



The A-Word

Joy Preble

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“Light, snarky, and heartfelt... The A-Word rolls along cheerfully through Halloween pranks, high school football, investigative reporting, angel-powered action, and a very realistic amount of aimless driving around.”

—School Library Journal

Jenna Samuels and her guardian angel brother battle heavenly head-honchos and earthbound bullies in this Texas-set hilarious follow up to The Sweet Dead Life.

It's been almost a year since Jenna Samuel's stoner brother, Casey, bit the dust and returned as her guardian angel. A year since Casey and his “angel boss,” Amber Velasco, saved Jenna's life and helped her foil the bad guys—more or less. A year in which Jenna has solved the true mystery of the universe: how to get one Ryan Sloboda to ask her out.

Jenna's feeling mighty cheery about life and love. But Casey, whose doomed relationship with Lanie Phelps (who has no idea her boyfriend is, well, dead) isn't doing much to distract him, has his own big question: Why is he still hanging around?

Bo Shivers, a heavenly head honcho Jenna and Casey didn't even know existed, might have the answer. Bo knows something big is coming. Something that might just change everything for Jenna Samuels, who once again finds herself up to her non-winged shoulders in heavenly secrets of global proportions—just as she's finally found the perfect Homecoming Dance dress.

The A-Word Details

Date : Published May 13th 2014 by Soho Teen (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9781616952907

Author : Joy Preble

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Paranormal, Angels, Fantasy, Supernatural, Fiction

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From Reader Review The A-Word for online ebook

Kristina says

I received this galley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you SOHO teen.

I loved last years, The Sweet Dead Life, so I was so excited about getting the chance to read the follow up, The A- Word. Jennie has grown a lot since the events from the first book, but I still felt so bad for her.

A lot has happened to Jenna after the events in The Sweet Dead Life. She's learned that a crazed madman has been poisoning her family. Because of this her family is still not whole. Her mom is distant and her dad still lives (part time) in Austin. If that wasn't enough, her brother, Casey, saved her life in a public place, and now management (aka-the head Angels) are punishing him. Jenna is happy that Casey is still around, and she hopes that he stays her guardian angel for a long time to come.

Jenna is only 15 and has already dealt with so much. I felt so bad, especially because all of her problems are connected to things that she isn't allowed to talk about with anyone. She always has to lie to her best friend, and she hates doing it. But Jenna is also growing up and is interested in boys, and I loved watching her innocent flirting with her crush, and eventual boyfriend, Ryan. Ryan was so sweet and perfect for Jenna.

I really enjoyed watching Jenna grow into her own. In the first book, she was a very weak 13 year old, and not just because she was dying. She just didn't have a lot of confidence, her family issues were tearing her apart, and after her brother died she felt she would never be ok. But in this story, I loved how much more self-assured she was. She wasn't afraid to stick up for herself or speak her mind. She even surprised herself sometimes after she said something!

I loved the writing in The A-Word. It flowed so nicely. Jenna was so funny, there were so many times that I couldn't help but laugh out loud. I am so nervous for the next book in the series, but I am excited for how the series will play out.

Libbie says

Preface: I read a lot of YA novels., both paranormal and contemporary. I don't know why the genre appeals to me as much as it does, I just go with it and eat them up like popcorn at the movies. Some authors nail the narrator voice perfectly, some sound like adults that are trying too hard to throw teen-slang in there to sound relevant. In THE A-WORD, Jenna's voice – both in her thoughts and dialogue – is spot on.

I've got two boys – 17 and 20 – and throughout reading this book, and the first in the series, it felt like I'd gone back to those early high school days with them and were listening to their friends tell me a story. I'm still trying to decide if this was a good thing. Yes, the author nailed the voice, but at the same time, it made for oppressive reading at times. I grew weary of references to her "signature look" or "signature jeans" and to the incessant reminders of her brother's weed habit and the time she walked into his room and found him in a compromising position.

Read the rest at All Things Urban Fantasy

Dana Wright says

Jenna Samuels has indeed had a very interesting year. She was poisoned, her brother is dead and returned to her as a guardian angel and her father is off in la la land in Austin. Her Mom is still half out of it after being drugged with memory loss drugs and her love life is just picking up.

Life with a window into A-world is not as peachy as you'd think it would be. Jenna has some hard life issues to look at, starting with who killed Amber, her brother's angel boss. We meet Bo Shivers (I love that name!) and learn a whole new side to the angel game. Not everything is as cut and dried as people think. There are shades of gray with rules that are sometimes not exactly clear for angels and humans alike.

Jenna teams up with her new boyfriend Ryan and her best friend to puzzle out yet another mystery, landing herself in deeper trouble than ever before. The child Jenna is beginning to grow into a young woman, if she makes it out alive. This book is choc full of Southern fried Texas sass, kolaches, eternal questions and some very zip-tastic one liners that had me snickering into my coffee.

5/5 Fun, humorous and fit for teens of all ages. This book is a keeper and I can't wait for more!

Jennifer Haight says

Joy Preble's The A-Word is a funny, charming and page turning treat. It is the sequel to The Sweet and Dead Life but can be read independently. The story takes place in and around Houston and the sense of place is evident in everything from how the characters speak, to what they wear and eat. Local readers will enjoy the references to Torchy's Tacos, H.E.B and football games. Readers from elsewhere can gain insight into what life in Texas is like.

The story is told from the perspective of Jenna Samuels. She's a somewhat innocent high school student who is crushing hard on her first boyfriend, Ryan Sloboda. What she can't tell him or anyone else is that her brother is an angel and that he works with a team of angels who are embroiled in fantastically awkward situations centering on corporate foul play. Preble manages to engage readers in all of the complicated relationships while keeping the spirit playful.

There's the allusion throughout the book that "something bigger is brewing" and I for one can't wait to see what adventures lay ahead for Jenna.

Holly says

I was offered this book from the publisher for an honest review.

I will say, I liked this book better than I liked the first one. The first one introduced this mostly-normal world with a twist on angels, but this one had better character development and growth. I'll always take the latter

over the former, even if the former is what gets me interested in the book in the first place.

So, I really like the characters in this story and how they never quite abide by what you think they will. Angels with drinking problems and who like to smoke pot do not exactly embody "angelic" behavior. And there's something freeing in that. There's also something highly ironic in that, which is probably why I find it really funny.

I wasn't sure at first, but I like that there's nearly a year between the first book and the second book. It gives the characters time to grow up. It makes the timeline more believable, too. Finally, Jenna's in high school instead of middle school.

I will say that some parts do seem a bit slow. I didn't notice the story really picking up until probably the last third. (The first third was pretty good pace wise, too.) I think I noticed a similar problem with the first book too. Anyway, it really just feels slow as Jenna tries to piece together whatever mystery she's dealing with at the time. And there are some exciting bits in there, but it would be more exciting if she could ever figure things out earlier.

Generally, I like this story. There's a lot of potential in it, as to where it can go from here. Even though I had never heard of this series a month ago, I genuinely want to know where Jenna's story goes next.

All Things Urban Fantasy says

Review Courtesy All Things Urban Fantasy

Preface: I read a lot of YA novels., both paranormal and contemporary. I don't know why the genre appeals to me as much as it does, I just go with it and eat them up like popcorn at the movies. Some authors nail the narrator voice perfectly, some sound like adults that are trying too hard to throw teen-slang in there to sound relevant. In THE A-WORD, Jenna's voice – both in her thoughts and dialogue – is spot on.

I've got two boys – 17 and 20 – and throughout reading this book, and the first in the series, it felt like I'd gone back to those early high school days with them and were listening to their friends tell me a story. I'm still trying to decide if this was a good thing. Yes, the author nailed the voice, but at the same time, it made for oppressive reading at times. I grew weary of references to her "signature look" or "signature jeans" and to the incessant reminders of her brother's weed habit and the time she walked into his room and found him in a compromising position.

Voice aside, I have to applaud THE A-WORD for frustrating me. It's a common pitfall in YA land when the hero or heroine is faced with mystery or decisions. So often, the author will forget that teenagers, for the most part, are reckless and quick to rush in...pardon the pun...where angels fear to tread. They employ an adult's caution. Not in this book. Jenna is rash, quick to anger and even quicker to jump to conclusions that aren't always the right ones. Did I want to shake her? Of course. At the same time, her actions were true to her 15 year old self.

I loved finding out more about Bo and Amber, about the bigger mystery carried over from This Sweet Dead Life, and new addition Ryan just added to the richness of the supporting characters. He was seriously wonderful and reminded me a lot of my sons at that age. And for all the frustrations, Jenna broke my heart a little, too. Her brother Casey did, too.

I'm sure to pick up the third in the series when it comes out. For all the repetitive phrasing about signatures and weed, I'm intrigued by the mystery and pulled in by the still-unanswered questions.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

The A-Word is about how Jenna's life has never been the same since her brother died and came back as an angel. He hangs out with other angels. They follow a complex set of rules that starts out with: 1. Don't reveal your existence. and 2. Don't ask a lot of questions about how or why you're here. Jenna is caught in the middle, able to see angels for reasons that are never fully explained in this book other than "she's special" but she's not allowed to tell anyone about them. Jenna, the main character, is a feisty, swearword throwing, Texan high school freshman who wants to look good for her boyfriend and confide in her best friend about her new, angel-filled reality. She's not what I would call a strong heroine, but she's no blushing violet either.

My beef with this book is that nothing much happens. It feels very reminiscent of the Sookie Stackhouse books but with angels instead of vampires. And, like Sookie, sometimes entries in the series are more about the relationships between the main characters instead of the small mystery or over-arching plot about vampires. Because this is the first book I've read in the series, I'm neither invested in the characters nor do I know their backstory. So, the book dragged for me. Also, in a book supposedly about angels, the focus of *The A-Word* was on high school hi-jinks and the angel's drama about still being on Earth but no longer being human. No thanks. I wanted demons, devils, fire and brimstone falling from the sky. There is none of that to my utter disappointment.

Some quotations, to give you a feel for the book. The narrator is Jenna: *"Our family had never been what you would call religious, but let's face it: once your brother comes back from the dead as your guardian angel, you begin to wonder about things."* pg 21

One of the angels: *"The problem, my dear," he said slowly, "is that Amber and your brother and I have something in common. We're all stuck here against our will. I just like to experiment with it, is all. So far, I have found no way to beat the system. But I am ever hopeful."* pg 49

Jenna's dilemma: *"...there was this ENTIRE WORLD that no one else knew existed except for me. A world of glowing dead folk with Spidey senses that might work and wings that did work and an Angel Management System that had more loopholes and secret rules than the US tax system."* pg 84

I was surprised by the amount of swear words that appeared in what was marketed as a young adult story (But then I thought, come on, Heidi. The title of this thing is *The A-Word*. You'd think I'd have been clued in by that). I know that some parents don't have a problem with it, but, for those that do, you may want to steer clear of this read. Other than the language, there's nothing really objectionable in here... except the risk of being bored to death with the lack of adventure/action in the story. Young adult readers who enjoy contemporary books with a little bit of urban fantasy on the side, may enjoy *The A-Word*.

Thank you to Soho Press for sending a free advance reader's copy to the library for review purposes.

Joli says

I signed up to participate in The A-Word tour because I'm always enjoy discovering new authors. I had not read any of Joy's books before, and this one sounded like it would be really entertaining. It was after I had been accepted to participate in the tour that I realized it was the second book in a series. I was so worried that I needed to read the first book to understand the background and what was going on. Thankfully when I did start reading The A-Word, it gave me enough background to catch-up and know what was going on and it can be read as a stand-alone.

The A-Word was an all out hilarious read. Jenna is a character that has a wicked sense of humor and I looked forward to reading whatever would come out of mouth next. She tells her story journal-style which helps move the pacing along and "catches" the reader up on things they might have missed. I liked this style of storytelling.

Some of my favorite moments were between Jenna and her brother, Casey. Their sibling banter was entertaining because they would give each other a hard time, but you could tell there was so much love between them. I enjoy reading stories about siblings, and this one was made even more special because of Casey's role as Jenna's Guardian Angel. It wasn't the obligation that he felt to protect her, but there was an immense amount of pressure from it too.

I enjoyed the mysterious parts of The A-Word as well. Why were these angels keeping all of these secrets from each other and why don't they know the sources of their powers? What is the larger power at hand? And when Jenna gets in the mix of it all, how can they keep it from her? The thing is, they can't - she's a curious girl and wants to figure it out and that is what made The A-Word enjoyable and entertaining.

I'm happy to have discovered this book and this new-to-me author. Liking the book so much and Joy's style of storytelling and her characters, I must go back and read the first book in the series, The Sweet Dead Life.

Paula Phillips says

Ever wondered what it would be like in the After-life ? Would you like to be a Guardian Angel? The past year for Jenna has been anything but boring and mundane with so much a' happening from her brother Casey's death, her own poisoning and her mum is spaced out half the time and her Dad now off with a new life in Texas. If you were like me and thought that having the ability to seek the afterlife and take a looksie at what's happening would be awesome, then after reading "The A-World" , it will have you thinking a whole new outlook as Jenna has to discover who killed Amber . We first met Amber in the first novel as we learned that she was Casey' s Guardian Angel Boss , we also meet a new character named Bo Shivers which does have an eerie feel to it and read as he teaches readers that being an Angel isn't all it is cracked up to be and that it's not all sunshine's and rainbows - that there is darkness looming about. As Jenna is pulled into the world of mystery once again, she dons her Nancy Drew hat and skills along with boyfriend Ryan to figure out the new mystery at hand but can she do so before she finds herself six-feet under and donning a pair of angel wings and Angel status herself ?

Find out in this fun and light-hearted teen mystery with a hint of the paranormal/supernatural themes of Angels and the After-life.

Stephanie Ward says

3.5 Stars

'The A-Word' is the second installment in a young adult paranormal series that follows leading lady Jenna Samuels along with her brother, Casey, who is now an angel (a-word) as they try to go back to their normal lives after the catastrophe that happened last year - when Jenna almost died and Casey died to protect her and then came back as her guardian angel. Things are hard enough with high school, boys, friends, and the other things Jenna can't talk to anyone about except Casey - then enter the mysterious Bo Shivers. He's the boss of Casey's A-word boss, Amber. They didn't even know he existed until he appeared out of nowhere - a bit rough around the edges and with tidings of bad things to come.

I found this to be a fun and solid second book in a series that combines humor and paranormal elements to form an original creation. I loved all the tidbits of information we get to learn about throughout the book - about the angels, their history, the stories about the trouble that's coming - all of it had me fascinated from the beginning. Jenna continues to be a realistic teenage character who does a pretty good job of balancing normal teen problems with the A-word stuff that's going on around her. We see a bit of character growth in both her character as well as Casey's, which I thought was refreshing. The plot wasn't anything totally original, but the author did a good job with the humor and descriptions to make it stand out in its own right. I loved getting to know the secondary characters better as well as more of the angel lore and prophecies. Overall, this is a well written YA paranormal sequel in a series that gives a different and fresh look at angels and the humans they protect. Recommended for fans of the genre as well as those who enjoy fantasy and paranormal fiction.

Disclosure: I received a copy of the book in exchange for an honest review.

Margie aka The Bumble Girl says

Joy Preble has done it again! The A-Word is amazingly touching, funny, heartbreakingly realistic follow up to A Sweet Dead Life! Great writing, plot, mystery and intriguing characters! I need more books from this author asap!

It's been a year now, Jenna is turning fifteen, wants to get her permit and has her eye on a cute boy. Things have been better, she's got her health, her mother is better and working, her dad is kind of in the picture, but at least that mystery was solved. And her brother, Casey, well... he's still an A-Word for sure. And as much as Jenna tries to live a normal life, having the A-Word hanging around all the time is really hard. Having no one to talk about it, having to lie and hide everything that has happened to everyone, her mother, father, best friend Maggie and boyfriend Ryan, is not easy. She's been through so much already, having a couple of guardian angels around should make life a bit easier.

Now Casey is wondering why he's still hanging around. He's done his job, is there something more for him? The mystery continues when we learn more about Amber, the EMT that help pull Jenna and Casey out of their car wreck who, in the first book, we learn she's an A-Word too.. and now Amber's "angel boss", Bo Shivers, is in the picture. Bo is unpredictable, loud and acts like he knows it all. But he's so vague with everything that he says. Is it possible that he doesn't know as much as he says he does? Something big is about to happen! And all we can do is wait and see...

I am really enjoying watching Jenna grow into a mature and responsible teen. She thinks things through, she is overly thoughtful and caring and is now more confident being her own person and dealing with what life has given her. It's impossible not to want to grab her up, feed her and hug her to death!

Again, I cannot emphasize enough that the relationship between Jenna and her brother, Casey is spot on! The love/hate between them is endearing and realistic. Their one-liner banters had me laughing out loud. I adore them! It is the best written sibling relationship I have ever seen in YA.

Fast-paced, well-written and out-of-this-world!

I cannot wait until book 3 is announced!!!

Joy says

Of course I love it because it's mine. But beyond that, I'm thrilled for you all to read this sequel to THE SWEET DEAD LIFE! It's everything that angel books should be but aren't always. A Texas makeover of the genre. I hope it makes you laugh. I hope it makes you think. Plus there's romance for main character Jenna. Her first boyfriend! And a whiskey-guzzling, angry new angel named Bo. Enjoy!

Beckie says

Review will contain some spoilers. Be warned.

The A-Word picks up pretty much within days of where The Sweet Dead Life leaves off. Jenna is slowly trying to get back to normal, hanging out with her BFF Maggie and even trying to catch the eye of a certain sexy football player, Ryan. Jenna has accepted that fact that her life will never be the same. Her brother is a ANGEL or A-Word as Jenna like to say still having problems saying the actual word. "EMT" Amber, Casey's "angel boss" still remains close by to keep an eye on Casey and Jenna. Casey doesn't understand why he still remains earth-bound especially after he's used up his ability to fly after saving Jenna. He did what he was sent to do, to protect Jenna. Why hasn't he moves on?

Amber suddenly becomes more and more distracted and distant. Something's going on. Jenna and Casey need to find out what. Out of the blue, a dead sexy older man named Bo, "Bo Shivers" (what a name! ;)) comes into the picture and he may end up being the key to finding out what's going on with Amber. Bo happens to be Amber's "Angel Boss" and knows more than he's letting on. Although, the main reason Bo is hanging around is Jenna but why?

More mysteries than ever come out in The A-Word. Why is Amber acting strange, and how really did she die? Who is Bo Shivers and why is so attracted to Jenna. Will Casey even get to leave and be accepted into Heaven? Mostly, how is this all related to what happen last year?

All of these answers and more are revealed in The A-Word. You won't want to miss it!

There was so much going on this book that at times I was confused to where the story was going. Once again I wanted MORE of the paranormal aspect added and while yes there was a lot about angels, I just wasn't enthralled by it. At times, I was even kind of bored. While book one gave me a good mystery, The A-

Word fell short for me. I wasn't feeling Jenna's character as much as I did in book one. I also ended up really not caring much for Amber. Her story was just not very interesting at times for me.

The A-Word was very likable and has many great qualities. I feel more of the younger crowd may take more from this one more so than I did. All in all, I will admit it was a fun read. Jenna is just as funny as ever, and I loved seeing her grow-up and fall in love. I really enjoyed seeing more of the secondary characters Maggie and Ryan get more of a involving role in The A-Word. They really bring the book together near the end nicely.

A definite read for Middle-Grade/YA readers but just as fun for adults never the less. :)

Michelle Lee says

The A-word was a wonderful book full of mystery and confusion. It starts off with a girl named Jenna, who is a normal teenage girl who lives with her mother and her older brother Casey, but Casey is not what he seems. He is apparently already dead, and is now an angel watching over his younger sister. He is supposed to be up there, but for some reason he is down on Earth living his normal life with his family. The only problem is that he does not age. He has to do jobs from another person who is in the same situation as him. Her name is Amber, she pretends to be his manager and sends him off on other missions.

This series of books are just a mystery, that just make you want to read more. I would recommend these books to anyone into romance and mystery. Also, I am looking forward to reading the other books!

Marie says

It's been about a year since Jenna and her brother were in their car accident, which resulted in Casey becoming an angel. Together with angel Amber Velasquez, they solved the Renfrew mystery, healing Jenna and her mom. Things should be back to normal, right? But Casey is still here on earth (no promotion for saving Jenna), and he's been "grounded" for using his wings. Their father is still living mostly in Austin, and might even be seeing another woman. Even worse: Casey and Amber have started feeling a "spidey sense" that something is most definitely wrong. But what?

The best part of this book: the *author's* growth since the last book! You might remember that I wasn't thrilled with some of the writing in The Sweet Dead Life. The writing in The A-Word is so much better! The primary characters are more 3D and real and mature. The characters' actions and conversations feel more age-appropriate too. In the first book, Jenna's speech and mannerisms seemed much more suited to a high schooler than a middle schooler; in this book she actually is a high schooler, and acting like one. There was also a ton of putting-down of her brother in the first book and lots of drug references; in this sequel the brother is mostly clean, and there are only a few references to his past drug use. This leaves a lot of room for character development and plot.

The plot in The A-Word starts right away. There's a mystery and a sense of impending doom, and a new angel is introduced. Jenna is struggling with being a normal teen and also trying to help the angels fight the bad in the world. The mystery kept me guessing up until the end, and I totally enjoyed the ride. The angels have this great snarky sense of humor, as does Jenna. Along the way, Jenna will maintain her relationship

with her best friend, Maggie (who has her own fantastically fun quirks), and maybe start a relationship with a boy. :)

Overall, this is definitely a light YA read. But it's so much fun! I listened to the audiobook during my commute and literally laughed out loud a number of times. I recommend.
