



True Confections

Katharine Weber

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Take chocolate candy, add a family business at war with itself, and stir with an outsider's perspective. This is the recipe for *True Confections*, the irresistible new novel by Katharine Weber, a writer whose work has won accolades from Iris Murdoch, Madeleine L'Engle, Wally Lamb, and Kate Atkinson, to name a few.

Alice Tatnall Ziplitnsky's marriage into the Ziplitnsky family has not been unanimously celebrated. Her greatest ambition is to belong, to feel truly entitled to the heritage she has tried so hard to earn. Which is why Zip's Candies is much more to her than just a candy factory, where she has worked for most of her life. In *True Confections*, Alice has her reasons for telling the multigenerational saga of the family-owned-and-operated candy company, now in crisis.

Nobody is more devoted than Alice to delving into the truth of Zip's history, starting with the rags-to-riches story of how Hungarian immigrant Eli Czaplinsky developed his famous candy lines, and how each of his candies, from Little Sammies to Mumbo Jumbos, was inspired by an element in a stolen library copy of Little Black Sambo, from which he taught himself English. Within Alice's vivid and persuasive account (is her unreliability a tactic or a condition?) are the stories of a runaway slave from the cacao plantations of Côte d'Ivoire and the Third Reich's failed plan to establish a colony on Madagascar for European Jews.

Richly informed, deeply moving, and spiked with Weber's trademark wit, *True Confections* is, at its heart, a timeless and universal story of love, betrayal, and chocolate.

True Confections Details

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From Reader Review True Confections for online ebook

Lisa says

A funny, edgy book. The narrator, Alice Tatnall Ziplinsky, is so perfectly off-kilter -- she's both sympathetic and disconcerting, often at the same time -- that she lends a slightly funhouse feeling to the story's telling. This dynastic epic of a candy-making family encompasses immigration, assimilation, success, failure, racism, inclusion, and everything you ever wanted to know about the candy business, all skillfully interwoven. And Alice's weird, funny, almost-perfectly-reasonable voice is the perfect medium. You pay attention, because Alice is the kind of narrator you want to keep an eye on, and in the process the story unwinds vividly. This is a smart novel, out of the ordinary and fun -- recommended whether you have a sweet tooth or not (although that's definitely an asset).

Sarah says

The secrets of the candy industry, seen from the inside out (particularly smaller companies rather than the big three). Great book. Since I've read Candy Freak, I could tell how well researched the book was, although the book never seemed researchy-- it was seamlessly woven into the narrative. I liked that the narrator was occasionally untrustworthy; for the most part you took her as a reliable chronicler of the family candy business, but then she'd mention something like, "From what I could tell from reading my son's e-mails, (before he changed his password) she seemed like a nice girl." And the descriptions of the chocolate were fantastic, mouth-watering.

Connie says

Brilliant!!! A work of fiction that incorporates the cultural history of candy-making in the US and political history past and present into an entertaining and fascinating plot.

This is so realistic that it seems that this is an actual biography of Alice Tatnall Ziplinsky.

I can't wait to read the rest of Katharine Weber's novels.

Gail Cooke says

"How sweet it is!" TRUE CONFECTIONS is as irresistible as a box of chocolates - the story is filled with greed, love, fun, lust and the incorrigible Alice Ziplinsky. She is not a true Ziplinsky not having been born into the family but married into it. Hired fresh out of Wilbur Cross High School to work on the Zip's Candies Factory floor, Alice diligently approached her tasks in the summer of 1975.

On her first day at work after five minutes she had just about mastered the art of "separating and

straightening the Tiger melts" when Alice looked up and saw for the first time her future ex-husband, Howard Ziplinsky, son of the firm's founder, Sam, and his grumpy wife, Frieda. Founded in 1924 Zip's did well with the manufacture of sweets, especially Little Sammies, so named because the elder Ziplinskys learned to speak English by reading Little Black Sambo.

However, success was not to last because a few bad decisions, such as the production of "Bereavemints," which had a deleterious effect on the mourners and led to lawsuits. Plus, Zip's was small and could be eaten alive by conglomerates and other hungry giants. Is it curtains for Zips?

But first some history - Alice (who inherited the majority of the company) has been through many years of psychoanalysis and now feels fully prepared to dissect and describe the family's ills and idiosyncracies in an effort to retain control of the business. That makes for an amazing story that includes the use of slaves on a cacao plantation and involvement with the Jewish mafia.

Weber fills her tale with a three generational history, smile provoking asides, and a blend of fact and fiction.

- Gail Cooke

Mari says

Why didn't this book garner the fame it deserved? I cannot recommend it highly enough. Now I have to read all her other books. It is funny, well, no, perfectly written, great and unusual topic, full of odd bits about the candy industry, wonderful family story - it has it all!

Debi says

Just loved this. (And, no, it didn't take me all this time to read it, I am just slack about keeping these lists.) I've always loved how Katharine's novels have some sort of document or artifact that helps to both spin the story and give the illusion of connecting it to the real world. This time, the whole book is that artifact - a novel in deposition - and there's a lot to think about. How reliable is our narrator? How much can we really know when we only know one side of a story? What would this family look like if we'd heard from a different character? Definitely will be re-reading this one.

Jonna says

An entire book the saga of a small family candy factory. I expected it to make me hungry; what I didn't expect was to be bored. I read the entire novel waiting for something to happen, and in spite of all the past intrigue (arson, infidelity, possible industrial espionage and even accusations of racism), this is a deeply dull book. The narrator/main character, Alice is annoying, and I understood why she has no friends! The best thing about "True Confections" are the descriptions of the candy made by Zip's; I'd like some Little Sammies, please!

Lauren says

Sharp, dark, and funny w/ an enigmatic, opinionated, and cranky narrator who rivals Charles Kinbote for sheer unreliability. Much fun.

Cynthia says

Interesting book. This is a great author whose novels are always different from one another.

Cordel Durrant says

Who should read this book? Well, if you like mysteries, this has something for you. If you enjoy gossip novels, this has something for you, too. You like family sagas? Yes, this is the story of four generations of a candy maker's family, albeit through the eyes of a delightfully unreliable narrator. Are you curious about candy-making, about small business, about the role of Jewish immigrants in modern America? Weber's book includes all of these. With such a mishmash, can the book be interesting? Oh, yes, most interesting, because no matter what Katharine writes about, she brings her own acerbic wit, a sly humour, and her own very special way with words. Were I still an English teacher, I would have this on my course of study; it is a book well-worth several readings, and the scrutiny of future writers for its technical treasures.

Kelly-lynn says

I won Katharine Weber's novel "True confections" through Goodread's First Read's giveaway section. It came packaged with little true confections wrapped candies. Completely unknown to me before hand, the story takes place in a city quite close to my hometown, giving it a very familiar feel right away. Weber's novel is like watching a food channel special on candy production mixed with a reality TV hell where a family bickers and feuds within each other, with chocolate tidbits and facts thrown in everywhere, and mother/sister/in-law drama steaming every page. The story can be jumbled at times, giving it a rambling friend quality, that can be annoying, but somehow you still can't put it down. Overall it is a great story, although I feel it could have been a little more organized in plot.

Christina says

True Confections is my first introduction to Katharine Weber's writing, and what a delight it is!

As a lifetime candy-lover, I was immediately drawn in by the title, and I was thrilled to discover that the book really is about candy rather than just a cute play on "True Confessions".

But this isn't *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (another great book, don't get me wrong). Rather than write a great fantasy about what life in the candy business is like, Katharine Weber chose instead to write a real-life story about love, family, and candy that is so believable I was tempted a couple of times to look up Zip's Candy to see where I could get some to try it myself!

The book's narrator, Alice Tatnall-Ziplinsky is an intelligent, articulate and witty woman that I found myself

wishing I could go out for coffee with. She also happens to share my opinion of white chocolate. Alice is a sympathetic character, and I found myself always on her side, and ready to believe everything she said. But was Alice always right? She sometimes hinted that she may not be...

At no point did I find *True Confections* predictable, and I was consistently impressed with Ms. Weber's exhaustive research into the candy business to make her book more authentic.

I wouldn't dare give away any parts of the story, so I can only say that you really must read *True Confections* for yourself. I have already requested that my local library order several copies for circulation, and I am recommending *True Confections* to all my friends.

*******EDITED TO ADD: In compliance with FTC guidelines, I must disclose that I received my copy of *True Confections* from Goodreads First Reads. I'm sorry I neglected to mention that earlier.*******

Ashlie says

I received "True Confections" as a goodreads giveaway and was excited to have it. I mean, who doesn't love free books? The honest reason why I entered the giveaway because the description said that the writer's talent was respected by many authors, one of which was Madeleine L'Engle and I figure if it was good enough for L'Engle, it was CERTAINLY good enough for me!

At first I didn't like this book very much. The style is not linear and the narrator jumps around a lot in the beginning in the present and past and I really just wanted her to get to the meat of the story. Once I became used to this narrative style, I really enjoyed this book. The story has wonderfully amusing bits of vocabulary, my favorite phrase was "intoxicating fermata." This novel is entertaining, confusing, and I'll say mysterious because the reader is never sure if the "facts" are indeed facts, or just the narrators rationalization.

I think this would be a great read for a book club because the author's storytelling allows for different interpretations of events and could be great for discussion. I will definitely be reading more of her novels in the future.

skein says

It's terribly complicated to review a Weber novel. They are not straightforward. Oh, it's easy enough to write a blurb (courtroom documents of divorce/will case involving chocolate tycoon) -- but there are layers and layers and layers of plot, stirred together in a careful mix (temperature + time, plus a little salt). It's brilliant and enjoyable, and it's what makes me return over and over again, but how the hell do you explain something so encompassing?

Every time I read one of her books I am astonished that they are

1. published, and
2. reasonably popular.

The public must be more high-brow than I thought.

Or maybe the subtleties just pass them straight by.

I include myself in this - being positive there exist several dozen references/hints that I missed.

(note: not a real review - my afterreading notes.)

She is a WRITERLY writer. Hard to believe that anyone [but another writer:] would give a shit about her duplicitous, unreliable characters, repetitive structure w/ minor changes that move the plot appallingly slowly -- so it seems -- the constant shifting of truth.

Whatever. I thoroughly enjoy her books.

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dealt a lot in racism, anti-Semitism, family-history-truth, amid sadnesses. Ultimately, the 'reliability' of the narrator was far less important than the story. I am sure that was what Weber intended.

Also: a metric shittonne of stuff about chocolate/candy. As a lifelong candy fan I was TOTALLY NOT BOTHERED (and I loved the lines connecting emotion/economy/consumption) - but I can see lots of other people not taking it so easily.

3.5 stars as usual. She'd be a tiny bit better if she stopped writing the Serious Literary Forms & wrote more novel-y novels -- or maybe the reverse is true. Whatever: I am a big fan.

ps. love her firm, unwavering stance on morality -- in all the books I've read -- so far.

Margee says

This is a wonderfully nuanced and funny tale of corporate and family squabbling. Weber invents a fascinating history for the Ziplitnsky candy family that is both complicated and moving.
