



All That Matters

Jan Goldstein

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What's the greatest gift that one person can give another?

Jan Goldstein's stunning debut novel, *All That Matters*, is a deeply moving, endearing tale of a young woman who, with the help of her feisty grandmother, makes a journey from the very brink of death and despair into a full embrace of life.

Jennifer Stempler has nothing left to lose: the love of her life dumped her, her mother died in a senseless car accident five years ago, and her famous Hollywood producer father started a brand-new family--with no room in it for her. So, 23-year-old Jennifer decides to pursue peaceful (permanent) oblivion on the beach near her home in Venice, California, drifting on a lethal combination of Xanax and tequila. But she can't even get that right.

Jennifer's depression is no match for her Nana's determination. Gabby Zuckerman refuses to let her granddaughter self-destruct. With promises made to Jennifer's father and doctors, Gabby whisks Jennifer back to her home in New York City, intending to prove to Jennifer that her life cannot possibly be over yet. In fact, it has just begun. Through jaunts in Central Park to road trips to Maine, Gabby teaches Jennifer how to trust and hope again. And by relating her own tragic and heroic experience during the Nazi occupation of Poland, Gabby bestows upon Jennifer an understanding of her own life's value. But when Gabby reveals a secret--one that proves to be Jennifer's toughest challenge yet--Jennifer struggles to find out whether the gift will sustain her.

Combining the unabashedly heart-warming sentiment of Robert James Waller's *The Bridges of Madison County* or Nicholas Sparks's *Message in a Bottle* with the irreverent humor of Jennifer Weiner's *In Her Shoes*, Goldstein's *All That Matters* is an inspirational first novel that leads readers to the core of what matters in life--family, hope, and savoring each moment.

All That Matters Details

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From Reader Review All That Matters for online ebook

Krystal says

I've been reading this book off and on for a week now. It has beautiful prose that I fall in love with, but the story is just not one I'm currently jonesin for at the moment. I'm sure I will continue to enjoy it though.

The first 3/4 of the book I was really into. The poetry of the authors voice was awesome. The fact that this was written by a male author left me feeling like a miracle had happened, a guy traipsing through a woman's psyche, like he knew what he was talking about? priceless.

Jessica is a twenty something woman who fails in her attempt at suicide. Her Grandmother, Gabby, comes to rescue her, to instill a will to live, and the wisdom to see each day as a gift.

Like I said, the book was poetry 3/4 of the way in, the author nailed the angst, but petered out to Hallmark ideology in the last part of the book "the realization" part. I just don't think the voice stayed as true to the characters in their time of angst as in their time of healing and acceptance...still worth a read.

favorite quote

"To my greatest gift, my granddaughter-
Listen for me in your heart,
that is where I choose now to live...
for that is my heaven.
Love Nana"

Suzanne says

Loved this book - brought tears to me eyes several times and here are a few quotes I liked:

Sunset is that magical time of day when heaven and earth kiss.

p. 135 "There are times when it seems everything good in life has been taken from us. But, if you open your eyes, your heart, you will find there are still gifts waiting for you each day. Sometimes it will not be an easy thing to see them. Sometimes you will have to work to find them.

p. 138 "There is a gift waiting for you each day. If you're willing to see it, hear it, even feel it, it's there."

p. 168 "This rock has seen many storms. Here it stands exposed to the elements, covered with the scars of its past. But one thing that always gave me comfort in coming here - it has not crumbled. It is still standing at the water's edge, facing the wind and the sea and whatever the future will bring...Our hearts are like this rock. They will not crumble as long as we live and as long as we love."

p. 190 Grandmother says to granddaughter: "This precious time we have shared together has crowned my life with hope."

Patty says

I absolutely enjoyed this small (198 pages) book. I guess I am always going to like books that make me feel something, and this one did.

It starts out being about a young lady that is in the act of committing suicide, but not successfully. Her mother has already died, and her father has moved on marrying again and has a new little daughter, and so Jennifer feels deserted, among other things. She ends up in the hospital for psychological evaluation, and who shows up but her grandmother from the other side of the US, NY city.

There are several great messages in this book, but the most important one I think is not to live a life weighted down by sadness, guilt, regret and grief. At some point one must realize that this one life they have, well they might as well enjoy it because it is the only life they have, so find the joy in the simple everyday things, such as the beauty of a butterfly. I have kept a grateful journal at times in my life and it is amazing the things most of us have to be grateful for.

This book is also about perseverance in life, staying alive, getting through very difficult times and having a more positive outlook on life, and lastly, the value of a life.

Wanda says

Jennifer Stempler had been living in a world of loss and betrayal, and could find no way of escaping it. After a suicide attempt, and showing no remorse, Jennifer is released to her grandmother's care, along with psychological counseling.

Feisty and lovable Gabby Zuckerman, Nana to Jennifer, was determined to help her granddaughter find her way out of the darkness and back into the light.

Barry Stempler, a less than desirable father to Jennifer, tried hard to make up for his past poor qualities as a father, but Jennifer showed only defiance towards him.

Mixing sweetness and sorrow, Gabby shows Jennifer how to embrace life with a passion. She also demonstrates, in a very loving and caring way, how to open up your heart and discover meaningful gifts of life each day.

A beautiful and touching read. 5+ stars.

Beverly says

I was not at all impressed with this. It was a Reading Group recommendation and I can certainly see where the subjects in the book could stir up book club discussion but as far as being a believable, attention-grabbing book--it was not. Jennifer, who is in her early twenties, has recently lost her mother and now her boyfriend has walked out on her. She decides to take her own life. When her plan doesn't work, the doctors feel one

option is to place her in a facility where she can work on her issues. Her father has a new wife and child not to mention a hectic career and really doesn't have the time to help out. Her grandmother, Gabby, then steps forward to do what she can so that Jennifer doesn't have to be placed somewhere. In trying to prove to Jennifer that life is indeed worth living, Gabby proceeds to tell her about her life of growing up in Poland and what happened to her and her family during WWII when the Nazis came into power. I just couldn't buy into the story line--everything just turned out a little too neat and packaged for me.

Laura says

A wonderful story of life! A young girl tries to commit suicide but is saved. Her life is in turmoil and she feels hopeless. Her parents were divorced and her father pays her little heed. Her mother is her confidant and sole support. Tragically her mother is killed by someone running a stop light. Her world falls apart and she feels alone and hopeless. Her ancient grandmother visits her in the hospital and persuades the doctors and her father to allow the girl to spend time under the grandmothers care in NYC. Thus begins a story of resentment, rebellion and finally of understanding...both of herself and the importance of finding one thing, no matter how small, to be thankful for each day of your life! This is a story of the grandmothers survival in Nazi Germany and the lessons in life she passes on to her granddaughter to allow her to open herself to all that IS good in her life and not to focus on the bad. It is a story of resilience and salvation. The point of this story is something we should all try to focus ona very memorable and touching book!

Clare Cannon says

What starts as a somewhat ragged story about a young woman who is ready to give up on life grows into a beautiful, life-affirming tale of love between a granddaughter and her indomitable grandmother. The first half of the novel covers some rough ground, but while there is some language and difficult themes the content is not gratuitous. As the two grow closer together the quality of the story picks up, and with the granddaughter we learn to discover the richness and beauty of life even amidst - and following - great suffering. In spite of the difficulties dealt with, the book is predominantly hopeful and uplifting, I hadn't expected to be so moved by the end. A short novel that takes us on a de-complicating journey towards the rediscovery of hope and joy. www.GoodReadingGuide.com

Carolann Krause says

Jennifer had nothing left to lose. Her mother died in a car accident and her father remarried and started another family. He had no time for Jennifer and he was a Hollywood producer. Jennifer decides to take her life on the beach in Venice California. Her father wants her to be sent away for help. Her grandmother Gabby came in from New York to take her back with her to try and Rehabilitate her. The father fought her but she won. Gabby was her mothers mother. She bought her to a doctor for help but Jennifer fought with the doctor. He told the grandmother she needs more help than he can give. Gabby has until thanksgiving to turn her around or she must go back to California to a hospital. Finally gabby gets Through o her and tells her of her life story. She was a child growing up in Poland during the nazi rein. Her parents were killed by them but her father threw her out of a window to save her. Jennifer hears about her mother as a child. They take a trip to New England and have a wonderful time bonding. Gabby is sick all this time and Exerted herself trying to take care of Jennifer. Now it is Jennifer's turn to care for gabby. She takes care of her o the end and gabby

gives Jennifer her journal that she wrote while hiding from the nazis. Her lasts words o Jennifer were To my greatest gift, my granddaughter....listen for me in your heart, that is where I choose to live....for that is my heaven. Love Nana.

Prunella says

Completely formulaic schmaltz. You know how it ends after about 2 pages. Unlikeable, undeveloped characters, except for the grandmother. Surely, this must've been an assignment for a creative writing class? Acceptable for YA readers. Otherwise, are you kidding? The story may be "moving", but I think I just got a lesson in how to write a book about anything, by rote, really quickly. Come on now. Pretty cover....

Andrew Mattson says

This was a very short but touching story about a grandmother who had very little time left to live and get granddaughter who felt she had no point in living.

When Jennifer tries to commit suicide on a beach in California, after her depression at the death of her mother 5 years ago, a bad relationship with her father, and a boyfriend she loved so much also leaving her, she feels like she has nothing left to live for. This brings her grandmother Gabby, who has emphysema in her lungs, flies to be by her granddaughter's side and she brings her back to New York to try and be with her and help her see her life has so much potential and she is worthy of living a life filled with love and support.

Gabby, who was also a holocaust survivor, shares with her life and wisdom and love to Jennifer as they bond and help each other heal their shared heartache over the loss of Jennifer's mother and Gabby's daughter, Lily. Gabby, despite slowly dying herself, helps bring Jennifer back from embracing death and helps her learn to love and embrace life again, no matter the pain, because there are always gifts to be found in life even after going through the darkest of days where you think it can never get better.

If your looking for a short but incredibly sweet story about love, loss, life, death, and persevering through it all, this is a good read.

Shonna Froebel says

This novel focuses on 23-year-old Jennifer Stempler, a young woman who is severely depressed to the point of attempting suicide. After her father's departure at a young age, she and her mother struggled. When her mother died in a traffic accident her senior year, she struggled with the loss. Now that her serious boyfriend has dumped her, she can't see anything worth living for.

But her grandmother won't give up on her, and fights to take her home to New York and help her find her health again. Along the way, Jennifer fights her grandmother's optimism. It isn't until she hears her grandmother's story for the first time that she finally finds something to hold onto.

A story about depression and hope, about the resilience of life in the face of tragedy and disappointment.

I loved the story in the book, but did have some reservations for the seemingly easy dismissal of the physiological component of depression through the rejection of medication.

Sara says

4.5 stars

This book was amazing and I would highly recommend it!! It has a little bit of a love story mixed in with the grandmother and granddaughter bonding just after the granddaughter trying to take her life. I was in tears more than once during this book and the more that I think about this book, I do still have a little sadness left in my heart.

Rianne says

I'm a sucker for cheesy things. I love all things sappy, sweet, and sentimental. That said, I found this book to be - very frequently - too cheesy.

One thing I must say right away: I greatly admire many of the sentiments that Goldstein presents here, especially a concept of finding some gift in every day and the general values of understanding and respecting the history of your grandparents.

However, I felt as a general whole that the characters seemed very much like stock characters. I found them extremely predictable (right down to what the next thing they'd say in the inevitable emotional outbursts) and in many ways flat and dull. I also found some of the situations a little to absurd to be true - (view spoiler)

The sentiments were great and the book passed the time pleasantly, but I did not find it to be anything particularly special.

Dree says

Isn't it great that problems are so easy to solve!?

Sappy. Painfully sappy. Not one of my better grabs off the library "popular fiction" shelf.

Nancy Richards-Eisener says

Compelling, captivating read about life and death, and about our illusions of choices over either one.
