

The book was found

Just Sayin'



Synopsis

Just Sayin' tells the story of an almost-blended family that almost falls apart before it even begins. 11 year-old Cassie Callahan is staying with her grandmother while her mom, Jennifer, recovers from a difficult breakup from her fiancé, Trent. Cassie, along with Trent's kids, Nick and Julie, are trying to figure out why their parents' relationship ended so abruptly and searching for a way to bring them back together. Meanwhile, the kids get caught up in a game show that encourages the "art" of insults, and learn along the way that our words have much more power than they think. In a way that only Dandi can accomplish, this story weaves together, in a contemporary way, an old-time game show, letter writing, outstanding vocabulary, and reminders from God's word that taming our tongue is both difficult and important!

Book Information

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Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

Customer Reviews

"Dear Mom, Have you found yourself yet? Gram just gave me a hard time telling me not to give you a hard time. She said I shouldn't write anything sad or whiny. So I guess this letter will be very short. I miss Julie. I miss Nick. I even miss Travis. Okay. I miss you, too. Nick and Cassie almost had their perfect family: their parents were getting married, and that meant a best-friend brother and a sweet little sister for Cassie, and Nick would have Cassie as his partner in

crime. When their parents mysteriously call off their wedding and Cassie is left in her Gram's care, Cassie and Nick become "almost-step-pen pals. Through letters, they scheme about how to get on their favorite game show, The Last Insult Standing, and just maybe figure out how to get their parents back together. Just Sayin' is a heartwarming, funny story told through letters, demonstrating the power that words have to tear people apart or bring them together.

I am amazed by the versatility of this author. I had just finished reading her gripping WWII fiction drama. Then I started reading this completely different, fun, witty, tender-hearted YA fiction family story that had me grinning from ear to ear the whole time I read. By the end of the second page, I was laughing out-loud. My heart and imagination were kidnapped from then on by this creative, talented author and the sweet children she wrote about. Here is a peek at the letter eleven years old Cassie Callahan wrote to her mother who is in CA. "Dear Mom, Gram is making me write you, even though it's past her bed time (which is about three hours after she fell asleep in the recliner in front of the TV). I am living with a very old person. You know how Gram has always lied about her age? Well, she started bragging about it now. I think how you know somebody's turning old. She is so old that when she went in to renew her driver's license, they said not only had her driver's license expired but so had her birth date. This author did an amazing job of creating this entertaining novel with only the use of letters written back and forth from one family member to another. The kids don't have phones and no access to a computer or internet service. They've gone back in time and they don't like it. Cassie and Nick enter a contest by Jonathan Kirby, the host of their favorite show The Hour of Insult, they get to work on filling out the entry form and are ecstatic about the grand prize they could win. Cassie goes to youth group for something to do. The Pastor tries to answer her questions and encourages her to write letters to God. She tries that but crosses it out. Underneath she starts to write to Jesus. I loved her transparent heart and the way she writes these letters. She begins, "Dear Jesus, I've been sitting on my bed and trying to write your Father (and mine), and it just hasn't been working for me. Then I got the idea to write you. You've been down here on earth. Both Cassie and Nick were looking forward to being a family until their parents' engagement ended abruptly.

Things were all set. They even picked out clothes for the wedding. What happened? They were determined to find out. In the meantime, they were having a blast thinking up ways to win the contest they'd entered. They also start corresponding to Kirby The King of Insults. Both of their parents didn't like the show and didn't want them to watch it. Something changes in Cassie as she starts reading the bible and looking up things about loving your neighbor as yourself and how the tongue had the power to lift someone up or tear them down. She starts to look at the power of words in a whole new light. This is a delightful story I read in one sitting. I was glued to the situation and wondered if this couple would get back together. This author has a clever way in which the kids in the story discuss a topic that's important and life changing even without it being preachy. I liked that. I also adored the Gram character who cared for Cassie. She was a hoot! Are you looking for a fun read for your book club? This is it. I highly recommend this novel. I loved this book and this author!

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

• Nora St. Laurent
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There was something about the idea of this book that reached out to me when I exploring options on the Tyndale site. It looked interesting and different. I'd peg this more to a middle grade reader than a young adult reader. Though as a grown up I really enjoyed it! It is a fun story about Cassie and Nick and their experiences as their parents don't marry and they finagle their way through the idea of insults and game shows and Cassie's aversion to the phone. Cassie also spends a little more time at church, a built in approved way to avoid her Mom's phone calls, and picks up a few tidbits of helpful knowledge. And curbs her insult career a tad. I didn't get the opportunity to read this with the Minions of Mischief but I really really think that both Moo and Munch would enjoy it for vastly different reasons. It's a little mature, as far as the actual words, for Moo but she would enjoy the relationships cheesiness of the characters. Munch, on the other hand, would devour it in an afternoon and I think would bury into the insults and the interplay and would grasp the 'power of words' thread more so than his younger sister. Although some of the 'handwriting' in the book was difficult to read (Gram and Ma had such thin tight writing) but I have to wonder if the kids would struggle with that as well since it's cursive. I know there's been this whole hoopla about

cursive and school and whatnot. My Minions are learning it so that won't be an issue. But it's something to think about on a larger scale. And also something to consider as far as limiting accessibility to this book to older middle grade readers who have been exposed to cursive. The entire story was fanciful and partly so over the top that while it was not realistically believable it was embracing and endearing. The idea of a famous person writing a couple of kids back? Or Gram becoming besties with said celebrity? Or two kids winning spots on a national game show? Or? Or? ... There were lots of that will never happen moments. And a beautiful massive red bow tied all around the ending. It didn't bother me one bit. I know, I am shocked too! The author managed to build solid characters with a multilayered story line with letters. Plain, old, post office delivered, letters. And she managed to encompass faith for a young person that made sense without feeling preachy or fake or awkward. The letter to God felt so real. I highly recommend this book to any middle grade reader, young adult reader, adult reader, senior reader, just a reader. It's quirky and entertaining and insightful and just there ya go...I was provided a complimentary copy of this book by Tyndale. I was not compensated for this review and all thoughts and opinions expressed are my own. I was not required to write a positive review.

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