

A Theory of Relativity

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A terrible accident has left little Keefer orphaned but not unwanted. Devastated by his beloved sister's tragic death, twenty-four-year-old bachelor Gordon McKenna assumes that he will be entrusted with raising his niece, whom he has grown extremely close to over the few precious months of Keefer's life. But the child's paternal grandparents have different ideas—and a fierce legal battle ensues that will test the capacity and limitations of family love again and again . . . and no one will emerge from it unscathed or unchanged.

Jacquelyn Mitchard, whose powerful, emotionally rich novels have won resounding critical acclaim and a wide, enthusiastic audience worldwide, brings us a soaring, heartbreaking, and unforgettable tale of love and the bonds that unite us all.

A Theory of Relativity Details


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Jill says

Was this book written by a committee? I'm sure it must have been. It was such a mish-mash! Some parts flowed and made sense. Other parts were turgid, boring paragraph after boring paragraph of strange content that made you wonder if the author had any idea if this was truly the direction she wanted to take the story, and us as readers.

Fascinating theme - adoptive children and their rights, or otherwise, in families and how different, or not, those rights are to blood relatives. This could have been a truly fascinating GREAT read. Sadly, due to sporadic and poor writing, it was just okay.

It was difficult to feel any real sympathy for one of the main characters, Gordon, and his quest to adopt his (adoptive) sister's daughter. The author gave us so little to go on, in terms of his relationship with little Keefer and how much he loved her (apart from sentences like that - "I would die without her", but these were *telling* not *showing* us). I think we were supposed to be rooting for Gordon, and feeling that the in-laws were the villains of the piece. But the writing was just so patchy and poor, I wasn't sure Gordon deserved such support. There was also a decidedly off chapter where Gordon describes his feelings for his sister, Georgia, that leaves a bad feeling in your stomach and sour taste in your mouth.

There are so many promises in this book -- promises of intrigue and twists and turns to keep you on your toes, of a suspenseful courtroom drama, of an engrossing tale of villains and victims (the latter of which prevail in a climactic heart-stopping ending). And yet it just doesn't deliver.

I almost stopped reading in the first half, but stuck it out (mainly because I'm a bit of a completionist, not because the book made me continue reading). The plotting and characterisation could have been massively improved, but mainly it was the writing that was just plain poor.

Sarah says

i did not care for this novel. the writing style was challenging but i pushed myself to finish it. unfortunately the flow of the story didnt get any better, too many flashback, flashforward, to present. And the ending. I mean I thought Gordon was horrible to women throughout the book, but i chalked it up to him being immature and not really knowing what he wanted. but to marry the girl who was like a stepsister to the neice he was adopting. its sick. and disturbing. on top of that it read like he used his neice's inheritance to pay for his education? what? wasn't that what he said he wouldnt do? what exactly happened to this character that i routed for throughout the entire book. Also having the epilogue written in the tense of a ten year old definately didnt help. i was incredibly disappointed by this one.

Kati says

I wanted to like this one and was extremely disappointed that it didn't draw me in like I thought it would. Between the cover and the "blurb" on the inside of the jacket I thought for sure this was going to be a book I

couldn't put down. I actually considered more than once putting it down and not picking it back up again. I found it confusing to read at times, and there several things about the plot that I didn't understand. The subject of the story was thought provoking and interesting.

Petra says

So much wasted potential! I hope this picks up but right now everyone seems very immature, secretive and no one is talking the issues out. I suppose this is all supposed to increase the tension but its not. It's making the story seem silly.

I finished this today and it did not get better. This could have been very good: a toddler, dead parents, family fighting to adopt toddler, discussion about whether adopted is as "relative" as one's "real" child.

But, the entire story just skirted around these topics and settled on looks, manners, whineyness and general surfaceness of all of life. Add to that the convenient plot changes/twists and you have a very mediocre story. At best.

Reading some other reviews I see that this may not be the author's best work. I'll never know. I won't be reading another of her books.

♥ Marlene♥ says

This is a sort of review (letter) I wrote years ago on Bookcrossing about this book.

on Sunday, September 05, 2004

8 out of 10

Hi How are you? I started this book this morning and am already half through the book.

205/399

After reading a lot of true crime i really needed something else and this was the perfect book .

You are right it is a great book I did expect that because I loved her other book The deep End of the Ocean. As with that book I am now wondering what will be in the future for the people in this book because how can this book ever have a happy ending. I had the same thoughts when i read The deep End but in the end it was not so important.

I will probably finish it tomorrow so I will update this journal then.

Update september 7 2004

Well I did finish it very quickly and It was a great book.

Bev Taylor says

love can bind a family together - or it can tear them apart

georgia is suffering from terminal cancer. then she and her husband r killed in a car accident. or was it a way of escaping the suffering and a husband who could not go on w/o her

they leave a young daughter of 2 years, Keefer. Gordon her uncle and his parents are determined to look after her as they loved Georgia so much and this would be a part of them

but her father's parents have the same idea and so starts a painful and lengthy struggle through the courts to decide who has the right. This is not helped by the fact that both Georgia and Gordon were adopted

this novel bares the bones of the limits of love and its capacity to heal. filled with humour and compassion but also heartbreak

just a shame that Keefer could not talk and so where she wanted to be

the author's use of prose is truly fierce and compromising. you must read slowly to really appreciate it

just one point - Gordon would not have been allowed down to the car immediately after the accident

bev

Vilo says

This book constantly made me think about what family is, what justice is, how we should treat each other. At points I really could not decide what should happen, but when the result was known, it was exactly right. I had read an early Mitchard, but this seemed much better developed, more believable and unique characters. There were a few parts I skipped because it was too sexually graphic for me (a subplot), but it is a book I am still thinking over.

Agatha Donkar says

Everyone in this book was a terrible person, except for the toddler.

Debby says

Jacquelyn Mitchard is one of the best at writing depth of emotions to the point that you feel the emotions along with the characters. It was true in *The Deep End of the Ocean* and it is true in *A Theory of Relativity*. This is no other emotional roller coaster of a book by Jacquelyn Mitchard. This one involves the issue of the custody battle and adoption of a 1-year-old child of a couple who were killed instantly in a car crash. The battle between the surviving families is a no holds barred dispute court battle involving issues such as adoption vs. biological children & families, the definition of blood relative, who is better suited to adopt a child, etc.

That said, this book desperately needed more time of serious editing. There is way too much in the book that gets bogged down in extraneous monologue and some of it is just so unnecessary to the story. I found myself mentally screaming "Come on already. Cut to the chase here!" So be prepared for these long monologues and musings. The end of the book gets a bit bizarre to say the least. A rather "odd" epilogue, which just left me shaking my head.

That said, I'd recommend the book on the basis of the actual plot regarding the adoption and all the family

dynamics involved. Very thought provoking! It reminded me of *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult in many ways. A book that makes you think and that can provoke discussion.

Peggy Walker says

I really enjoy her writing, because her characters are really well drawn. She does have a way of wrapping things up very neatly and a bit oddly in the last 2 books of hers that I've read, but I'll keep reading. A very good exploration of some of the loopholes in the law...in this case, adoption law, but really there are quite a few out there. I'd enjoy a conversation with a number of these characters, although I'm not crazy about the way Gordy treated women, Keefer excepted.

Cham Cuartero says

I was in and out of the bookstore in less than 5 minutes and this was what I bought:

This was the first book that I bought and read after we moved into our new house. And it is also what "revived" my talent of finishing a book in 24 hours or less. I actually ended reading in about 48 hours but at least it's an improvement, redeeming me from all my unfinished starts.

I went into the BookShop to pick up a magazine and I followed suit. I wasn't really planning to buy anything but when I picked up this book and read the synopsis, I just couldn't let it go. This is the book that made me realize that for a book to be sold in posh bookstores, it doesn't guarantee to be a really good read. Like everything else these days, publishing and selling books is also commercialism-driven. It's a sad truth, with the possibility that lots of great authors go unnoticed because of the lack of "marketing" for them and their talent. Who would have thought I'll find a nice book in a secondhand shop? Oh well....

A Theory of Relativity tells the story about a little girl who loses both of her parents at such a very young age. She becomes the center of a custody battle between her remaining relatives. Growing up in an extended family, I was really touched by the story. There are a lot of twists to the plot too, making it a more exciting read.

One important realization that the novel gave me: Families are not bound by the blood that courses through their veins, but by the LOVE that flows from the heart and is shared by each and every one in the loop. =>

CMT325 says

The book gripped me in the beginning. Keefer is a cute one year old girl whose mother is dying of cancer. Then out of nowhere, both her mother and father are killed in a car accident. We are mostly given the perspective of the mother's side of the family, who knew she would die eventually but thought the girl's father would raise her. So now there is an unexpected custody situation to deal with, but they all assume Keefer's uncle will take her. But then Keefer's father's side of the family comes in and they want custody.

There are some complications to the case, including the will of the parents and the fact that Keefer's mother and uncle were adopted, so technically, she is not related by blood to her grandparents or uncle. The court

case becomes a nationwide issue.

It was once the custody arrangements were made that the book lost not for me. There was another twist in the plot that I found to be a bit unrelated to everything else and it changes everything else. They also have a letter from Keefer years later so we can see what she's like. It didn't fit with the test of the book so I left the book feeling a bit ... Disappointed.

Julie says

I honestly don't know how to rate this book - I wanted to like it, it was well-written, the storyline and subject matter kept me interested, but I had so many problems with things! I had a really hard time connecting with the characters - I didn't like any of them enough to find sympathy for them, even considering the storyline. I really didn't like Delia or her family at all, but also I didn't feel like Gordon really wanted Keefer for any of the right reasons until the very end. I had to simply shake my head and think "Really?!" when Gordon thought it was a good idea to buy Keefer a dog bed and set it up in the closet. I had mixed feelings about the ending - I thought it was way too predictable and "clean," but I did like how the ending was done. There were just so many things I had issues with, and yet I mostly enjoyed the book. So a somewhat reluctant 3 stars for me.

Cindy says

Okay, so it was a slow and steady read. I enjoyed that I was able to slow down and take my time with it. It evoked a lot of feelings in me because I worked in the adoption world and feel strongly about adoption. She was able to embody the prejudices against adoption while at the same time dispelling those myths. She was extremely accurate on her account about adoptees and I loved this book for that. I wish I could give this book three and a half stars. I just didn't like the way it ended or how she tried to wrap it up. It almost seemed like she rushed it to meet a deadline. Other than that, I feel I could recommend this book.

Diane Ferbrache says

I have read several of Mitchard's books, so I was looking forward to this one. (found on the \$1.00 rack at Half-Price Books!) Unfortunately, I didn't enjoy it nearly as much and actually found myself skimming large passages.

It's an intriguing story -- Georgia and Gordon are adopted siblings. When Georgia is killed along with her husband in a car accident, Gordon wants to adopt his 18-month old niece. He is challenged by the husband's family on the grounds that he has no "blood" relation to the child. Several scenes are very moving and heartwrenching, but overall, I found myself pretty bored. I liked the characters and the premise was certainly interesting, but overall it just didn't grab me.
