



# **In Your Shoes**

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**The critically acclaimed author of *Lily and Dunkin* delivers another heartfelt story that will remind readers you never know who needs a friend the most, about two imaginative tweens who help each other find new beginnings.**

Miles is an anxious boy who loves his family's bowling center even if though he could be killed by a bolt of lightning or a wild animal that escaped from the Philadelphia Zoo on the way there.

Amy is the new girl at school who wishes she didn't have to live above her uncle's funeral home and tries to write her way to her own happily-ever-after.

Then Miles and Amy meet in the most unexpected way . . . and that's when it all begins. . . .

## In Your Shoes Details

Date : Published October 30th 2018 by Delacorte Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9781524713737

Author : Donna Gephart

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade, Realistic Fiction, Death, Family, Contemporary

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# From Reader Review In Your Shoes for online ebook

## Debbie Tanner says

This middle grade fiction book is about two kids dealing with a loss. Amy's mom died and she and her dad have moved in with her uncle and her dad is taking classes so he can work in the funeral home. Miles lives with his mom and dad and grandfather and they're all still dealing with the death of Miles' grandmother. The friendship between Amy and Miles is lovely and their friends, Tate and Randall, are also terrific. There are strong themes of family, friendship, and dealing with the death of a loved one, all of which will resonate with middle grade readers. I can't wait to put this into kids' hands!

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## Patrick says

Love, love, loved it. Excellent story telling...

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## Gail Shepherd says

Full disclosure: Donna Gephart is a friend of mine, so this review may not be \*entirely\* objective. But I was blown away by Gephart's sixth middle grade novel, IN YOUR SHOES, and I'm confident I would have felt the same even if I'd never met her. I fell in love with the structure of this novel from the get-go: A "noisy, nosy narrator" opens the story with a bit of philosophical framing: how our ordinary moments are nestled inside an unknowable universe, on an Earth spinning 1,000 miles an hour on its axis; and furthermore, how stories themselves are constructed, sometimes propelled by no more than a bowling shoe falling out of the sky. This narrator drops in now and then through the course of the book to provide wise and witty commentary on the action: the tale of a grieving boy and a grieving girl, Miles and Amy, whose friendship and first crushes help them both cope with the death of a beloved family member.

There's also a story within that story, a fairy tale written by Amy, who is a budding novelist. Amy's fairy tale glancingly plays off the other themes of the narrative—resourcefulness, resilience, kindness, bravery, loyalty. Amy's writing and the way she thinks about writing are a meta-commentary on art and imagination, humorously exposing how the novel itself is constructed (the inciting incident, the twist, the climax, etc.) IN YOUR SHOES would make a fantastic companion read for a middle grade fiction writing unit or any literature unit looking at how stories are put together. But most importantly, Gephart has woven all these many layers together beautifully, into a hilarious, heartbreaking tale of how we manage the inevitable losses in our lives.

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## John says

"We can enjoy our messy, imperfect lives so much more when we simply live in the moment, filled with gratitude for exactly what it is." —Donna Gephart, from In Your Shoes

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## **Sarah says**

A boy meets girl young love story or, more specifically: bowling boy meets funeral home girl. New in town, Amy is walking to school one morning when she is whacked in the head by a flying bowling shoe. The shoe's owner, one Miles Spagoski, is a proud member of the family that owns the local bowling alley. Amy and her father have recently moved to town following the death of her mother. They live with her uncle in his funeral home. Her father is away during the week taking classes in order to be certified to work at the funeral home. (Which seems an extremely odd career choice following the passing of one's spouse.) Lonely, Amy one day wanders into the bowling alley and, in order to learn the rest of the story, (Paul Harvey reference, anyone?) it would behoove you to read this new middle grade novel. Honestly, one of the best first relationship books I have ever encountered. the characters are both likable and relatable, the story is tender and innocent, and, the dynamics between Miles and his beloved grandfather kick it up even further.

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## **Kari says**

What serendipity when I opened the mail yesterday for the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame and found a fantastic middle grade novel about bowling!

As Group Tour Director for the Museum, you can imagine my frustration at some of the circumstances the characters endure, but for unbiased readers, the ending is more than satisfying.

I zoomed through this story in less than 24 hours and thoroughly enjoyed it. My thanks goes out to the author for sending it along.

P.S. I bought ten copies for our gift shop!

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## **Shannon Hitchcock says**

We all read through the lens of our life experiences, and so much in this book resonated with me. I actually pulled out a highlighter and marked passages that would have been helpful to me growing up.

Miles suffers from anxiety, (so did I), and this is my favorite line: "Maybe his worrying didn't actually keep terrible things from happening. Maybe it just made him miserable."

Amy lives over a funeral home, and so you know death is going to touch both main characters, but this book is about so much more. It's about dealing with grief and being happy despite it. I cried during a couple of passages, and without giving away too much, want to say the ending is brilliant. It touched my heart in the best way. Brava to Ms. Gephart. I like this book even more than LILY & DUNKIN!

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## **Savannah Hendricks says**

Even though I'm 38, I related to Amy and her need to not spend much time in the lunch room. When I was in school I used to sit in the hall on the floor to avoid the lunch room. I didn't find peace in the library like Amy, because I hated reading, because it was hard for me at that time. Again, Donna doesn't disappoint. Her books are a great read for all.

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## **Stormi (BMReviewsohmy) says**

3.5 stars

So contemporary is not my usual genre, but I was curious about this one because of the blurb on the back, I will admit that it took me a bit to get into it but overall I did enjoy it.

It's about a couple of odd middle graders and the awkwardness that goes along with meeting new people and becoming friends.

Miles pretty much lives at his parent's bowling alley and is always working on getting that perfect score. He is pretty much a worry wart and you can tell by that first line up above. He is always thinking about death and is a little strange. Amy's mother recently died and so her father moved them to Buckingham, from Chicago. It's a huge change for her especially since she is now with her uncle who owns a funeral home. Her father is gone during the week learning how to work in a funeral home and her outlet for things is to write. She uses things that happens to her in real life and makes stories out of them.

Her first day of school starts off with a bowling shoe being thrown at her forehead. Miles and his friend had been fighting and Randall throw his shoe. Nice first meeting, huh? The next meeting goes just as well when she goes to the bowling alley and Miles accidentally spills his rootbeer on her. It's an awkward start but Amy kind of likes Miles and his clumsy ways. Then she meets her first friend in a library, Tate. It just so happens that Tate is friends with Miles and Randall.

The big thing in the story is the school dance. Randall is going with Tate and they are trying to get Miles to ask Amy but he is reluctant and doesn't really want to go to the dance, but Amy really does. Then some sad things happen and things take a bit a turn for Miles.

I really liked the characters even though they were pretty strange. I think they would be relatable to middle grade readers. They are at that awkward age that making new friends is a lot harder than it was when they were little. The pressure of dances and seeing the opposite sex in a different way.

I like how the author put Amy's story writing into the story so we kind of got a little story inside a story about a prince who was harry...lol. You just have to read it.

I understand the need to help middle graders understand loss and things like that but I was not ready to read a middle grade book that made me want to cry. I don't like crying especially over a scene in a book so for me I thought the last half was a bit to sad as I like happy MG books. It did redeem itself in the end. So I liked it but I didn't love it.

I would recommend it to those who like contemporary or have young readers who are into contemporary reads.

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### **Stephanie Ward says**

'In Your Shoes' is a wonderful new contemporary middle grade novel that tackles important topics such as mental illness, friendship, trust, trying to fit in, and family. I don't normally read this genre, but I was surprised at how much I enjoyed this book. The story was sweet and definitely relevant to today's kids. I also really liked how it touches on mental illness (in the form of anxiety) and makes it accessible to the age range of children reading the story. I believe it's important to tackle ignorance at a young age.

The main characters, Miles and Amy, were both easy to identify with right from the beginning and easy to connect with. They were both realistic with flaws and great traits alike and both saw and accepted these things in each other, which made their friendship all the stronger. I really identified with Miles due to his anxiety issues because I also suffer from the same affliction. Amy was the new girl who hates living in her uncle's creepy funeral home. I loved watching Amy and Miles meet and then seeing their friendship grow and deepen throughout the novel. To me, the plot was that important - the story was more about their friendship and how important it can be in someone's life. Also, the tough topics it touches on kind of take over the small details of the story, but it's something that I didn't mind at all. I felt this was more of a character study instead of an intense plot and the ideas it talks of are more relevant than the majority of the things that happen during the story. I definitely recommend this book to fans of middle grade, children's fiction, and contemporary fiction.

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

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### **Erin Varley says**

Miles, Amy, Tate, and Randall make for very memorable characters. Tough lessons are learned via the characters, and this is certainly a book I would promote as one to help with dealing with loss. One of my favorite parts was the story Amy writes and when Donna breaks the fourth wall with the narrator.

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### **Samantha (WLABB) says**

Rating: 4.5 Stars

What happens when the anxious bowler's shoe hits the lonely new girl on the head? They strike up a great friendship, of course.

- Pro: This book delivered so many feels! It was touching and heartwarming and just so precious and sweet. I swear my heart exploded over and over again as I read this book.
- Pro: Family was a really important part of this story, and Gephart doesn't just show the bright and shiny side of family. She also showed the imperfect side, and I like that she included some family conflict, because it gave her a chance to explore things like resolution and forgiveness.

- Pro: What an interesting group of kids. Amy was a writer, Miles was a bowling hustler, Randall was a fashionista, and Tate was a knitting weight-lifter. I absolutely adored all four of them, and their friendship was spectacular.
- Pro: Gephart really did an outstanding job thoughtfully exploring feelings of loneliness, grief, and regret. And, I loved seeing boys, who shared their emotions with each other. It's so important for young men to see that it's acceptable to be in touch with their feelings.
- Pro: I really enjoyed the way the story was told. It was alternating third person omniscient, with the addition of a third point of view, "a nosy, noisy narrator", who I really enjoyed.
- Pro: This entire book tugged at my heartstrings, but the ending totally snapped them. It was so, so sweet and unexpected, and I think it could give a lot of comfort to a tween, who had suffered a loss.

Overall: An endearing story of friendship, loss, endings, and beginnings, which touched my heart.

\*ARC provided in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Scott Fillner says**

Absolutely loved this story and the author's notes which followed. I can picture myself and friends reading this and helping us understand some of the feelings we experienced at this age.

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### **Nicole Hewitt says**

This review and many more can be found on my blog: Feed Your Fiction Addiction

This book about middle graders working through grief is sweet and heartwarming. I especially loved the emphasis on family bonds. Miles's relationship with his grandfather is especially sweet, so it makes it all the more heartbreaking when there's conflict between them. The book also deals with the topic of anxiety, as Miles struggles to let go of his fears. There's a cute middle grade romance, and a strong theme of friendship as well, which both add to the book's charm. With interesting settings (a bowling alley and a funeral home) and a ragtag cast of characters (one of whom has a slight disability), this book emphasizes that you don't have to fit a certain mold to be happy or accepted.

\*\*\**Disclosure: I received this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. No other compensation was given and all opinions are my own.*\*\*\*

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### **Lesley says**

It's difficult to write about loss—because everyone experiences loss differently, but death has become all too common, and teachers need novels to help their students deal with loss and gain empathy for their peers who

are coping with grief. “1.2 million children will lose a parent to death before age 15” (Dr. Elizabeth Weller, Dir. Ohio State University Hospitals, 1991); [last year] 400,000 people under 25 suffered from the death of a loved one (National Mental Health Association). Sometimes, especially in multi-generational households, the death of a grandparent affects a child as much as the loss of a parent.

Grieving her mother’s death, Amy is torn from her best friend and her home in Chicago to live in her uncle’s funeral home in Buckingham, Pennsylvania. Her father is learning the funeral trade and is away Monday to Friday, and Amy, even with her optimism, is not making new friends. Life hits a low when she sits down with girls in the middle school cafeteria—and they move to another table! But she meets a new best friend, Tate, a weight lifer with interesting fashion sense, in the school library, and they spend their lunch hours talking stories and eating Jelly Krimpets.

Meanwhile Miles is still grieving the loss of his grandmother while worrying about his grandfather dying. In fact, Miles worries about everything. His family owns Buckingham Bowl, and bowling the perfect game, especially while beating his best friend Randall, is his goal.

And a bowling shoe is how Miles and Amy connect—literally, both at the beginning and the end of this delightful middle-grades novel. In addition to Randall and Tate, Amy and Miles become each others’ support system through the special bond of grief and loss.

A delightful novel about the power of family and friendship which features two sports uncommon for a middle-grades book, female weight-lifting and bowling. The story also conveys the power of story, those we read and those we write.

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