-old Jerri thought life couldn't get worse. She was wrong. Sent to live with people who didn't want her, Jerri was powerless to stop her once-happy childhood from becoming a nightmare of cruelty and neglect. Only a stubborn belief in her own worth and a fierce will to live allowed her to reach adulthood physically and emotionally intact. This is a book that will inspire not only those who have been orphans or foster children, but anyone who has known the pain of being unwanted.

Letters My Mother Never Read Details

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Reader says

“The struggle for my soul is on. I am obsessed with thoughts about how to stop this emotional battering. I find myself staring at tall buildings, thinking of how easy it would be to step off a tenth floor balcony and fly from this existence into the next. I am constantly thinking of the pros and cons of staying in this world or leaving it. The end seems to be beckoning me, luring me to give up.”

These are the words of Jerri Sueck. Jerri's nurturing mother was killed in a fire when she was only 8 years old. From there, Jerri's once-promising family life quickly fell apart. Entrusted to the care of her grandmother, instead of being loved and supported, she was emotionally and physically tormented - ridiculed, starved and isolated to the point of helplessness and hopelessness. After finally breaking free from her abusive grandmother, the only reward Jerri received was getting stuck in the loveless foster care system which, for her, only meant a cycle of rotating foster parents who refused to fully accept her. Everyone talked down to her like she was a nothing and no one wanted to adopt her! Finally, 17 years-old and no one to count on for love or support, this grueling emotional trauma leads Jerri to give up altogether. She decides that she doesn't want anyone to adopt her; that she is unworthy of anyone's love.

Jerri's tumultuous journey through orphanages, broken promises and unrelenting setbacks mount, and she turns to reading books as a way of gathering the strength to carry on. In Jerri's words: “When I read, I am transported through time and space to other worlds, worlds that offer me a glimpse of the lives of people I have never known. I can leave the loneliness of this world and enjoy the adventure of being somewhere else...Reading softens the sharp edges of my reality. For a few fleeting moments, it lets me live the lives of people in faraway worlds. Reading is like a Novocain shot to my soul. It numbs all my pain.”

As painstakingly heartbreaking as this story is – and it IS about as sad as it gets – Letters My Mother Never Read also inspires readers to overcome life's challenges and embrace life's blessings. In the end, if someone who has survived as horrifying of a childhood as Jerri's was, then it stands to reason that anyone – regardless of circumstance – is capable of following suit.

Susan says

This book made me see people and foster children in a whole new way. I couldn't believe the way that they treated this girl and her brothers - especially her own family. I think that the grandmother in the beginning had no right to blame her for the fact that she wasn't her blood. And I thought it was especially cruel that she didn't let them be involved with the family. And the step-dad? Yeah; he wasn't much better. I think he should have helped. But what I did like was that in the end she did find some peace. This book was simply... wow.

Angelica De says

Once you read this book you just can't imagine a child's life so horrible. How can someone just have the heart

to judge and neglect kids and not show any love and care there suppose to experience there whole life. This book is based on the author's life. Jerri Diane Sueck's mother died in a trailer fire and there sent to there mother's husband parents where there hated just because they are not blood related except for the younger daughter Alice. Jerri and her 3 brothers are to stay in the coal room in there adoptive father's parent's house. There barely fed they have to wear the same clothes evryday for 2years. There neglected, hated,humiliated,etc. There put in an orphange because there adoptive father didn't want them anymore there seperated from there little sister and in the orphanage they barely get to see each other. here sent to many foster homes and the twin boys are adopted and seperated from there brother and sister.Jerri is 18 and to old to be in the orphanage she moves out sent to live her life. She went from having the worst childhood someone can ever imagine to actually having a pretty succesful life she's happy she stay intouch with her siblings. What she's trying to tell people is imagine how a kids life is when they don't parents or even family relatives who show love to them. They grow up with knowing that they were never wanted and cared for and loved.

Kimberly says

I only give this book five stars for its content. I will not comment on the style of the writing or anything else that may be objectionable to the rating itself. This book really hit close to home. As a Social Service major currently in college I really felt a connection with this book. It was interesting to see the workings of the foster care system through the eyes of a child, and also being able to compare the differences between then and now is astounding. I do not recommend this to someone just looking for a light read. It is light in terms of page count, but the content is heavy and depressing. I do recommend it however to someone who is entering into social services. It's a pretty good look into the psychological aspects of small child going through so much physical and emotional trauma.

Juan Bravo says

I think this book is a very sad book.it is Sad how jerri was treaten as a kid and lived to tell the story. it is sad how there mother died in a trailer fire and no one would tell her.i cant believe the step father didnt do anything like standing up to her mother. I like how jerri took cared for her little brother and was very responsible. Overall i love this book and again one of the best books.

Vicki says

I thought this book was well written and did an excellent job of portraying the authors point of view within the foster care system.

It was horrifying to read about the abuse Jerri and her brothers tolerated as young children. It was also just as upsetting to read about her upbringing in neglectful foster homes.

This book makes me pray that no other child ever goes through the system like she did.

Esme_weatherwax says

(Spoilers are in review)

I found this story both disturbing and in an odd way comforting. I was greatly disturbed on how the kids were treated. I found the Coal Cellar chapter the hardest to read. I do not understand how their adoptive father could treat them like that and allow his mom to treat them in such an abusive manner. Although towards the end she finds out why her mom's side of the family did not take them, but it's no excuse. She is a lot more forgiving than I would have been. I also don't understand why her 2nd foster mom took her in if she did not want a teenage girl to begin with. It would have been better if Jerri was left at the orphanage than taken by that woman. The way the guidance counselor treated her made me shake my head. I was glad to see that some of the nuns were kind to her and tried to help her out.

However in spite of all this she went on to earn her masters and she ended up so much better than most people would have been in her situation. Her brothers also turn out ok. What really shines through is the fact that she could have been so bitter over what happened but she is not.

I am surprised she remembers what she thought when she was 8,9,10....., I think she does a good job telling her story and I was pleased to see she was able to help other kids who had lost a parent.

Sandy says

I'm really annoyed to find out that apparently, there are two versions of this book published in different years. The second version, published a few years after the first, is almost twice as long as the version I recently bought, which was a brand new paperback. The only thing I can see that would even give anyone a clue that there are indeed two different books (aside from the page count) is that one has "...The Whole Story" written after "An Abandoned Child's Journey" on the cover. Note to the publishers/whoever makes these decisions: NOT COOL. Either make a completely separate book that continues on where the last left off, or at least give the new version a different name and explain that a lot of content was added! And maybe, you know, stop selling brand new copies of the first edition altogether, ten years after it was originally published. I'm annoyed that I did not get to read the 'full' version, and I will not be purchasing another copy so that I can re-read half of the same book again. I just can't justify it when there are over 500 other books on my 'to-read' list, with more added constantly. Still, I feel cheated.

The only reason I even stumbled across this information was trying to find interviews or more information about the author, because I felt like the book fast-forwarded through parts of her life too quickly, with gaps left in the stories where I felt like there must have been more to be told. The first interview I read was before the book was finished and published, and stated she had a 445 page manuscript, which immediately peaked my interest, and a little more digging turned up the second edition published three years later, with twice as many pages.

Haley says

This book is really good. I'm vacillating between four stars and five stars because...

1) 5 Stars - This was such a moving read. Even though I'm a crybaby, it's not usually books that make me

cry. This book made me cry though. Jerri's story is so intimate - as a reader, she makes you feel like she's telling you a secret that she wouldn't just share with anyone. You almost feel honored that she chose to open up to you.

2) 4 Stars - There is literally no "comic relief." Jerri lived a tough life. Her book will not make you smile or laugh, BUT...

3) 5 Stars - Jerri makes you think about how you treat others around you - people about whom you might not (probably do not) know the entire story.

I read this book as a part of an 8th Grade book club, and it stimulated lots of interesting discussion about the assumptions we make and the ways we treat people.

Natalie says

spoilers

I cannot think of a time that I have been angrier at humans. I am absolutely appalled at how the nuns, social workers, guidance counselor, and foster families treated her and the other orphans. How DARE those nuns (not all of them, as some were genuinely nice) call themselves servants of God. And I thought my high school guidance counselor was bad, looking me in the eyes and telling me she hopes that I never have children? Her guidance counselor would hand her papers and say to have her parents sign them, then say, "Oh wait. That's right, you don't have any!" I pray that all of these horrid people were reprimanded and not allowed near children ever again.

Patty says

Such a sad story. Jerri had amazing strength and resiliency. It sheds a lot of light on the world of abandonment, neglect, and the foster system from a child's point of view. I am never really sure why these types of books draw me in except I want to know how someone manages to survive and who helps them along the way.

Ruth Lopez says

Letters My Mother Never Read by Jerri Diane Sueck is a based on a true story novel. Jerri grew up being an orphan. Let's take a few steps back, Jerri was a young child whose father left the family picture but her mother remarried another man and eventually had his child. Since they were moving out from their trailer. Her mother went to the trailer which was leaking gas and she did not know. Leading to an explosion. Her mom's side of the family could not take them in because they had their own families to take care of. Her stepdad's family treated her and her siblings like if they were nothing to them. It came to the point where the stepdad's mother told him to get rid of them. Which he did, he took them to an orphanage. That is where she grew up in. Due to her rough past she became successful. She is now a known author.

Catherine Stepherson says

Good read very touching.

Yael Barber says

I admit this book is heartbreaking and sad, but its just mind blowing to me. About 5 children loose thier mother in some type of fire and have to live with family members that treat them as animals. The story is told from Jerri the second oldest girl who is also the author of this book. To tell such a life story of losing her mother at 8 and living with her fathers family after leaving foster homes to be living in a cold basement without wearing clothes at night etc Jerri is writing to her mother (whom she believes is watching over her) about whats happening to her.

Maurice Daily says

bitch
