



The Atlas of Love

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When Jill becomes both pregnant and single at the end of one spring semester, she and her two closest friends plunge into an experiment in tri-parenting, tri-schooling, and trihabitating as grad students in Seattle. Naturally, everything goes wrong, but in ways no one sees coming. Janey Duncan narrates the adventure of this modern family with hilarity and wisdom and shows how three lives are forever changed by (un)cooperative parenting, literature, and a tiny baby named Atlas who upends and uplifts their entire world. In this sparkling and wise debut novel, Frankel's unforgettable heroines prove that home is simply where the love is.

The Atlas of Love Details

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From Reader Review The Atlas of Love for online ebook

Ginnie Leiner says

This was one of the best books I have read in a very long time. The storyline is that three female graduate students, friends just recently, decided to move in together when one, Jill, discovers she is accidentally pregnant with her long time boyfriend's child. The boyfriend, after much discussion, departs only to return later and stir up the mix.

The book raised such questions as What makes a woman a mother? Clearly giving birth is not the deciding factor. What makes a family? My mother's saying, "There are all kinds of arrangements" comes to mind. And ultimately, What can love overcome?

I highly recommend this book. Enjoyed it thoroughly.

Sally says

Funny at times, close to home with the baby, the grad school, the teaching while in grad school with a baby, and all that. But also a bit annoying with the constant bestybestybest friend talk, and a tad unrealistic with all the best friending they do and sunday dinners they have while supposedly teaching and writing, much less raising a baby. But fun to read, and a nice pass of the time. I loved that it was set in Seattle. Good. Fine.

The crisis, the center of the story, scared me to death because it was about a very sick baby. That hit me like a brick to the stomach out of nowhere. All ended up fine. But books with sick babies should come with a disclaimer on the back so new mommies don't read them unknowingly. Look at the cover! I thought it was going to be all sunshine and roses. It was more than a little bit not sunny at all.

I admit I skimmed the last three pages or so because they felt lame and too tidy. There were also annoying typos in this book 2/3 of the way in, which makes me think not only the editor, but the author was tired of her story at this point too.

I think I'd like this book more if I were 23 instead of 33.

Sue Hess says

Every once in awhile I read a book compulsively. That means I read as I prepare dinner; I read when I am supposed to be working; I read in every spare moment I can find. The Atlas of Love is my latest compulsive read. I could not put this book down, and it has stayed with me since I finished it. Instead of reading something new, I only want to re-read this book.

Laurie Frankel has a gift for writing. The story is wonderfully compelling. I found myself thinking about what defines a family... blood or love. I laughed; I cried; I became angry and ultimately completely satisfied with this story. Though this is Ms. Frankel's first book, I certainly hope there will be more to follow. Without

hesitation, I recommend *The Atlas of Love*.

Jaclyn Day says

I picked this up from a Borders clearance sale that Brandon and I popped into recently (all books 90% off...it was sad and exhilarating at the same time). I thought the cover looked cute and I'm never one to turn down a book that costs about \$1. (Again, so sad!)

Because I paid such a low price for the book and because it was one of the "leftovers" in the fiction section, I didn't have high expectations. I just wanted to be entertained and thought it looked like a good, light read...perfect for reading in the bath or with a cup of tea.

Instead, I was happily surprised that Frankel's dialogue and character development grabbed me from the first page and held my attention until I finished. It's her first published book, but you wouldn't know it. She has a confident voice and the interesting details in this book kept it from being your cliched "baby on the cover" novel. The book's pace does ebb and flow, but I was charmed enough by her writing to keep powering through.

The Atlas of Love is the story of three English-lit graduate students: Janey, Katie and Jill, who band together to help Jill when she becomes unexpectedly pregnant. After Jill's boyfriend makes a break for it, Janey and Katie become substitute parents—living with Jill and Atlas (her son) and helping with everything from feedings to naps to play time. The book is thought-provoking, especially as tensions grow between the girls as Jill starts to pull away from the intimacy of their unconventional "family" situation.

The book is thoroughly charming and I hope Frankel continues on to write a sequel, since several of the character's story lines have plenty left to explore. If you need a heart-warming "chick lit" book but would rather do without the cliches that usually come along with the genre, this is a good place to start.

Shonda says

What makes us a family? Sharing the same mother and father? Our siblings or grandparents? What about the close family friend who, as long as you can remember, you called Uncle So and So even though he is not your mother's brother or your father's. And your best friend. . . is she family? She may not be your sister, but you certainly feel as though she is. In *The Atlas of Love*, the debut novel by Laurie Frankel, this question is pushed to its limits.

No matter how we plan our lives, right down to the smallest detail, our lives often take an unexpected turn. For Jill, this occurs when she learns she's pregnant and her boyfriend isn't thrilled to become a father. As he fades from her life, best friends Janey and Katie step in and offer to co-parent. The three friends are also graduate students and devise a plan that will allow each to attend and teach class, study and take care of Jill's baby. After Jill gives birth, neither woman is prepared for what comes next.

The Atlas of Love is told in Janey's voice. Janey is the peacemaker of the group. She definitely takes care of everyone (she cooks all the meals) and puts her friends' needs in front of her own. Katie is the romantic. She is looking to marry and have children. Each time she dates a new guy, she looks at him as being The One.

And then there's Jill. She's the hardest one for me to describe. At times she can be kind and sweet, while at other times she's downright selfish and entitled.

Despite their planning, this new living arrangement begins to spin out of control. A medical emergency will cause each woman to evaluate her life as well as their friendship. As each woman begins her own journey, the meaning of family will begin to take shape. How each defines family will be different, however necessary as all three women begin a new chapter in their lives.

The *Atlas of Love* is a novel that should not be missed. Frankel is a talented author. I am looking forward to reading her future works.

Patty Pacelli says

Fun story with interesting characters and lots of witty, entertaining dialogue and narration.

Amy says

This was one of the worst books I've read in a long time. Absolutely hated the writing style; a whole LOT of telling and not showing. Then telling after showing just in case you missed it. I felt like saying to the author, "We get it! You don't have to over explain everything!" It really could have used an editor. In fact, it seemed like whoever did edit it just ran a spell check, because at times there were weird sentences that had obviously been rewritten and meant to be cut out. The characters did not ring true, especially the baby's mother who was so unlikable it was hard to believe anyone would be friends with her. The baby may as well have been named "plot device" as it did not at all convey a thing about what life with a baby is actually like. In one scene the baby is crawling around and eating cake when he's only about five months old. It really annoys me when an author either doesn't keep track of how old their characters are or else doesn't lift a finger to research what babies are like at each age. It was a fast read and took place in my city, otherwise I probably wouldn't have even finished it. Do not waste your time.

Melissa says

I bought this for the cover - the baby is so damn cute I couldn't resist. And I knew my mom would like it (for the same reason) so I figured why not.

It's a really cute premise - 3 friends raising the baby but it was a bit boring. They're all in school so we pretty much had to read the syllabus for Janey's literature class. Look, I hardly read for my classes, why should I have to "sit through" a pretend class? And there really wasn't much interaction between the girls and the baby, except to say that raising a baby while in school is hard. (I don't think you need to be a grad student to know that). The crisis was an opportunity to show how selfish and unappreciative the baby-mama (I forgot her name, probably on purpose) and the fact that everything was resolved so tidily was just lame.

Three stars - I'd give it 2, but I know mom will give it 4 for being like a Lifetime movie so I used the average.

Austen to Zafón says

I'm reading several other books, but every time I go to the library, I see some book on the "New Realeases" shelf that I can't resist. This was one of those. Abandoning my other books, I plowed through this one quickly and in the end, although I was frustrated with the characters throughout most the book, I was engaged by the plot. Janey, an English lit grad student/teacher at a Seattle university (called Rainier in the book) makes friends with two other grad students. One is Mormon and constantly on the lookout for The One she is destined to marry. The other is a blunt, self-absorbed person who from the beginning takes advantage of Janey's tendency to care for others and make peace. I found it difficult to understand why these women would be friends, but when the blunt one, Jill, gets pregnant and her boyfriend takes off, I was amazed that Janey's solution was for these three people with completely different priorities to move in together, co-parent, and not reduce their workload at all. Perhaps I've forgotten what it's like to be in my early 20s, when I was probably just as optimistic and clueless. Of course, nothing goes as planned. Jill gets bitchier and more selfish until she is so over the top, I found it hard to believe. I loathed her, just as I loathed Janey for being such a namby-pamby BFF with Jill, who really has nothing to offer but her son (and even that on a limited, I'll-take-even-that-away-when-ever-you-piss-me-off basis), which is apparently enough for needy Janey. I didn't like Katie the Mormon either, who seemed to be there to provide some comic relief and an easy target for Jill's scorn. So what did I like? The part of the book that's strongest is Janey's relationship with her grandmother, a strong and funny woman with a firm grasp of reality that Janey herself is lacking. The scenes with her felt more realistic to me than the rest of the book. That makes sense because in the author notes, Frankel says that a little of each of her grandmothers was put into that character. Also, Frankel's writing is enjoyable, witty, and quotable. I look forward to more from her, as this is her first novel. And what really kept me going was that early in the book, Frankel writes, "Like everything that must go according to plan in order to work, this didn't." The intimation that I was about to watch a slow-motion train wreck kept me turning pages until way past my bedtime.

Kelly Francois says

This book was quite engrossing in the beginning. I loved the relationship between the 3 main characters. They are all so different, yet they find that they balance one another out. As the story goes on, it starts to get a bit wordy. The narrator is an English Phd student and teacher, so she is CONSTANTLY talking about how what she is teaching in her class and how it relates to the drama in her life...and DRAMA there is...maybe even a little too much. Perhaps that's the point, though. Also, one of the characters, Jill, becomes so selfish and indignant that it seems almost over the top. There isn't a ton of character development and then all of sudden she is a complete bitch. It made those parts hard to read. Also, the growth of Janey's relationship with Ethan is both predictable and sudden. However, I love the relationship between Janey and her grandmother and I honestly cried when their part of the story was being told. All in all, it was an enjoyable read. Nothing I would rave too much about. Definitely an easy read, but perhaps a bit pretentious.

Sarah says

LOVE LOVE LOVE this book. I got it from the library, but am planning on buying it to read again. I was laughing out loud within just a few pages of starting it. It was lighthearted and fun; while also dealing with

serious issues of single parenthood, family, and friendships. The character development was great and I felt like I knew the characters well by the end of the book. Fantastic read.

Cheryl says

An enjoyable read, for the most part. Starts promising, then gets a bit annoying, then gets engaging, then frustrating, then somewhat satisfying. Frankel writes chick-lit for chicks with brains. The story of what happens when three grad student friends raise a baby together feels realistic, and there are genuine funny and heartfelt moments, particularly involving the main character Janey and her family. Overall, it's a nice tome about modern families and what family really means, and only became annoying with all the Literature references - it felt like Frankel was breaking the fourth wall when talking about narrative and story, within her story.

Julie says

The people in this book are jerks. The narrator is a push-over, the baby mama is selfish, possibly psychotic (but don't you dare say anything bad because she's family!), and the token conservative friend seems like an afterthought.

The main problem is that Frankel took an anecdote - three graduate students band together to raise a baby - and tried to turn it into a novel. There was a lot of unnecessary padding, including long tirades about how haaaaard it is to be a grad student. Lady Author, I know. I've been there. (But, also, don't kid yourself, higher education is a privilege and if you've lost sight of that, it's time for you to get a real job. One that doesn't allow for so much blissed out yoga and running with cute boys.) It doesn't make for interesting reading.

Neither does it help that Frankel felt the need to spell out her novel's (prosaic) moral in painstaking detail every three pages. Gimme a break. This isn't *Uncle Tom's Cabin*!

Amy says

I finished this yesterday and immediately recommended it to a friend. It's not that it was the absolute best book I've ever read, but it had moments of such insight, clarity, and humor, that it captured me. I think one of the things I enjoyed the most was that this patchwork family of three women who come together to help raise the baby one of them has are all English Lit grad students. The constant interplay of literature in their lives was like hot fudge on ice cream, certainly not necessary, but once added, turned that plain old scoop of frozen deliciousness into a sundae.

There were many, many moments that captured me. I blogged about one here and then just nodded in agreement with a number of others. The author has a knack of adding little touches that made the characters and the situation seem very real. (Like the story of the candlesticks that Janey's grandfather gave her grandmother. He brought them back for her from Paris, instead of the perfume most men bring their sweethearts, because he remembered how beautiful she looked in candlelight, and carried that image, and the

candlesticks, until he could return to her. I'm betting that's a real story, from Frankel's own family lore, incorporated into the story, with love.) (And, for the record, Janey's grandmother is a fabulous character, reminding me so much of someone close to my own heart, that I'd swear Frankel and I were related, though we're not.)

Anyhow, this is a novel both literary, and lovely. Thank you Laurie Frankel.

Jane says

Do graduate students really talk to each other that way? I don't remember having time to formulate intricate conversations or thoughts when I was in grad school, but I guess that's just me. Anyway, I must also be a horrible person because if a friend pulled shit on me like the shit Jill pulled on Janey, I would write them off forever because, frankly, life is too short for that kind of bullshit and assholelike behavior. And isn't that sort of the point of the book? Sometimes you need to take a leap. Yeah, a leap from poisonous people in your life! Janey needs to move on with her life and stop ruminating over what she wishes she could have by trying to take care of people who don't deserve her help. She basically puts her life on hold for these assholes, and for what? What did she accomplish? She didn't even realize that she was being walked on all over. I don't know if her sacrifice was worthwhile. Nothing was resolved. No one became a better person. None of their lives changed for the better. So much happened but nothing happened. This is not life, it's not history, and it's not fiction. I'm giving it 2 stars because I'm writing so much about it. At least it got me riled up enough to make me review it.
