



## Other Bells for Us to Ring

*Robert Cormier*

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## **Other Bells for Us to Ring** Robert Cormier

Eleven-year-old Darcy hasn't lived in any one place long enough to have a best friend--until her family settles in Frenchtown and she meets Kathleen Mary O'Hara. Darcy is spellbound by Kathleen Mary's vivid tales of Catholicism. She shows Darcy a world beyond Frenchtown: a world of daring games and secrets, of sins and miracles. With Darcy's father off fighting the war somewhere in Europe, Kathleen Mary couldn't have come into her life at a better time.

Then, just as suddenly as they appeared, Kathleen Mary and her family disappear. While Darcy waits to hear from her, she learns that her father is missing in action. Christmas is coming, and Darcy is unsure about the power of God's love. Will the miracle she hopes for really happen?

## **Other Bells for Us to Ring Details**

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# From Reader Review *Other Bells for Us to Ring* for online ebook

## Shanae says

I thought this book was good. I enjoyed that it talked about friendship and how a friend is nice to have. I enjoyed that it was a fast read and it held my attention.

I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a book about friendship. It is a good book for people that need a interesting book to read.

warnings

violence- some

language- very little

sex- none

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## Jessica Rawden says

I've read a lot of Robert Cormier, but I had never picked up his first book *Other Bells for Us to Ring*. I could tell, even in the first few pages, that Cormier had not yet fallen into the mastery of crazy young adult stories he would later be known for. That being said, *Other Bells for Us to Ring* had some great stuff going on. Darcy Webster, our main character is awkward and shy and has to deal with both moving and being a religious outsider in a wholly Catholic community. Her foil is a girl named Mary who is loud, Irish Catholic and is running head first into an adult world before she is really prepared. The story deals with WWII, and topics such as alcoholism and abusive parents. It seems everyone is hiding something in the book, and how family's deal with the things they must hide is super important. It's also great that Cormier addresses how hard it can be to live in a community that is split by religion. The most poignant part for me was when Kathleen Mary wants them to get rid of their toys so that they can both start playing adult. Darcy has a Shirley Temple doll that she gives up, but later cries about, perhaps realizing she's not ready to let childhood go completely. The book doesn't have the happiest or most uplifting of endings, but in the end, Darcy has learned a lot about herself, and perhaps that is more important. This book is at a reading level that middle schoolers could understand, and may have been written for early teens, but it handles some pretty heavy topics including alcoholism, domestic abuse, religion, ostracization, and death, so I would only recommend it for ages 15-18.

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## Margo says

Usually I love Robert Cormier's books. This book did not meet my expectations. The book was a sweet story about a friendship with a sad twist at the end. It took a long time to get to the action. I liked the ending and felt it was a nice way to finish off the book, but I struggled with the first half of the book. A story about a young girl whose father goes off to WWII as she finds a best friend in a new town and eventually finds faith. The story was ultimately about faith and God as Darcy discovers the complexities of religion and where she fits in them. Great for someone who is struggling to understand religion.

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## **Denise says**

This book is somewhat on the dark side. Only 152 pages, it is a short read, however it took me a while to really get into the book. Brought back a lot of memories for me--I was brought up Catholic and one of the main characters is a young Catholic girl.

The story takes place during WWII. The life of Darcy, the protagonist, is rather dreary. Her family has moved around a lot and Darcy has not made friends until she meets Kathleen Mary O'Hara. Her father has trouble finding and keeping a job, so he joins the military. Both Kathleen Mary and Darcy's father go missing. One story line ends on a happy note and the other doesn't.

I was surprised by the depth of this story because it is a teen read. I can't say that I thought it was a wonderful book but I can say that the story will probably stick with me for a while.

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## **Trisha says**

If I were to choose another one of Cormier's books to read, I would not recommend reading this one. It was mostly a charming nice easy read. What intrigued me was the fact that it was taken place in a French town near French Canada, and that it was during WW2. But it's really about a young girl's realization of what love is. She makes a new best friend, who is extremely Catholic, as are most people in the town, but Darcy's family is not. She at first only sees the rules that Kathy keeps for her church and she doesn't see the real reason for following the rules. She learns that the first thing that comes for any real devotion to a church is love of God, and then everything else follows. Darcy's father is at war and becomes M.I.A. and it's the prayer and faith of the Catholic mother that Darcy believes brought him home. You don't have to believe in the Catholic Church or even in God to enjoy this book. It's about learning to believe in something. She didn't become Catholic, she just found that she could believe. She's not just a little nobody, but she is somebody. She lost her friend, but she gave her a purpose in life.

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## **Rach says**

This is the first book I read in one day. A tragic but also endearing story about young Darcy Webster and her army family moving into a new town when she meets a tough local girl Kathleen, and they become best friends. As Kathleen familiarises her with town, Darcy begins to grow up and question life. Then her father goes missing in the war and then she begins to really question life's ups and downs.

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## **Reily Riemersma says**

This story is about a girl named darcy who has moved around all her life. she hasn't lived in one place long enough to call anybody her best friend. until she moves to Frenchtown and meets her best friend.

Growing up I didn't really move much. ive moved twice and it wasn't so bad because I just moved up the street and was still able to go to the same school and have the same friends. I cant imagine what this girl has

gone through.

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### **Haylee says**

This book is not one of my favorite books by Cormier, but it was very touching. If you cannot feel compassion for a young girl who loses the people she loves, I might have to call you heartless. Bad things happen to good people, but life keeps on going. There are indeed "other bells for us to ring." I felt Cormier was very clever to add religion in this book. Instead of saying whether one religion was better than the other, he merely spoke through his characters that God will still love you no matter what religion you are apart of.

Warning: Death, sorrow, loneliness

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### **Gabbie Limbo says**

I chose this book because I like the description in the back. "Other Bells For Us To Ring" is about a girl named Darcy who keeps moving and never had a best friend until she met Kathleen who changed her life. I like the quote , " be like the lilies of the field , who do not toil or spin. Be like flowers everywhere who respond to rain and sunshine and need nothing else. Be like trees that stretch to the sky." because it is encouraging. I like the author's point of view of how it was told by Darcy. I would recommend it to people that are Catholic.

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### **Ashley says**

I'm not really sure how I felt about this book. On one hand I loved it: it was a very insightful view into an eleven-year-old's view of friendship, war, religion, and tragedy. On the other hand, I had very little patience for the characters. Not that any of them were obnoxious or anything, but it read very much like *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, which I also had little patience for. Perhaps it was because I didn't think anything like that when I was that age. From what I hear about Robert Cormier, this book was quite tame. WARNINGS: some abuse (albeit in the background), minor language.

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### **Cat Conner says**

At first, I was determined not to like "Other Bells for Us to Ring" because this book was required reading for me (well, the author was required). However, I very much enjoyed Cormier's historical novel about a young girl named Darcy who must face the social and political facets of WWII society. Darcy is a shy eleven year-old girl who finds solace in making friends with Kathleen Mary O'Hara, a fiery redhead who challenges Darcy's religious beliefs. Kathleen is a devout Catholic obsessed with growing up, while Darcy is a Protestant unsure of how she feels about entering young adulthood. Both Darcy and Kathleen struggle with their family lives. Darcy's father eventually goes to fight in Europe and Kathleen has to deal with an abusive, alcoholic father. Kathleen tells Darcy all about the Catholic church and Darcy has to figure out what she really believes and how accurate Kathleen's information is. However, Kathleen disappears from Frenchtown,

the neighborhood of Massachusetts in which Kathleen and Darcy live, and Darcy's father goes missing in the war, leaving Darcy to figure out her internal struggles alone (her mother lives with her but is helping in the war effort).

I felt like "Other Bells for Us to Ring" got off to a slow start, but the ending chapters were so touching that Cormier's message of true friendship and religious discovery cannot be ignored. I do like how Cormier developed the relationship between Darcy and Kathleen. They started out having typical preteen adventures and conversations, but began desiring and exploring the deeper facets of adulthood. I like how the discoveries that Darcy do not change her sweet, inquisitive personality, even though she sees much darkness in those around her. So many authors take heavy young adult themes and transfer that heaviness onto the reader. Cormier's writing is revealing without being depressing. Cormier created the perfect blend of joy and pain, a blend that is truer to real life.

Everyone should give "Other Bells for Us to Ring" a chance. Sometimes, reading an uplifting novel is just what the reader needs to move on with his or her own personal challenges. I felt like this book helped me to realize that I'm not alone in the world and other people, other authors like Cormier, understand the confusion and/or pain that I have felt in my life. I think that coming to this realization is very comforting and one of the triumphs of Cormier's writing.

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### **Karyn Huenemann says**

This is the only one of Robert Cormier's novels I feel able to recommend to non-adult readers. While I teach a number of his works at the university level, the issues they contain are in general too starkly expressed, and too troubling, for me to consider the experience of reading them something I want to give to those I love—or even like. *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, I might, as well, if the reader were looking for a troubling novel with a powerful and effective social message. But *Other Bells for Us to Ring*, unlike *Fade* or *Tenderness* or *After the First Death*, has a beauty in it that warms the soul. The ending does not leave us mourning for the characters, but rather believing in the miracles that true friendship and faith can bring into an otherwise desolate life.

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### **Josiah says**

Robert Cormier basically seems to write two types of books: introspective novels regarding the world as it was while he grew up, in which he demonstrates the deeper insights about life that he has developed during the years following his youth in the mid-twentieth century, and the excruciating suspense novels for which he is more widely known. *Other Bells for Us to Ring* falls into the first category, and those who have taken the time to piece together Robert Cormier's personal philosophy from reading his many published works won't want to miss this important piece of the puzzle.

Darcy, age eleven, has moved from town to town with her family for most of her life. She hasn't had much of a chance to make close friends, though it's also true that she's never really made an effort to get to know the kids in her classes; that is, until one of them makes the effort to get to know *her*, after Darcy moves to Frenchtown. Kathleen Mary is an unusual girl who takes to Darcy right away, and after finding out that they share an interest in poetry, the girls become friends.

On the surface, Darcy and Kathleen Mary don't appear to have a lot in common. Most noticeably, Darcy's family is Unitarian, while Kathleen Mary is from a Roman Catholic religious background in a town filled to brimming with Catholics who take their belief system very seriously. The girls' friendship with each other causes them both (but especially Darcy) to have new questions about the nature of religion and why their families believe what they do, but the difference in faith never causes much of a rift between them. Still, Darcy and Kathleen Mary are a quirky pairing as friends, not always seeing each other all that often and rarely planning to get together; when it does happen, it's almost always on a whim. Darcy isn't completely aware of what the friendship means to her until the night when everything changes.

At the same time, in her home life, Darcy becomes sick with fear when her father reveals that he has been assigned for shipment overseas as a member of the U.S. military, to help construct temporary bridges for the Allied cause in World War II. He had already been an active participant in the war effort up to that point, right here from Frenchtown, but going overseas to where the actual combat rages is a totally different story. Darcy's father writes to her and her mother all the time after he's shipped out, though, and his constant stream of letters is a comfort that keeps them from worrying that something terrible may have happened to him.

But then the flow of correspondence stops, and official notice comes that Darcy's father has gone Missing in Action. The stunning news affects Darcy and her mother in very different ways, causing Darcy to wonder at length about the nature of miracles, and her mother to become subdued and emotionally shut away from the world. For Darcy, it was her friendship and conversations with Kathleen Mary that has brought on the thoughts about miracles. Unitarians and Catholics may not have the same ideas about God, but what if a bit of Catholic influence could make the miracle that Darcy desperately wishes for come true, for her father to return safely from the war? When everything depends on it, how does one truly get through to God to petition for a miracle?

Described in the book jacket as "Robert Cormier's first book for children", *Other Bells for Us to Ring* does read younger than most of the author's novels, but I'd hesitate to say that it is intended for readers much younger than twelve or thirteen. There are some minor instances of profane language, and one of the book's scenes in particular is quite jarring. Overall, though, I see *Other Bells for Us to Ring* as a worthwhile story that examines some hot-button issues more closely under the microscope of contemporary reason, and ultimately allows the reader to make the important decisions about faith and belief for him- or herself. I would definitely give two and a half stars to this book.

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## Michael Kemp says

*Other Bells for Us to Ring* was a good book about a an eleven year-old girl, Darcy, who moves into a new town. Her new friend, Kathleen O'Hara, challenges her religious beliefs as a Unitarian by "making her Catholic" by throwing holy water on her. Sadly, her friend moves away before she can know if that "conversion" was real or not. So she struggles with the state of her soul and whether she'll be saved. (Does she need to go to a priest?) Her father is off at war, and she is left to tackle these difficult issues with only the help of her mother.

This has a beautiful ending, and she begins to believe in miracles. I don't want to say what happens to give it away. But it is a very sweet ending.

I enjoyed the story quite a bit because of the voice of the narrator. She was very believable. All the characters are quite round and fun. I liked the story; it wasn't earth-shattering, but it was fun. If you want a fairly short read that has good characters, this is the book for you.

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## Andersreads says

I'm a big fan of Robert Cormier, finding him one of the most thoughtful and suspenseful YA author. I consider him one of the authors (along with Paul Zindel and S.E. Hinton) who created the realistic young adult genre. By that I mean books written for teens that dealt with the real issues that concerned them without being moralistic. This book shows his versatility as an author, one who can write powerful books like *The Chocolate War*, suspenseful psychological books such as *I Am the Cheese*, out and out suspenseful books such as *We All Fall Down*, books with moral questions, such as *The Rag and Bone Shop*, as well as historical fiction. In this book, the main character, Darcy, whose family moves around so much that she has never had a real friend, finally meets someone who is such a friend. Although they have much in common, there are also some differences. The most important one is that Mary is a Catholic while Darcy is a Protestant. The theme of faith and miracles is central to this book.

I would recommend this book to someone interested in historical fiction or someone who wants to explore ideas related to faith. I also feel that girls would find it more interesting than boys.

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