



Stay with Me

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In 1979, five toddlers were found alone in a luxury boat tied to a dock in Puerto Rico after a devastating hurricane. No one knew who they were or where they came from. Raised by different families, they remained connected by a special bond—always considering themselves siblings, despite their unknown blood relations.

Now adults, Taina, Holly, Adrian, and Raymond have been summoned by the fifth, David, to an island off the coast of Connecticut and the family home of David's ex-girlfriend, Julia. But along with the joy of reuniting comes the exposure of raw places, jealousy, and childhood sorrows. Having been diagnosed with an aggressive form of brain cancer—and experiencing flashbacks to the time before the hurricane—David believes that healing his relationship with Julia and discovering his origins will strengthen his ability to endure and survive. David pushes the people he loves the most to their emotional breaking points in order to uncover the truth about the mystery that both unites and divides them.

Intensely gripping and lyrically written, *Stay with Me* is a magnificent blend of romance, suspense, atmosphere, and intrigue that brilliantly explores the true meaning of family and the remarkable ways a personal history can paint a future.

Stay with Me Details

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From Reader Review Stay with Me for online ebook

Sandi says

I won Stay With Me through FirstReads. I'm really torn between giving it 3 stars and giving it 4. I'm going to go ahead and put 4 because it did keep me turning pages and I really cared about the characters. The premise is really interesting. Five very young children are found alone on a luxury fishing boat in Puerto Rico after a hurricane. They are all too young to talk and can't tell their rescuers their names or what happened. Although they are adopted by families all over the U.S., they remain in touch and consider themselves to be siblings. When the oldest develops a rare, fatal brain tumor, he starts to access his earliest memories. That causes all kind of issues among the siblings. Like I said, it kept me turning pages because I just had to find out how they ended up on that boat.

The novel does have some flaws. It has a lot of improbable situations. Unfortunately, I can't get into them without spoiling the book. It was also a little too much like an Eighties movie where a group of people in their early thirties bound by family ties or friendship get together and spend more time dealing with issues than enjoying each other's company. Despite the flaws, I did enjoy Stay With Me quite a lot.

Emily says

If the blurb for this book had been different, I might have enjoyed it more. Instead, it made me expect something the book was not particularly interested in delivering. "Thirty years ago, five toddlers were found alone in a luxury boat...after a devastating hurricane. No one knew who they were or where they came from." One of them gets cancer which triggers flashbacks of before they were found and he wants to figure out where they came from, so he gets them all together at his ex-girlfriend's house to figure it out. Now, from that information, I expected for the book to be a description of their investigation, with clues revealed along the way that prompt some kind of emotional catharsis. Instead, the narrative mainly focuses on David's diagnosis with cancer, his lame attempts to get his ex-girlfriend back, and everyone's messed-up intimacy issues. No real revelations come until the last 80 pages of the 369-page book; however, and it is only then that the book starts to get interesting. It isn't nearly compelling enough to make up for the time I spent slogging through the first three quarters, but I did read that last part in one sitting, and way, way past my bedtime as well. If you are a fan of emotional drama and family interactions, you might enjoy the whole thing, but if you are more interested in the mystery of the abandoned children, read the prologue and then skip to Part III.

One other note: The book is written in the first person when told from David's perspective, but third person omniscient when focusing on anyone else. From a few of the errors in this ARC, I think the author had originally written the entire thing first person, but alternated narrators. The switching back and forth was probably too jarring, and it was a good call to switch to third, but I could also have done without David's inner musings as well. It doesn't make him any more of a sympathetic character and it's still pretty jarring.

Nancy says

This is not the kind of book I would ordinarily read, but I'm really glad that I happened upon it at my library. It's not the kind of book that one just can't put down, but one that is meant to be savored. The author did a

beautiful job developing the characters, 5 Latina children who were abandoned as toddlers. Although the children were adopted by separate families, the children maintained a relationship with each other and considered themselves siblings. As the story opens, David, the main character, is diagnosed with brain cancer and has flashbacks of his early childhood. He believes that his real name is Javier, and Spanish phrases pop into his head although he is an English speaking American. This leads David on a mission to learn who he is and where he and his brothers and sisters came from. With the help of David's ex-girlfriend, Julia, David and his siblings come together and face truths about themselves and their families who gave them up. The story explores themes of family, friendship, and loyalty. My only criticism is that the book had several grammatical errors that should have been caught by the proofreader.

Lauren Barth says

This was a very touching book about the meaning of family. Five children were abandoned as toddlers, adopted and raised by five different families in different states, and share their life story as adults. They don't know what happened to them or if they're even blood related. But they're still family and they stick together. It was a beautiful story to read and really makes you think about values. It's not really one of those books that you can't put down; I wasn't completely engrossed in it. It's more of a book that you savour and it lingers with you even after you're done. I loved all of the characters and cared deeply for them. The mystery of their past kept me drawn to the story. However, I expected something more. The author's writing style was a little distracting because she switched from past to present, sometimes without any notation, and there was a ton of spelling and grammar errors that were so annoying and made it hard to focus on the actual story. There was also a lot of Spanish in it and as someone who doesn't speak an ounce of Spanish, I don't want to have to use Google translate when reading a book for fear of missing important details.

Selcas says

"I am mediocre, always have been. And that's why I'm trying so hard not to be. I have so little time left to make my mark, to be extraordinary at something...Even if it's only at being an extraordinary brother." David

When David is diagnosed with a terminal brain cancer, he is forced to reflect upon his life, his mysterious past and his potentially short future. As a child, David was one of 5 children found abandoned on a luxury boat along the coast of Puerto Rico. Dressed as though they were children of prosperous families, the children appeared to be from multiple cultural origins ranging from African to pale caucasian. Now as adults, brought up by separate families they still consider themselves siblings.

Under the guise of spending some final quality time together, David gathers all his siblings to try and unearth the truth of their past. The novel explores how a person's perceptions of their past and expectations of the future can influence personal identity and relationships, ranging from disastrous to beautiful results.

Sandra Rodriguez Barron writes descriptively and portrays the key characters with very human thoughts, feelings and actions, at times I found myself agreeing, laughing or just contemplating some of the thoughts of the characters, alternatively, I would find myself banding my head with frustration with some of their actions.

Of the 6 key characters (including 5 siblings and Julia, David's ex girlfriend) I eagerly followed some of their

story lines, however there were also several sections that seemed to drag slowly, consisting of characters I never fully clicked with or side story lines I never became interested in.

I won this book as an ARC from good reads. Overall an enjoyable novel and definitely worth reading (closer to 3.5 stars).

Zoë Danielle says

"Memory, after all, is a place both the living and dead can inhabit."

Some books click with a reader, some books just don't- unfortunately *Stay With Me* by Sandra Rodriguez Barron didn't click with me. *Stay With Me* is the story of five siblings, bound together by the fact that they were all discovered together on an abandoned boat off the coast of Puerto Rico. None of the siblings know if they are related by blood, but they have been adopted and raised by five different families across the United States. When one of the siblings, David, is diagnosed with an extremely severe and fast-moving brain tumour he brings the siblings together on a private island belonging to his ex-girlfriend's family. But David's motives are more complex than a simple family reunion, he's been having flashes of memory from before the siblings were found and he is looking to discover where they came from and who they really are.

Stay With Me caught my eye with its extremely intriguing premise- five children abandoned and not knowing where they came from- and the questions it raises. Unfortunately even with six main characters (the siblings plus David's ex) there just wasn't anyone in the book I could really relate to, they all lacked dimension. A lot of the dialogue felt unrealistic and I never got lost in the story, I never forgot that this was a book and not real. I feel like the book went to a certain level of depth when I expected more. Barron takes on big topics- the meaning of family, the meaning of life- but writes about them in a way that often verges on superficial. In contrast, there was excessive description in areas when I really didn't need it, for example talking about every little detail of Griswold island.

Where Barron does succeed is her ability to capture a unique landscape, and so the portion of the book I enjoyed the most was when it was taking place in Puerto Rico and the surrounding area. Even if I wasn't relating to the characters, I was enjoying the authentic setting she had placed them in. I was less appreciative of the back and forth switch between David's perspective and a third person view. I didn't really find anything gained from having the story told from the third person perspective, except at the point when David was unable to adequately express himself, and perhaps it would have been more powerful if Barron had left the transition to omnipresent narrator til then.

I was also completely uninterested in the potential romance between David's ex and his brother and I didn't think it connected well to the other themes in the novel. In comparison, one of David's sisters struggles with forming a real connection with her husband because of their childhood abandonment and her years in foster care, and although I felt that storyline could have been fleshed out better, at least I understood why it was there. Lastly, when Barron sorta/kinda/maybe tried to touch on the idea of incest and a relationship between the two siblings, who may or may not be biologically related, it simply felt awkward. Although I really loved the idea of the book, in the end everything tied up a bit too neatly to be realistic. Ultimately, Barron had a strong concept in *Stay With Me*, it just wasn't executed in a way I could fully appreciate. **

Lisa-Marie Cabrelli says

I wish that I could do half ratings because although I like this book I would have given it one less half star to reflect that fact that although the author had a great idea it didn't quite solidify as I am sure she intended. This is the story of the meaning of family. Barron sets up the exploration with the discovery of 5 orphans in an abandoned boat at a dock in Puerto Rico - flash forward 20 or so years and we find ourselves following the lives of these children as adults. The orphan story is juxtaposed with the family of a girlfriend of one of the adult siblings - a family with a long-established and documented history. Throughout the book the characters face love and loss that brings in to question, what is family? What is it that creates a family and what physical or emotional elements must exist to keep a family together. Without giving anything away I think the author ties up everything a little bit too neatly. Her attempts at digging in to the complexity of these relationships don't seem to be fully fleshed out - it seems like when these relationships were threatened with getting a bit too nasty (which some real-life familial relationships inevitably do) she backed off and resolved things with a neat little plot twist or sometimes completely abandoning the line of questioning - as she did with the relationship of the sibling who was painfully in love with her "brother". Overall an enjoyable read but could definitely have been better if it had been a little darker.

Linda says

This story depicts life as it is: messy and unpredictable in need of mercy and forgiveness. It had good character development and a storyline that kept me guessing. The last couple of chapters were a bit strange.

Joni Thomas says

I enjoyed this book. It stuck with me even after I put it down and I could not wait to pick it up again. The story of the five abandoned toddlers really resonated with me because I myself have a 2 year old and I could not imagine abandoning her. So while reading the book I kept coming back to what had happened to them when they were toddlers.

The book follows the 5 toddlers, now adults, after one of them, David, finds out he has terminal brain cancer. The diagnosis drives him to want to find out exactly what happened years ago and why his siblings and himself were abandoned on a boat in Puerto Rico.

This book was a hypnotizing read. I was so caught up in wandering what was going to happen next. It was fast paced but not so much that I was on the edge of my seat the whole time. There was just enough mystery to keep me intrigued while still allowing other parts of the story to be told. Everything flowed together perfectly and I was never left confused or needing to reread a few pages to understand something. This book seems like the perfect beach read and I recommend it anyone who needs a book that balances intrigue and mystery perfectly with romance and drama.

Niki Sorensen says

"It is indeed profoundly sad to forget who you are. But, I will argue, how much more so never to have

known?"

That is just one example of the beautifully written sentences in 'Stay With Me'. I took my time reading this novel. There were so many times that I just wanted to peek at the end to find out what would happen to a certain character, or to get an answer to one of the many interesting mysteries as the story unfolded.

Surprisingly, things did not go in the ways that I expected. It was refreshing to read something that wasn't the same old story written with different names and faces. Not only was the storyline unique and clever, the characters were unexpected. I don't want to say anything that would be a spoiler, so I'll just say that the characters did not react the way I thought they would. They were not perfect people, but I related to each one of them.

There are subtle connections in 'Stay With Me' that tie together at the end. I really enjoyed how Ms. Barron compared nature to human experiences in character growth and understanding. I highly recommend this novel.

Another favorite quote, "I'm in 'the hilltop hour' as Helen Keller called these moments of pure happiness."

Nicole says

"Stay With Me" by Sandra Rodriguez Barron begins very mysteriously and captures your interest from the very first page. A luxury boat is found in a marina in Puerto Rico. In the cabin, they find 5 toddlers and no parents. Questions arise such as "Who are these children?", "Where did they come from?", "Where are their parents?", "Are they related or siblings to each other?", "And what is their reason for the starfish drawing they each have on their hand?". Not only did these questions stump the Puerto Rican authorities, but they continued to boggle the minds of the 5 for over 30 years.

Although they were raised by different families, each being adopted and brought up in various parts of the States and Puerto Rico, they remained close and believed to be siblings. When one of the 5, David, is diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor, he feels he needs to find out their true origins before time runs out. You travel with this family and their journey to discovering that love is a beautiful choice.

Personally, I loved this book! I thought it was interestingly written and kept me captivated from the beginning. Barron does a wonderful job of bringing you into the book. You can hear the Latin music and taste the flavors of the Caribbean. Her imagery very vividly tells the story and you feel like you're actually there. I laughed out loud, cried, and even found my jaw dropped on several occasions! She writes in several different points of view throughout the book, thus allowing you to understand everyone's feelings, fears and anxieties that surround the story. Each character is unique and beautifully written. And although some phrases of the book are in Spanish, Barron does a great job of translating throughout.

To its core, this is a love story... for a family. 4 stars.

(Oh, and here's a fun fact: Barron went to my alma mater, FIU! Not that that makes me biased or anything.)

Colleen Mertens says

This story starts with a mystery that unravels through a tragedy. Five toddlers are discovered on an abandoned boat after a hurricane. They come together as adults to confront their past after one of the boys is diagnosed with cancer. They confront their demons and battle to learn the truth as that brother wants to know. The characters are likable and you want to know who they are as you read. It is a well written story despite the tragedy.

Emily says

Sandra Rodriguez Barron deftly weaves a tale of five abandoned children in "Stay With Me". The author's gifted story telling and colorful characters keeps this story from feeling contrived. The result is a beautiful, original chronicle of individuals searching for permanence in a transient world.

Sarah (Workaday Reads) says

A beautiful and sad family drama with a strong mystery element. The story starts with the story of five toddlers abandoned on a boat before jumping to the present where the five are reconnecting due to the inevitable death of one of them. They decide they want to find out their true origins because not knowing has shaped each of their lives in a different manner.

I have to admit that I didn't connect much with any of the five. I felt more of a connection with Julie, who is David's ex-girlfriend and whose house everyone is meeting in. Each of the five seem too exaggerated and one-dimensional to fully seem real, but Julie is average and normal. Her relationship with David is complex and I can understand why she does what she does.

The mystery of finding out how the five toddlers got on the boat in the first is only really delved into near the end, and although it seems to be resolved quite quickly, it is still a dramatic and emotional story. It was my favourite part of the book, and I wish more time had been spent on telling that part of the tale.

Overall, this was an emotional story that I quite enjoyed, even if I didn't really enjoy most of the characters. As a family drama, it tells quite the story and certainly highlights the craziness that some families have, even if they aren't families by blood. There seems to be a message that family is what you make it to be, which is noble and translates well on paper.

Sara Strand says

Frequent readers of my blog will know that my big thing is that I'm absolutely convinced I will die of a brain tumor and recently I blogged about that. And the news I got about my dad came *literally* the day after I finished this book. I find it kind of bizarre that a lot of the books I'm reading all of a sudden take a turn for the personal afterwards. So because of that, I connected with this book.

The story of five seemingly abandoned children is sad and as a mother it pulls at you. I enjoyed learning

about each sibling and how the experience of early childhood traumas such as abandonment really pave your future as an adult. It proves that every person handles stress and trauma differently and these characters were no different. I felt sad for David, suffering from brain cancer, because you see how horrible that is. Especially towards the end it scared the crap out of me.

The only part of the book that I thought was awkward was the really detailed descriptions of Griswold Island, the story could have been just as great without it. I kind of feel that overly detailed parts should be left out- if it doesn't really add to the story.

I do like how this book covered the emotions a person would feel if they didn't know about their birth parents and facing the option of finding out. I can imagine that is a hard reality for some to face, especially if you were abandoned. I really loved how Sandra was able to tie the book together at the end. Sure, David is dying and you know what is going to happen but I think she made his story close appropriately. Do you know how you read some books and feel like it wasn't really meant to end yet? I didn't feel that way with this one. I felt like it ended right when it should have. And I really enjoyed it.
