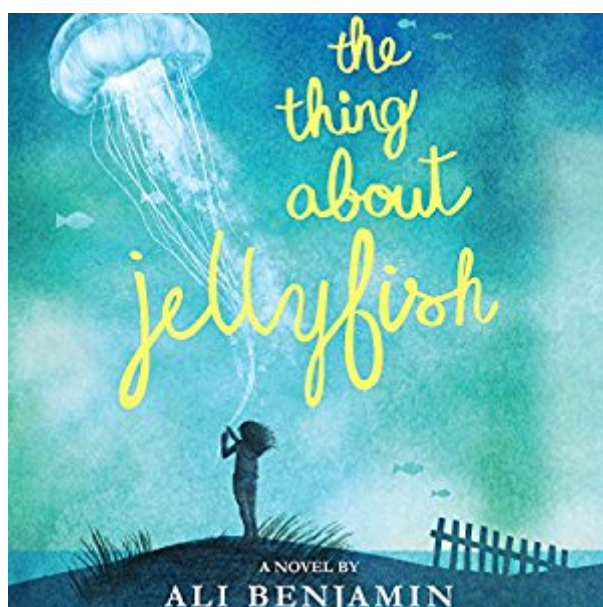


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The Thing About Jellyfish



Synopsis

A stunning debut about how grief can open the world in magical ways. After her best friend dies in a drowning accident, Suzy is convinced that the true cause of the tragedy was a rare jellyfish sting. Retreating into a silent world of imagination, she crafts a plan to prove her theory - even if it means traveling the globe alone. Suzy's achingly heartfelt journey explores life, death, the astonishing wonder of the universe...and the potential for love and hope right next door.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

An emotionally intense story is told here. This is a juvenile, but it certainly isn't a typical one. It's a multilevel novel aimed a bit more at girls but should affect guys too. The basic theme has to do with dealing with the death of a best friend and schoolmate. However, there's a lot more. Suzy is convinced that her friend was stung by a jellyfish and sets out to prove her theory. She's obviously a very bright student and is being well taught how to carry out a scientific project. Suzy is a very complex character and one the reader can love. The novel is strongly educational while entertaining. Suzy tells her story in the first person. There's a lot here also for parents who choose to also read the book. This is a sensitive masterpiece that I can recommend to child and parent alike.

Suzy is dealing with the death by drowning of her former best friend by indulging in self-imposed silence and a stubborn refusal to talk to anyone. This exploration of grief and denial is beautifully written with graceful notes and arresting observations on every page. It is also over 300 pages of precocious, self-absorbed navel gazing by a girl who is apparently unconcerned about and untouched by the emotional carnage she is leaving in her wake as a consequence of her behavior.

Mom, Dad, sibling, friends, teachers, and so on are just collateral victims of Suzy's journey. At the outset I alternated among: appreciating the tone and style of the writing and the beautiful phrasing and pace, checking to see how many more pages I had left, and wanting to slap Suzy in the head with a cold wet fish. Reviews and blurbs emphasize the elegiac passages, the jellyfish angle/conceit, and Suzy's marvelous search for personal and universal meaning as she navigates her own inner space. O.K. as far as that goes. Suzy is also cruel, irresponsible and a major narcissistic drama queen. This all makes the book interesting, maddening, annoying and compelling. I guess my point is that this isn't an emotionally satisfying trip down memory lane with Scout in "To Kill A Mockingbird". This is a roller coaster ride through the mixed up and complicated head of a conflicted and sometimes childish and dense twelve year old girl. It isn't all gauzy and upbeat and for all of its mild and mellow passages it is challenging and in many ways confrontational. So, if there was ever a read-it-yourself-and-see-what-you-think, this is it. Please note that I picked up a free copy of the ARC of this book at the 2015 ALA Convention. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.

This is a remarkable story. Ms. Benjamin took us through the feelings of a young girl who is dealing with grief for the first time in her life. Not only do we learn about Suzy, but we learn about jellyfish, things I'd never in my life known since I'm not a scientific person by nature. I found it fascinating, emotional, and the kind of book I will keep and never lend to anyone since I don't want it to disappear from my bookshelves. Yes, it's a Young Adult novel, but it kept my attention throughout. I read that Reese Witherspoon plans to make a movie based on this and hope she is successful as I would love to see it on the big screen too.

Thoughts: I saw this book in the bookstore a few months ago and instantly wanted to purchase it. The synopsis zapped right into my heart, the cover art was beautiful, and the story was very different from what I've heard before. Unfortunately, I was only able to get one book that day, and walked out with the Doldrums in hand. So months later, when my teacher announced that The Thing About Jellyfish is a Sweet Sixteen book, my heart leapt (even though, I have to admit, I kind of forgot about it). I snatched it up as quickly as I could and began reading it in earnest that night. There was a little apprehension, though, too, because my friend and fellow book-lover (especially Land of Stories and Ruby Redfort) had picked it up and set it aside just a hundred pages in. It wasn't really that interesting, she explained, when I gaped at her in horror. The Thing About Jellyfish is one of those books that you don't really know what to

think. At first, I was a little disinterested, too, as my friend had been. But as we began to dive into the story and I grew to know more about Suzy, the main character, my heart reached out to it. I was hooked. Suzy is a twelve year-old girl who's been having struggles with her best friend lately. The last time she ever sees her friend is when the friend is crying - because of something Suzy did to her. Days later, Suzy receives a phone call telling her that her friend drowned. Suzy goes into instant denial, because she believes her friend was an excellent swimmer and never could have drowned. Then, she learns about a certain kind of jellyfish - a fatal one, that is - that lurks in the exact waters her friend drowned in. Suzy begins to research this jellyfish, believing that it was responsible for her friend's death, with a sort of crazy obsession. Suzy was likable and easy to relate with, but also easy to sympathize with. You feel bad for her. She's in mourning, and she makes some decisions she probably wouldn't usually make. This, however, is what makes the story interesting. Suzy feels ready to travel all around the world, alone, to prove her jellyfish theory, and you respect her - and pity her - for it. The writing was beautiful, but I especially loved the flashbacks to before Suzy's friend dies. They help build the story, while showing the reader the meaning behind Suzy's pain. It's a very poetic book, one that will have readers hanging on to every word until the end, even though, like I've mentioned, it was a little slow at times. I was a teensy bit disappointed with the story - I have no idea why, there just was a little feeling of dissatisfaction at the end. Book Scavenger and Lost in the Sun had the same feeling, a feeling that there wasn't enough closure, I guess. Overall, however, I really liked this heartwarming, beautiful story, and would recommend it to anyone in a heartbeat.

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