



The Anatomy of Wings

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Ten-year-old Jennifer Day lives in a small mining town full of secrets. Trying to make sense of the sudden death of her teenage sister, Beth, she looks to the adult world around her for answers.

As she recounts the final months of Beth's life, Jennifer sifts through the lies and the truth, but what she finds are mysteries, miracles, and more questions. Was Beth's death an accident? Why couldn't Jennifer—or anyone else—save her?

Through Jennifer's eyes, we see one girl's failure to cross the threshold into adulthood as her family slowly falls apart.

The Anatomy of Wings Details

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From Reader Review The Anatomy of Wings for online ebook

Teen says

Told from the point of view of a younger sister, this is the story of a girl, Beth, that mysteriously goes wild, to the point of no return. Her family slowly falls apart and piece by piece we are given the story that leads to her death.

Set in a small Australian mining town in the late 70's early 80's, the story feels very disconnected 2009 US. The story felt surreal throughout, although the situations that Beth found herself in could all be relevant to teens here today--opportunities to experiment with alcohol, sex and relationships. There is a deep sadness in this book, in the family and in Beth herself, but it never really moved me. There are also a couple of chapters that did not seem to fit at all. They outline other people in their cul-de-sac's lives and just serve as a distraction from the main story.

I wouldn't really book talk this, unless someone had a very specific situation they were looking for. The ending isn't particularly enlightening or encouraging, although the family does start to recover themselves from their grief. I would recommend this for highschoolers although the POV is a preteen and the main character is only 14.

Sue Gerhardt Griffiths says

4.5 stars

The authors writing style is just so lovely which made this book an easy and enjoyable read, despite it being awfully sad. The story rolled along at an unhurried pace giving the reader time to linger over its poetic chapters. Ten year old Jenny, the narrator of this story loses her singing voice - struggling with her sister's death - her friend Angela is on a mission to help her find it by sifting through a box of keepsakes containing Beth's personal effects. The story switches back and forth, before and after, Beth's death which I had no trouble following but some readers may find confusing as each event is not identified, but truly if the reader takes the time absorbing each word there won't be a problem.

A very moving novel which I recommend.

Karen Foxlee's first novel The Anatomy of Wings has won many awards and it's not hard to see why. I will be on the lookout for more of this authors works.

Book 'f' of the a-z author challenge 2018

Pamela says

I found this book an interesting read. We get to watch a young teen (Beth) spiral out of control - into drugs, sex, and depression -- through the eyes of her younger sister, Jenny. Jenny and her friend begin to investigate

the events surrounding Beth's death. I loved the parts of the book that focused on Beth's behavior and her family's reaction to those behaviors and her death. It felt honest, and was very compelling to read.

However, a few things the author did made it hard for me to completely like this book. The time period was never really established until later in the book. While there are hints throughout the book, I was never completely sure if this was the early '80s, or if the characters just really liked the '80s era.

Interspersed in the novel are chapters that outline the lives of their neighbors. While the reason for this becomes clear at the end, it was still very confusing and (I feel) unnecessary.

I also did not understand the angel aspect of the story. While Beth claims to have seen and, I assume, talks to angels, it's never really expanded upon. She also seems to have "magical powers" from these angels that helps her transform people into something better, but at the same time this "miracle" causes Beth to spiral out of control. It's never really explained to my satisfaction, what that aspect of the book was all about.

Sheralyn says

Not in the least impressed. The story is confusing and jumps in too many tangents; the purpose of which I just do not have the desire to try to understand. The language is terrible, unacceptable, and I was really not impressed with the author's idea of a 13 year old sleeping with a man in order to "free" or "fix" him as the character constantly feels compelled to do with insects and ruining the main characters life while she is at it. Not worth finishing or starting. I am sorry I gave it the time I did.

Michelle Wrona says

I hated this book. I couldn't even finish it because it was so boring. It doesn't even tell you how Beth died! It tells you how Jenny and Angela use a book of cases to figure out the mystery but half the time to doesn't mention it at all! Don't waste your money on this book, it not worth a cent.

Lisa says

Jennifer Day's big sister Beth has died, and her family isn't coping. Aged only ten, Jenny tries to make sense of what has happened, trying to unravel Beth's secrets while also dealing with her parents' and sister Danielle's distress. She has to confront Beth's bad-girl reputation in a tough outback mining town, survive at school and manage her own grief as the fragile remnants of her family tear each other apart. The trauma of all this has robbed her of her powerful singing voice and although she can't articulate this clearly, she knows that solving the mystery of her sister's bizarre behaviour is the key to recovering her voice - and perhaps her equilibrium – in time for the school eisteddfod. With her bemused friend Angela who keeps a Book of Clues, she muddles around seeking answers...

This could have been a dreary, sentimental story, but Jennifer's voice is strong, funny and perceptive. Her naïve voice is authentic even when she confronts brutal events that make this a book for mature readers.

To read the rest of my review please visit <http://anzlitlovers.com/2011/12/11/th...>

Karen says

I'm not really sure why I finished this. I was completely lost the first 50 pages. The author was trying so hard to be poetic and abstract that I was completely confused. The sentences were often structured in a confusing way as well.

I figured it had to get better, but then as the story unfolded it was depressing and sent mixed messages. Why was she getting lighter when inside she was getting darker and lost? Was the ending supposed to be uplifting?

Why, when it seemed the story was being told by the younger sister's perspective would I suddenly find the narrative jumping to detailed descriptions of what someone else was doing when she wasn't even there? Why do I care about the neighbor's sub-stories? They don't take part in the plot at all.

I don't know. I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone.

Matylda Saresta says

<http://mniejniczominireczne.blogspot...>

Madeline O'Rourke says

I want to start by saying that *The Anatomy of Wings* is very well written. The story is good and the characters are distinct, the writing flows well, and the structure is right. I really don't have any complaints about the novel. It's just that I didn't care about it. It may have been my own reading mood at the time, it may have been the story itself, but I just didn't have any connection with the characters or their story. Again, well-written—Foxlee has a great style—I simply didn't care about it.

Sidenote: Foxlee has a great style. Her editor doesn't. I want to fight whoever was in charge of commas. I can't even say that they limited comma use to only when absolutely necessary, because comma usage didn't even meet that standard.

Emma says

The last line of the Goodreads summary says it all. I was initially hesitant to read this, just because it is meant to deal with a lot of big issues through the eyes of a 10-year-old. I was pleasantly surprised by the whole thing. Jenny Day's voice is poignant and tells a story that everyone else is afraid to.

The story is told through flashbacks. Jenny is trying to figure out why she can no longer sing since her sister passed away. She believes that the two events are connected and is trying to uncover the real reasons behind Beth's tragic death. Here's my main problem - we see all the things that Beth does, and how she's trying to help everyone, but we never really see HOW she helps people or WHY she has the compulsion to do so. I

find it so hard to relate to a character who's motivation I can't grasp. Surprisingly, Jenny was the most relatable at ten, although I often forgot she was only ten. I don't think her voice was always that of a child. She was dealing with a lot of things that ten year olds don't have to deal with.

The prose, however was so beautiful! It really did keep me going, even when I wanted to stop because of the sadness. I think the way that the family reacted was spot-on. The author really portrayed the family in a realistic way.

Overall, I thought it was an excellently written book, with a very interesting and intelligent ten-year-old for a main character.

My rating: 4 out of 5

Wendy MacKnight says

Five stars feels like they're not enough for this book. Written mostly from the perspective of young Jenny Day, the book tells the story of the last year of her older sister Beth's life, as she struggles to unravel the mystery of what led to her sister's death and the loss of her own singing voice. Never have I read a more heartbreakingly true representation of young women navigating a world that wants a piece of them, how their blossoming is something to be plucked, not celebrated. Foxlee's imagery and use of language is lyrical and brilliant and a joy to read. The mystery and storytelling compelling; you keep turning the pages, desperate to learn what happens next. Karen Foxlee is brilliant and this is a book that deserves to be read again and again.

Anindita Satpathi says

This book seems to be about premature sexual awakening rendered in the most mellifluous and vague of terms, because otherwise its entire premise falls flat on its face. Beth, Danielle and Jenny are sisters (in that order) living with happy parents. One fine day, when they are out for a picnic, Beth faints and since that day she glows and her beauty increases by the day. Heck, by the hour. Jenny, the narrator, who follows her sister around everywhere, perceives Beth's increasingly 'wild' behaviour as a blossoming of sorts. Beth starts talking to herself and looks off into the distance and seems to know secrets that burn through her bright blue eyes. She starts hanging out with the 'bad' girls, who can't keep up with her badness (except Miranda). She is self-assured and cool and someone you'd want to be best friends with. Beth sleeps with men to 'fix' them and is largely indifferent to intercourse except when it's with boyfriend Marco, who, by the way, treats her like dirt. Their first sexual encounter screams rape and their later encounters reek of guy-bored-with-nagging-girlfriend. I wonder if she knows how to nag because she's just thirteen and only strokes his face and asks him if he has a sadness within, to which he responds with stereotypical manly brusqueness. The sadness bit makes you barf, yes. If they had feelings for each other, I wonder why it was all about the sex and why he lied about keeping his half of the heart-shaped locket? I am suffocating in the cliches here!!

Now getting down to her transformation, which happened much before she met Marco, the change comes

over her the day she fainted and also started menstruating. In fact, she probably fainted because her menses started. This is not mentioned through the rest of the book, but I (much like the dogged yet completely redundant Angela) would like to believe holds the key to the story. The angel bit (that keeps reappearing) is a red herring, so pay no attention to that. Now, if the story is about heightened sexual awareness and hot-girl-blossoming-into-even-hotter woman, (remember she's 13 years old) why does she treat her sexual awareness and physical beauty like a cross she has to bear? I am guessing it was not about Beth communing with angels as her Nanna suspected, but about turning into an angel herself who saves men by sleeping with them (yikes!) I wonder why she never wanted to save women. I never got around to feeling sad for her because I was too annoyed by her being precocious.

I like Danielle (yes, the other sister; she's mentioned just a few times) because all she ever does is glower at Beth. She sees the cool sister without her halo and as a troublemaker and likes to just be left to herself and to revel in melancholy. Shucks, the book should have been about her; she's the one who had to wear a horrible, clunky back brace and has no boy issues. If this is a book specifically for Young Adults, the validation of Beth's behaviour as otherworldly and angelic is disturbing, because you never get to hear her motives from her own mouth. She concedes to sex without mutual consent on several occasions and looks heroic while doing so. Honestly, do we need such portrayal of a female lead who is supposedly a strong character? For all Beth's self-assuredness, I just wish Foxlee had explained the role of Beth's agency in her supposed sexual awakening, because she just seems to be drifting along with the wave as it hits her. The trend of gliding over Beth's thoughts is consistent through the book. Just accept that she's mysterious and beautiful, dammit!! If this transformation is simply in Jenny's eyes, the all-seeing narrator, she should have done a better job of explaining Beth's suicide. Didn't see that coming, did you? Hit you right between the eyes? But a flower as fragile as her has to die, or the world chokes her. *Sob*

The language is kind of nice though, which is how I managed to get through it in one day. Going down in the list of 'love to hate it'.

Annalisa says

There are some things Foxlee does very well. Some of her writing is very beautiful, almost ethereal. She set up her mining town very well. I could feel and smell and see it. And her characters were very well defined too. I loved the mom's warnings, especially about cemeteries full of kids who died from running with scissors. I related most to her, the heartache and frustration of a wayward child and what you'd do if you saw your child down spiraling. I thought the neighbors were interesting. And I loved Danielle's Milwaukee neck brace and perm fund and Jennifer's inquisitive nature.

But I don't think Jennifer was the right narrator for this story. She was too young to understand what Beth was going through. Sometimes that made for a nice contrast with what we the reader deducted from her account and what she understood. But sometimes she had to know way more than she would logically have known and it made me disbelieve her narration. And sometimes she doesn't know enough so in the end most of reader's questions are unanswered. We never know if Beth's seizure at the lake had anything to do with her being down and that pushed her toward her relationships with Miranda and Marco or if those relationships destroyed that. I never knew whether to trust the glowing and the grandmother's account and how that affected Beth. We never know what happened in the fight Jennifer was so anxious to get answers about or that last night either. And we never know (view spoiler) I was okay with some unanswered questions. Jennifer is never going to fully understand what happened to her sister, and that is the often the case with death, but I also didn't get a sense that this was about coming to terms with not knowing, more like how her death affected everyone in the town. In the end, I felt incomplete with the story.

I thought Beth was an interesting character, but I didn't know how to feel about her. The contrast of her being this angelic creature and yet a "naughty" girl, almost more angelic the more naughty she got, was strange. And I didn't get a real sense of her turmoil because Jennifer didn't understand it. She acted more like a 17-year-old and I had to remind myself that she was 13/14, but that could have been because to a 10-year-old she seemed so adult. When we discussed this in my book club, one of the girls brought up the correlation between Beth and the myth of Icarus. Icarus flew too close to the sun despite his father's warning and the wax melted on his wings plunging him into the sea. I'm not sure what sex has to do with saving people, but Beth set out to save Marco that way, and probably a lot more people, but in the end all of what she messed with was too much for her young age and it destroyed her. A great metaphor, and some beautiful writing, I'm just not sure the story was all that satisfying.

Maree Kimberley says

I absolutely loved this book. I bought it at the Brisbane Writers Festival on a whim, and didn't know anything about the book or its author when I picked it up. It grabbed me from the first line and didn't let go.

It's a very Australian story in terms of setting but its themes of grief and loss are universal. At times I found it unbearably sad, as Jennie and her family struggle to deal with the weight of the absence left after the death of Beth, Jennie's older sister. But Jennie also has a warmth and light to her that stops the novel drowning in despair, despite the grief that is suffused all the way through the narrative.

If there is one minor criticism I have about this book it's that the point of view confused me a few times, particularly when Jennie was describing things in the first person that she could not possibly have witnessed. But I accepted this quirk in perspective and just went with it.

I was completely drawn into the world of the novel. The book shimmers with the heat and dust of the desert, and the deft rendering of the location adds to the sense of suffocation within the novel. All the characters and their relationships are beautifully drawn. The prose is gorgeous, tight with grief but never veering into sentimentality. I definitely want to read more from this author.

Highly recommended.

Jean Leong says

I loved this book. I don't care what the low rating on this page proves, it proves nothing and does the book absolutely no justice. The Anatomy of Wings was downright awesome and beautiful and painful to read. I couldn't even try to explain what this book was about without sounding boring but this is not a boring book. I repeat, NOT A BORING BOOK. It's just so different in the sense that the topics they touch on is revealed so raw and real to the readers. The book's most outstanding qualities is the beautiful, almost 4-dimensional characters. The characters build up the more you read and the more you get sucked into this....this madness.

One of my favorites.
