



## Family Game Night and Other Catastrophes

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Annabelle has a secret . . . a secret so big she won't allow friends within five miles of her home. Her mom collects things. Their house is overflowing with stuff. It gives Annabelle's sister nightmares, her brother spends as much time as he can at friends' houses, and her dad buries himself in his work.

So when a stack of newspapers falls on Annabelle's sister, it sparks a catastrophic fight between their parents--one that might tear them all apart--and Annabelle starts to think that things at home finally need to change.

Is it possible for her to clean up the family's mess? Or are they really, truly broken?

Mary E. Lambert's moving and heart-breakingly funny debut novel about the things we hold dear--and the things we let go--will resonate with anyone whose life has ever felt just a little too messy.

## **Family Game Night and Other Catastrophes Details**

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Author : Mary E. Lambert

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## **From Reader Review Family Game Night and Other Catastrophes for online ebook**

### **Bill says**

Mary E. Lambert's first novel is a Dostoevskian romp through family dysfunction that will teach the young (and remind the old) that the trials of life inevitably leave little chips in your soul, but those chips don't prevent you from being whole. Unless you try to split your soul into seven pieces hidden away in places relevant to your personal history in an unlikely bid to achieve immortality. That will prevent you from being whole.

A highly recommended book for introspective readers of all ages.

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### **Kiera says**

Such a light and fun read!! I picked it up since it is a 2018-19 Washington Battle of the Books books. I loved it 4.5 stars!!

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### **Jessica Rinker says**

I always appreciate a middle grade that wrangles with something deeper, and the author has a done a lovely job of portraying a fractured, but not destroyed, family with humor and everyday happenings like cute boys and best friends, exactly how life usually goes.

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### **Jen Petro-Roy says**

I loved this book! What a pitch-perfect middle grade voice. I so felt for Annabelle, dealing with her hoarder mother, avoidant father, friends, and a crush, while figuring out how or if to let people in.

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### **Elizabeth says**

This was a fun but intense read. It was well written and explored a family's issues and how all parts of the family impact the system. Light hearted yet serious. I'm recommending for my almost 10 year old and anyone who likes a good family story.

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### **Corabel Shofner says**

I wasn't ready for this book. The title made me think it would be a slap-stick goof. Boy was I wrong. I

realized by the end of the second chapter that this book, while humorous, was a dead-on study of a highly dysfunctional family that loves each other deeply. Annabelle's mother is a hoarder, which involves many of the same problems as other addictive behaviors. Hoarding can be as damaging as alcoholism or gambling and it affects the entire family, each in different ways.

And this is where Mary Lambert excels. She effortlessly juggles three generations: the grandmother and aunt, mother and father, Annabelle and her siblings (an older brother and a younger sister) and her friends. There are so many moving parts in this story, but Lambert never loses the coherent heart of this family and how damaged each one of them is. Closely observed with all the nuance and levels of struggling to heal. Shame and guilt, secrets and blame, perfectionism, escapism. There is something very 'real' in Lambert's writing.

The story is frustrating because the Mother can't stop herself, but it is neither dreary nor depressing, rather **FAMILY GAME NIGHT** is loaded with smart humor and hope and love.

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### **Sarah Sammis says**

It is what it is.

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### **Emily says**

This is about as well done as a middle grade book on this very painful topic could be, and it had me turning the pages fast. Not something I'll feel drawn to reread, though.

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### **Wendy MacKnight says**

I've been waiting for this book for so long! Last night I started to read it and couldn't put it down so read it in one fell swoop. The story of Annabelle, whose family has become completely dysfunctional thanks to her hoarding mother is at turns heartbreakingly, heartwarming and most of all, utterly believable. I kept turning the pages, desperate to see what would happen next. The characters are completely believable and their flaws painfully rendered. This is a story I hadn't read before in MG and I think it will help and support so many kids. Well done, Mary!

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### **Carlie Corson says**

It was a good book, but it didn't blow my socks off. It was good and had a good story line, but the ending was a little weird.

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### **Jennifer Eckert says**

A fantastic middle grade novel about hoarding; an issue rarely dealt with in children's literature. This book is

very well written and deals with the subject with empathy. You really feel the desperation of the kids in their attempts to deal with their mother's behavior. And while the storyline isn't wholly resolved, you're left with a sense that it will be ok. The relationship between the two sisters is particularly sweet, and seeing the entire family pull together to overcome something those daunting leaves the reader with hope. I'd highly recommend this to kids who like other realistic fiction novels in the vein of *Wonder*, *Counting by 7's*, *The Thing About Georgie*, and *Out of My Mind*.

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### **Barbara says**

All families have secrets, but seventh grader Annabelle Balog is particularly embarrassed by hers. Her mother is a hoarder, and the house is filled to the brim with her mother's collections, various items procured at yard sales and online, as well as towering stacks of newspapers that necessitate tricky navigation from spot to spot. So fearful is Annabelle of what others will say about the state of her house that she keeps most of her friends at arm's length, and hasn't let anyone visit for the last couple of years. When her sister Leslie is almost crushed under a pile of newspapers, her father offers an ultimatum to her mother and moves out while she is supposed to get rid of the trash. The arrival of her mother, Grandma Nora, only adds fuel to the fire as the two women battle over empty milk cartons and canned food items. Although Grandma Nora finds it easy to sort trash from treasure, her daughter is unable to do so, and for every garbage bag that is hauled out, she hauls another one back in, unable to let go of her treasured objects. The book contains several emotional scenes in which the effects the hoarding is having on all members of the family are described as well as the helplessness with which Annabelle's mother tries to tackle her demons. Tackling hoarding, a topic that is not handled often in middle grade novels, the author has created a family in the midst of crisis, and even when it looks as though they will fall apart, their love for one another keeps them going. Clearly, the tie that binds just might be enough to get this family back on the road to recovery with a nudge from some helpful therapy. Although Annabelle wants nothing more than to run away from her problems, her love for her sister brings her back just in the nick of time. For readers who have always thought that their families had issues, this book puts some of those into perspective with insight, empathy, and humor. Older readers may ponder at what point the line between having supplies in reserve and hoarding has been crossed and may be curious as to what prompted this woman's actions. Every case is different, of course, but it is clear as Grandma Nora points out, the Annabelle and her mother are two sides of the same coin, one seeking to be unencumbered with any possession and the other seeking solace in the largess of ownership of stuff, no matter how useless. After all, one never knows when some object might come in handy. I was touched by Annabelle's plight and her feelings of shame over her broken family as well as the author's vivid reminder that all of us have something that is broken and needs repair. This is a promising debut from a middle school English teacher who knows her stuff.

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### **Sarah says**

This was just a random book Megan pulled off the shelf from the library, and we gave it a shot. I had no idea what it was about, but I actually loved it. I don't think everyone would give this 5 stars, but if you have ever personally dealt with a hoarder in your life, this was so potent and accurate. Also, the writing was so well done and made me laugh multiple times.

This is really more appropriate for a middle schooler to read since the main character is 13 or so and deals with some middle school drama (friend dynamics, a boy she likes) and I edited some of it while reading out

loud to Megan (such as the parts when the other kids are complaining about their mom or dad being so dumb or stupid for having curfew or whatnot), but I just loved it. I loved seeing the personalities of the characters, the deep emotional issues that are dealt with but in a kid-relatable way, how to work through your problems and admit it when you need help and not just ignore the problems or run away, also I really liked how (view spoiler)

What a nice random gem that Megan found at the library.

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### **Tanja Voosen says**

Ich hatte mir unter dem Buch ehrlich gesagt etwas anderes vorgestellt. Eine witzige und süße Middle Grade Geschichte rund um eine chaotische Familie. In dem Buch ist die Mutter der Protagonistin psychisch krank und müllt daher das Haus zu. Das war auch das Hauptthema des Romans. Es geht ausschließlich darum, wie die Kinder ihrer Mutter helfen können, ihre Grenzen zu überwinden. Bei einer "Family Game Night" mit der Großmutter kommt ein Stein ins Rollen und die Familie beschließt den Kampf gegen das "Müll-Haus" anzutreten.

Ich fand den Schreibstil wirklich toll und flüssig zu lesen. Es gab auch die ein oder andere Stelle, an der ein lustiger Spruch folgte, da die Beziehung der Geschwister untereinander sehr gut beschrieben war. Überhaupt war die Sache mit der Familie toll erklärt. Es gab Höhen und Tiefen. Auch die Protagonistin konnte ich gut leiden. Alles in allem war mir aber der Stoff des Buches einfach zu wenig. Es ging so viel um die Krankheit der Mutter, dass alles andere (Freundschaft, Charakterentwicklung, Konflikte der Prota) zu kurz kamen. Das fand ich sehr schade.

Kein schlechtes Buch, muss man aber nicht gelesen haben.

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### **Susan says**

There are so many things that kids find hard to talk about with anyone, including friends or family, and books/stories can be a way for them to relate, identify, and then hopefully, share. This book deals with a compulsive hoarder and her children and how the middle child, Annabelle deals with it. Her brother runs to work and friends and her sister has nightmares, but Annabelle tries to control her reactions and it slowly erodes her sense of safety and family.

An excellent book for late elementary/middle grade readers.

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