



# How Not to Disappear

*Clare Furniss*

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## How Not to Disappear Clare Furniss

Our memories are what make us who we are. Some are real. Some are made up. But they are the stories that tell us who we are. Without them we are nobody.

Hattie's summer isn't going as planned. Her two best friends have abandoned her: Reuben has run off to Europe to 'find himself' and Kat is in Edinburgh with her new girlfriend. Meanwhile Hattie is stuck babysitting her twin siblings and dealing with endless drama around her mum's wedding. Oh, and she's also just discovered that she's pregnant with Reuben's baby.

Then Gloria, Hattie's great-aunt who no one even knew existed, comes crashing into her life. Gloria's fiercely independent, rather too fond of a gin sling and is in the early stages of dementia. Together the two of them set out on a road trip of self-discovery — Gloria to finally confront the secrets of her past before they are erased from her memory forever and Hattie to face the hard choices that will determine her future.

Non Pratt's Trouble meets Thelma and Louise with a touch of Elizabeth is Missing by Emma Healey, Clare Furniss' remarkable *How Not To Disappear* is an emotional rollercoaster of a novel that will make you laugh and break your heart.

## How Not to Disappear Details

Date : Published July 14th 2016 by Simon & Schuster Childrens Books (first published December 31st 2015)

ISBN : 9781471120312

Author : Clare Furniss

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Fiction, Romance

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# From Reader Review How Not to Disappear for online ebook

## Beth Bonini says

This is Clare Furniss's second YA novel - her first was the well-received *The Year of the Rat* - and she has definitely demonstrated that she can write realistic YA with enough depth for an adult to read and enjoy. As with her first novel, this one takes place in contemporary London. Furniss writes characters with believably messy and complicated personal lives, but relatably so. The tone is not melodramatic in any way, although the protagonist Hattie is dealing with some fairly big problems. Neither gritty nor glamorous, Hattie lives in the kind of middle-class home that will be familiar (or at least imaginable) to many readers. She has a loving but slightly chaotic family life, and loyal but somewhat inconsistent friends. She also has a big problem: she is pregnant from a one-night stand with her friend/crush Reuben.

Hattie's pregnancy is an important storyline, but it is actually secondary to her relationship with Gloria - the great-aunt she never knew she had. Gloria is a former actress and more than a bit of a 'character'. She is also suffering from the early stages of dementia. After a rocky start, Hattie and Gloria decide to take a (somewhat improbable) road trip together in order to unearth/resolve some of the secrets and mysteries of Gloria's early life.

I had some trouble warming to the book at first, and particularly to Hattie's voice. However, about halfway through the book I felt like Furniss really started to take command of the different threads of her story. Gloria's past is very compelling, and the reader - along with Hattie - has to unravel it like a mystery and piece it together like a puzzle. There are also some interesting parallels between the two, seemingly so different, characters.

Many readers will have an older relative who suffers from some form of dementia, and I thought that this aspect of the story was skillfully and sensitively handled. I also appreciated the fact that Hattie has a loving and supportive family life. (The character of her 'almost' step-father as particularly endearing.) The ending was satisfying, although - again - realistic, as opposed to simplistically 'happy' and tidy. Overall, I enjoyed the novel far more than I expected to.

This novel appeared on the 2017 UKYA Prize shortlist.

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## Bookread2day says

Review by [www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com](http://www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com) I really loved reading this book. Clare Furniss is an outstanding author building truly amazing characters, with an incredible story line. I just couldn't put this book down. I read this all night until I had finished. I loved reading about the relationship, Hattie with her great-aunt Gloria, who no one knew existed, who now has early stages of dementia. Hattie finds herself pregnant by Ruben, and in her mind she is set to have an abortion. Hattie tells her aunt Gloria her secret about being pregnant. Gloria has secrets of her own that she shares with Hattie. I highly recommend How Not To Disappear as it is one of those books that is a must read.

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## Jenna says

This review also appears on my blog, [Reading with Jenna](#).

*I received a copy of this book from Simon and Schuster Australia. All thoughts and opinions are my own.*

This is a story about two women from different generations who go through similar experiences of being pregnant at a young age. It is a heartwarming story about family and motherhood and I enjoyed it very much.

In this book, Hattie discovers that she's pregnant with her best friend's child and she has no idea how to handle the situation. She spends her time ignoring the situation and when she receives a phone call one day about a crazy great-aunt that she never knew existed, she decides that it's the perfect distraction. Her great-aunt, Gloria, suffers from dementia and wants to tell Hattie some family secrets that nobody else knows about before her memory fades. Together, they go on a trip to places from Gloria's past and Hattie discovers some answers to her predicament.

This has two separate storylines. We get Hattie's story and how she handles the knowledge of her pregnancy, as she travels through England with Gloria. We also get Gloria's story through flashbacks spread throughout the book. I really enjoyed that both of these storylines were included in the book and, being a lover of historical fiction, I really liked the time period and setting of Gloria's story. Gloria's past was like a mystery that was slowly being unravelled throughout the book and I appreciated the little twists that the author placed in the book. I did predict the twist that came at the end of the book, about halfway through the novel, but I enjoyed it nonetheless. I also appreciated the dual perspectives that we got, but I did have some issues with it. Hattie and Gloria's voices were too similar for my liking. I couldn't really tell the difference between the two perspectives and if there wasn't a difference in font and formatting in the book, I would've been completely confused. Gloria also acted and sounded like a child most of the time, which didn't help the confusion.

I wasn't a fan of the writing style in general. There was far too much telling and not enough showing, which made me feel a little bit disconnected from everything that was going on. I couldn't fully immerse myself in the story and I just wasn't engaged with what was happening. The book could have been a much more emotional read, if I had been shown what was going on rather than told. Hattie was also a chronic question-asker and I felt like I was even being told what questions I should be having about the plot. There were questions being thrown at me in quick succession, and I couldn't help but think that they were questions I should be formulating by myself. I also thought that the flow of the book wasn't very good. A lot of sentences were all mid-length and I think the novel needed a bit more variation in sentence length in order to have better flow.

I really enjoyed the plot of the story (both the main plot and Gloria's past) but the book was a little bit slow in pace. There was a big section in the middle of the book where nothing really happens and I felt quite disengaged. There were lots and lots of flashbacks in this middle section and I felt like the book wasn't really progressing. They were pretty much just driving, eating, sleeping and walking around the streets, in the present. We were getting to know Gloria's story (at an agonisingly slow pace) but not getting to know more about Hattie at the same time. I did highly enjoy the first and last thirds of the book though.

The characters of this book were likeable and relatable for the most part. I loved Hattie and how kind-hearted she was. She was also very mature and put herself and her well-being first when it came to making decisions. I also really liked Gloria's character but, like I mentioned before, she acted like a child a lot of the time, which was pretty frustrating to read about. I also didn't think that Gloria's dementia was handled very well.

There were a couple of info-dumps about dementia but I found that it was the same information being dumped over and over. I didn't think we needed constant reminders about one symptom of dementia. The information was all presented as research from websites that Hattie had done, which made it sound very unreliable. I thought the dementia could have been incorporated and developed a little bit better in the book.

Even though I have quite a lot of criticisms about the book, I still enjoyed it. I thought the story was heartwarming, well-conceptualised and brought out all the emotions in me, but was slightly lacking in its execution.

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### **Annalise says**

Ah, this book. I loved it.

Hattie is a teenager, who has just found out she's pregnant with her best friend's baby. And she's not sure how to feel about that. A distraction comes in the form of her long lost aunt Gloria, who's losing her memories, and so Hattie takes her on a road trip of places that mean a lot to her so she can remember them one last time.

I really love books about teen pregnancy and the issues faced by pregnant teens, and this was such a heartwarming coming-of-age story that read like an adult novel, with complex and diverse characters who almost jumped off the page. At times, this book has dual narrative, which I loved, and the author doesn't shy away from difficult and complex relationships and conundrums where there is no 'right' answer. This is a heartbreaking and heartfelt novel that I couldn't put down.

If you're looking for an emotional rollercoaster with a strong focus on family, **HOW NOT TO DISAPPEAR** is a top choice.

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### **Grace P. (gracefulreads) says**

Wow! 4/5 Stars

**HOW NOT TO DISAPPEAR** is the gripping tale of Hattie and her great-aunt Gloria, who have not yet met until the start of the novel. Hattie is pregnant, and in a stage of denial about it, her dad died when she was little, and Gloria has dementia and is facing the memories of her complicated past. The plot mainly includes Hattie and Gloria going on a road trip to recover Gloria's past before she can no longer remember it herself. Along the way, Gloria reveals her life story to Hattie, and Hattie reflects on her own life and learns a lot about herself.

When I first started reading **HOW NOT TO DISAPPEAR**, I was a little skeptical of whether or not I would end up liking it. Little did I know, I would be sucked in and not be able to stop reading it. **HOW NOT TO DISAPPEAR** is not just one story, it's really two in one. I was not expecting that at all, and I was shocked by Gloria's story. This novel ended up being a very emotional and tough read, but it is also bound to leave an impact on readers. When reading it, you do not want to know any more details than a vague synopsis to avoid spoilers.

Full of devastatingly real struggles and redemption, *HOW NOT TO DISAPPEAR* is shocking and bittersweet, and it will have you guessing the entire time. I enjoyed reading about the number of places Hattie and Gloria visit in the U.K., and there was humor mixed in with the seriousness that lightened the mood. Hattie's family was incredibly entertaining and fun to read about. They were so supportive of Hattie, and it is so necessary that supportive families are represented in YA because they do exist out there, even if YA makes you think otherwise at times. Even though this book is closing in on 450 pages, it did not feel that long, the chapters are short, and there are plenty of parts and flashbacks from Gloria's point-of-view. It turned into a rather surprisingly quick read for me.

I highly recommend *HOW NOT TO DISAPPEAR* to both teens and adults who can handle mature content in YA and value a compelling story. This book shines a light on the contrast between the way things used to be and the way they are now. This novel is powerful, thought-provoking, yet heartfelt, and readers will be glad they decided to pick it up.

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## **Carol - Reading Writing and Riesling says**

Adored this book!

### **My View:**

This is an engaging read, at times hilarious, at times poignant and heartbreaking – it may sound like I am describing a modern YA romance but this book is so much more than that. It is a coming of age story, a story of the circle of life – and in particular focusses on end of life/beginning of life, relationship and dementia. But it is also about memory and identity, prejudice, love, family, assumptions, domestic violence and unplanned pregnancy...this narrative discusses so many issues you will wonder how the author managed to weave them all into a totally engaging and meaningful story. I enjoyed every moment of this – so much so I had a tear in my eye at its end.

In the acknowledgments Clare Furniss gives “heartfelt thanks” to the many friends, family and colleagues who “made the writing of this book possible in so many ways, from proofreading, and advising on historical details to child-minding and ...support.”(p.407)

I would like to give my heart thank thanks to Clare Furniss for:

- Writing diverse characters - with flaws, with temperaments, with histories, with dignity, with life experiences – the good and the bad.
- Writing empathetically about aging and dementia.
- Writing a complex narrative with so many social issues woven into its fabric - book clubs take heed – this book will suit your purposes very well.
- Writing strong female protagonists – I loved them all – Gloria, Hattie, Kat, Edie, Alice, Hattie's mum....
- For not taking the easy way out and letting the car accident resolve the “problem” – no spoilers here.
- For exploring and revealing the intricacies and diversity of relationships, the give and take, the abuse of.
- For allowing Hattie to determine her own future.
- For writing a wonderful mystery with twists and turns that you won't anticipate.
- For not sugar coating life.
- For the dual story line/dual time lines – I loved the social commentary, the social history.
- For writing a narrative that a fifteen year old or a fifty year old can enjoy.
- For giving me a most enjoyable and entertaining evenings read.

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## QueenFra says

It's was beautiful and depressing but I loved it.

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## Grace says

As I reached the end, I thought of the beginning...and it seemed so long ago!? Like, this story is magnificent and important - equally sad and delightful, then a bit more sad - but it's also long. Reading it felt like a commitment, and that's why I put this book off for so long. It was lovely though, when I was able to give it my time.

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## Emily Mead says

Eh.

I mean, I'm all for family stories but I'm really not a fan of the "past and present" approach.

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## REVIEW

**I read a lot of Aussie YA and US YA, so this UKYA was nice and refreshing.**

(also, that's a lot of letters)

(I apologise)

ANYWAY so How Not to Disappear is nice because it's mostly about FAMILY. Basically we've got this long-lost aunt who's got dementia, and a kindly neighbour reaches out to her only family – which just so happens to be our main character, Hattie.

**What I love about Hattie (apart from the fact that she's just super-odd) is that she visits this great-aunt who she's never met purely out of spite.**

And because her mum tells her not to. Now that is a girl I can get behind.

HOWEVER (which is not a surprise because I've been picky as of late), I was not the biggest fan of this book.

REASON NUMERO UNO:

The past and present sections.

I am a notorious grump when it comes to novels that switch between past and present, because 9 times out of

10 it just doesn't work, and one ends up being much less interesting than the other (usually the past).

REASON NUMERO DUO:

Narration from great-aunt Gloria.

I WANTED HATTIE. HATTIE IS THE REASON I'M READING THIS STORY.

**I also hated Reuben with a passion.**

Why is it that in contemporary books (and I'm talking chick lit as well) it's always the GIRLS who are waiting behind while the losers they profess to "love" are being jerkwads who don't deserve the time of day?

THIS. MAKES. ME. MAD.

**But I did like how all the family stuff tied together, how it came full circle, how their family was messed up and wonky but still really important.**

(Because I mean, I'm pretty sure everyone's family is messed up and wonky)

(Some more so than others)

(I mean, have you seen Game of Thrones)

**Basically: recommended if you don't mind books that switch between past and present, and if you like stories about family.**

I guess I'm just grumpy because I've only read ONE five-star book this year.

Humph.

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**Kirstie says**

Love d the characters in this book and thought it was a sensitive approach to dementia too

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**E L E A N O R (bookishcourtier) says**

an interesting read scarily similar to unbecoming. I feel like if had read this one first I might have enjoyed it more, but I felt like I was just reading the same book. and also I thought that some things weren't tied up at the end. but it was good.

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**Emma Carroll says**

A wonderful story of family secrets and huge bursting-with-life characters. I absolutely LOVED this book from start to finish. Perfect in so many ways- and definitely best read with a box of tissues to hand.



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## Abby says

4 1/2 stars.

√. Hattie as a main character was brilliant. She is so complex and mature for her age, and Furniss does a great job of making her real. Even though I haven't been in her position (hiding a teenage pregnancy), I felt like I could relate completely to her.

√. A thought that stuck with me while I was reading this was how Hattie was such a strong female character without having to be physical fighter. Her strength came from feeling her emotions, feeling scared and being brave enough to hold her head high, empathise with those around her, and carry on.

√. Similarly, I really liked Gloria. She completely didn't fit the stereotype of the old lady, sporting garish clothes, heavy makeup and a taste for champagne rather than tea. As with all of the characters in this book, she wasn't two dimensional at all. Every time you thought you knew everything about her, something else was thrown in to enrich either her character or the plot. And all the while, she didn't become the plot of her dementia, which made it even more emotional.

√. Despite the characters being so great, it was the message that really did it for me with this book. Like I said earlier, the emphasis isn't on shutting out the world and not being scared, it's about feeling it and being brave because of it. The message wasn't just directed at Hattie either - it was used in relation to the secondary characters too, whether it be Reuben or Hattie's family. I just thought it was great that it wasn't complete tunnel vision on Hattie and that the other characters mattered too.

√. No preaching. That is a major positive of this book. The topic of abortion and adoption is discussed and considered by Hattie but it never sounds like the author wants you to take a particular standpoint on whether you should agree or disagree with it. I am pro choice (with conditions) but never felt like my opinion was portrayed as being wrong or right. In that way, I think this book can be for everyone, no matter what your views are.

√. The writing and the characters in this book make it seem like it is beyond YA, really. I noticed a few other reviewers have said this and I completely agree that Hattie's maturity and darker subject matters are more New Adult. It can be a positive or a negative depending on your comfort zone but if you don't feel ready to branch out from YA, this could be a great transitional book. Give it a try!

✗. There are flashbacks to the fifties and sixties in this book when exploring Gloria's past, and those include racist language and domestic abuse. Just a heads up if you are sensitive to that kind of language. If it upsets you, you might want to give this one a miss.

This book is so under-appreciated! It was really great!

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## **Rebecca says**

How Not to Disappear was an emotional story that did not shy away from some difficult elements, and addressed those elements without making you want to stop reading it. By addressing troubling issues it showed how important it is that we face problems in our society and stand up to its flaws, such as racism and rape culture. It showed how important progress is, in that it reminds you of how much worse things used to be, but also how we still have room to keep improving.

While doing this, there was at the same time still a sense of humour which helped the book feel optimistic in the face of the tough decisions and situations that the characters had to deal with. There was an important message of keeping hopeful in the face of despair and this was helped by the fact that the two narrators still managed to find moments of humour, and it felt more realistic that way too, as it showed how complicated and mixed up life can be, with many different ups and downs.

The novel also had a wonderful use of language to convey emotion, it was evocative and heartfelt, and witty too. The language was well used to emphasise the significance of feeling in the story, and the importance of the idea of being alive in the moment and letting yourself feel in the moment.

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## **Bee Loves To Read says**

How Not To Disappear follows the story of Hattie and Gloria, Hattie's great aunt whom no one knew existed.

Together they go on a journey. For Gloria it's a chance to tell the story of her past, to have someone else know, before the cruelty of dementia takes it away forever.

For Hattie it's a chance to get to know her great aunt while having to make her own life choice on whether or not to keep her baby, a result of a one night stand with flaky best friend, Rueben.

This is a very emotional book, especially when all the loose ends are tied together. You're kept second guessing about Gloria's past and the twist is so raw and emotional I felt physically drained and emotional. I'm talking tears in my eyes kind of emotional. I loved Gloria and Hattie both and I recommend this book to everyone.

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