



Hungry, the Stars and Everything

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Helen Burns is a food critic with a big black hole in her past. But when she embarks upon a tasting menu at a mysterious restaurant, she finds over the course of the meal that she is forced to confront her deepest, darkest memories – for better or for worse...

Hungry, the Stars and Everything Details

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From Reader Review Hungry, the Stars and Everything for online ebook

Lolly K Dandeneau says

This was so weird, I just need a few days to think about my review. I know it's not new, I am backtracking and trying to catch up on some piles of books collecting dust. I've been neglectful of my books

Bridget says

I probably read this too soon after listening to Animals so it paled a little in comparison to how intense that book is but I still really enjoyed this book. I like reading about food and memory and stroppy women. The ending felt a little false to me but is was satisfying like a film so I can understand they why of it.

Heather says

I liked that this book has an air of escapism, I liked that it was written by an English author so I had to look up some words and there were some interesting vocabulary choices and I thought that the main character's relationship with her mom was interesting. But and this is a big But - I felt like this book would have been better without the main character, she was a stumbling block and as the main character, she was in the book a lot (and probably rightly so). It would make a good bookclub book as it's the type of book that when you finish you think, I wish I had someone to talk to about this. Maybe after some discussion it'd warm up to it, but right now - it's a 3-starrer for me.

Carolyn says

Helen is a successful food critic. For the past few years she has been living with Pete, a wonderful, sensitive man who has just asked her to marry him but somehow she can't say yes. She has a secret past that she has never revealed to Pete. While she dines alone at a chic new restaurant she reviews her life and tries to understand what went wrong. She elects to have the 11 course tasting menu and the story unfolds gradually along with each delicious course described in exquisite detail and by the end of this fabulous meal Helen has resolved what she needs to do with her life. This is an original idea for a love story, well written and fun to read.

Clare says

This had some lovely pieces of writing and I snipped some great quotes and passages, but ultimately I think it promised more than it delivered and some of the plot devices became more than a little tiresome. And the ending! Don't get me started on the ending.

Holly says

I am really sad about this book.

SPOILER ALERT

It starts off GREAT! All through the story, it's GREAT! And then the end happens, and it totally has a Hollywood ending that I would never believe in a million years. And there was a slightly mystical thread that ran through the book, which I kept expecting to go somewhere. Instead it slowly just dwindled away for no apparent reason. So I am sad about the book. I really, really, really loved it and would recommend it to anyone interested in magical realism, romance, mystery, and drama...until the last five pages. But hey, if you *like* a trite happy ending, this is a five-star book.

Kate says

There's lots I want to say about Emma Jane Unsworth's debut novel, *Hungry, the Stars and Everything*, including drawing attention to perfect little passages such as this -

"Children aren't supposed to like dark chocolate. It's one of those bitter things that you are meant to acquire a taste for later in life, like olives and self-pity. But I was different. I enjoyed the taste of wrongness in my mouth..."

Instead, I'm taking my lead from the book itself, where Helen, the main character and an emerging restaurant critic, is given advice on how to write a review -

"'I'll tell you my bulletproof reviewing technique,' Keith began... Then, leaning in towards me, a thick tongue of orange liqueur fumes rolling out of his mouth, he whispered: 'Whenever I leave a place, I ask myself three questions. One: How do I feel? Two: Where did that transport me to? And three: What did I enjoy the most?'"

So, according to Keith's checklist, this is how *Hungry, the Stars and Everything* measured up -

1. Much of the time, nervous. Unsworth does the is-she-deliberately-screwing-up-her-life? character very well – the reader is left as a helpless observer, witness to one poor decision after another.

"I broke it off with him when he made me a mix tape so appalling that I didn't even bother to play it. I looked at the track listing and thought, This shit is going nowhere."

2. A fabulous restaurant – the descriptions of food are sensational. Chapters in the book are arranged around a dégustation menu that Helen's reviewing. Each dish is introduced and linked (subtly) to an event in her life, allowing the story to switch between past and present.

Roast pheasant served with spiced prune mincemeat, is described as -

"It is sweet, rich, exciting and poignant – simultaneously full of promise and tinged with tragedy. It tastes like Christmas."

3. Unsworth's neat (sometimes cutting), insights -

"I wondered whether being in love with the same person for ever and ever always involved living a lie of some kind or other."

"...I realised that I wasn't sure that life went on: sometimes it stopped when you realised that you were never going to get what you really wanted, and carrying on regardless after that was all just part of growing up."

3/5 In her second book, Animals, Unsworth perfected what she started in Hungry, the Stars and Everything. There was an element of the plot in this story that really didn't appeal to me – probably just personal taste but it felt like a trick and the way it was resolved was odd. That aside, all the relationship bits, the growing-up bits, the family bits, the astronomy bits and the restaurant bits were brilliant.

Find my full review here: <http://booksaremyfavouriteandbest.wor...>

Lyndsy says

Having taken a day to reflect on this, whilst I wasn't overtly bowled over by the reveal of the protagonists 'black hole', I have to say that I really did enjoy the emotional turmoil that unfolded over the courses of a gourmet tasting menu. Helen is a food critic, and when a proposal from her boyfriend stirs up past history, she literally confronts her past with each course. Clever, fluid and transitioning easily between her last and the present critique, I did find myself turning the pages with an appetite!

A cleverly constructed evolution of the plot makes this story of heartache and life changing decisions so relatable. Everyone has been through some form of heartbreak, the story really isn't anything new, but the delicious relation to food and a figurative devil figure plays out the tangible emotions that makes this a love story with a difference.

I only wish we all had the pleasure of such a gastronomic stimuli to help us all make decisions! Ice cream it is then....!

Jenny says

I thought this book had a lot of promise, but it really didn't go where I expected and I felt a bit uncomfortable with the ending. I'm not really sure what message the writer was trying to share about relationships, but I certainly didn't get a good one from it!

Lorna says

*****SPOILER ALERT*****

So much going for this beautiful book, but I never did understand her feelings for Luke, or how him giving up his job in research, but staying in France was in anyway 'for her'. His job was never the problem. It all seemed a bit convenient how he'd magically straightened himself out.

Priya Bhakta says

I don't know how to review this book.

It took me over a year to read, not because I found it difficult to read or wasn't enjoying it, just because we never seemed to be in the same place at the same time. I did enjoy reading it though. I loved Helen, our heartbroken and dissatisfied narrator, how she was eminently human (read: selfish, indulgent, flawed), I loved the writing, the level of detail. And yet I felt somewhat let down by the magical realism strand of the story, I didn't feel like it paid off. I also expected the ending to be ... the other option of what's chosen and whilst I can see why the author played it off this way it felt a bit of a let down.

In short, beautifully written but lacking a punch.

Anneliese says

I loved this book. The whole tale, our protagonist's life story, is woven and connected to a 5-star meal. She is eminently human; weak, broken, sad, passionate, full of life and yet fleeing from it. The author's way of turning a phrase, and her descriptions of love and desire and the terror of settling, the insanity of knowing how and where you belong, are perfect. Our character isn't perfect, but she is so relatable. We learn about her relationship with the devil (and I liked the lack of a clear definition; is he real? Is he a hallucination?), her family, her real, terrible, passionate love, and her wonderful and safe love. I highlighted more passages on this book than any yet, because her descriptions of those loves resonate with me.

Laurinha Lero says

minha vontade é descontar umas duas estrelas só de raiva por não ter eu mesma escrito essa bosta

Jane says

It's quite sad really that AA Gill's death reminded me of how much I enjoyed this book a while ago, but it's

this familiar mixture of being brazen and walking over a seeping melancholy, all mashed up with talking about food from the perspective of each of the five senses that brought it all back.
Fabulous book.

Claire says

Such an enthralling and wonderful read. Combining the supernatural, family, food and love. Following how Helen's emotions can be affected and reawakened through the course of a meal.
I love the way Emma writes and the little nods to Manchester and Liverpool make me feel even more involved in the story.
I have that sense of mourning now I've finished it but it has made me want to read *Animals* again.
