



The Mermaids Singing

Lisa Carey

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There is an island off the west coast of Ireland called Inis Murúch -- the Island of the Mermaids -- a world where myth is more powerful than truth, and love can overcome even death. It is here that Lisa Carey sets her lyrical and sensual first novel, weaving together the voices and lives of three generations of Irish and Irish-American women.

Years ago, the fierce and beautiful Grace stole away from the island with her small daughter, Gráinne, unable to bear its isolation. Now Gráinne is motherless at fifteen, and a grandmother she has never met has come to take her back. Her heart is pulled between a life in which she no longer belongs and a family she cannot remember. But only on Inis Murúch can she begin to understand the forces that have torn her family apart.

The Mermaids Singing Details

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From Reader Review The Mermaids Singing for online ebook

Jeanine says

(2.5 stars) I had a VERY hard time digesting the women in this novel. Three generations of women all making the same self-destructive mistakes, all unlikable, ornery, selfish and stubborn to the point of hurting themselves. I could not believe they had men who not only loved them, but pined for them. Seriously? They were all so darned MEAN that I can see why they never had friends, but men loved them? And the step-sister who absolutely loved Grace, and Grace tells her repeatedly that she hates her. I never saw anything worth redeeming in these women and their stories were so similar I found myself getting them mixed up. (I suppose that's the point of the book, to show you how mistakes can repeat themselves in future generations.)

On the plus side (betcha didn't think I had one, didja?), Lisa Carey is wonderfully descriptive with her portrait of the Irish landscape and had some beautiful, lyrical writing. I found myself re-reading some passages just for the pure pleasure of it.

Vanessa says

Curiously enough, this book reminds me of two of my most recent reads combined. Not only does the motif of mermaids persist in this, as it does with *The Mermaid's Chair* (completely unrelated to this book), but the concept of isolation and emergence works its way through in this book as well using the island as the main embodiment of both. Like Tan's novel, *The Bonsetter's Daughter*, this book builds upon the bonds and barriers created between three generations of women from their native land, however, this time being that of Ireland. It is a lovely book overall and will certainly give readers pause for thoughts of family, life, and wants.

Tanni says

Okay here is another one I could not finish. I thought this would be great. It is set in Ireland (love Ireland) it is about mothers and daughters (hello?). But she uses the F word too much and the coming of age discovering your own sexuality alone and with others is way to graphic and leaves no room for the imagination. It is very pornographic in the way she uses her vocabulary. To say the least I was very disappointed. I got about 1/3 the way through.

M.M. Strawberry Reviews says

This book isn't really about mermaids, so be forewarned. It's more of a 'chick lit' book (perfect for those of you who like chick lit) and it was a book I really enjoyed. It's interesting to see the relationships between mom and daughter (Cliona/Grace, Grace/Grainne) as well as grandmother and granddaughter, and adding a bit of Irish myth (of Grainne) added a great touch to the story. The writing itself is overall solid and enjoyable, narrated in a fairly smooth style from all three women's points of view, and the conflicts between two characters - whoever they might be at that point - was believable and interesting, as well as each

woman's experiences between America and Ireland. Overall a enjoyable read.

Antof9 says

Read the majority of this while "decking" (enjoying the sun on our back deck with wandererjen.

I both liked and didn't like it. I loved the Irish-ness of it. Loved the musical language, the names I memorized to pronounce correctly (and now can't spell without looking because they aren't spelled like they sound), and I loved all the beach descriptions. Could almost make me wish I lived near water, instead of mountains. Almost, but not quite :)

But there was an awful lot of angst-filled sex in this one. Some of it was necessary to the story, and a lot of it could have been left out, I think. The mother-daughter-mother-daughter relationships were fascinating, and really, they were enough story unto themselves to not need all the sex as "filler". The family relationships were so interesting, and the exploration of one person's feelings juxtaposed with how they actually acted were ... well, fascinating. I know; I already used that word :)

I loved Liam and Seamus, and also compared them to Michael Willoughby. These sweet, kind, gentle men made me want to know them more. Marcus, too. I was happy with the family interaction at the end, and felt relieved at the resolution. But it was sure hard work getting there.

Alesa says

"The sins of the mothers shall be visited upon the daughters." That might be a good synopsis of this novel, told with some good lyricism and emotional insight, but structurally a bit flawed, IMHO.

The story follows three generations of Irish/American women, and their struggles with illegitimate pregnancies and raising daughters on their own. The setting, mostly on a small island off the coast of Ireland, is entrancing. Each of the women (grandmother, mother, daughter) spends part of her life in the US and part on the island. Each feels a genetic closeness with mermaids.

The main problem with the book, for me, was that the three women had such similar voices and life experiences. We have three feisty (and surprisingly lusty and promiscuous) women with a lot of resentment towards their single mothers. I had a hard time remembering whose stories were whose.

Also, there were an awful lot of references to mermaids. Okay, I got the symbolism (women who latch onto men and lure them to their death); yet it was actually the women themselves whose lives were ruined by early pregnancies. The men who fathered the children got off scot free. The mermaid thing just got tiresome after a while, since it didn't really lead to an emotional epiphany or character transformation.

People with a romantic bent for novels set in Ireland might enjoy this, however.

Elena says

It's very acclaimed but I couldn't stand it. All the characters did is sleep around. I didn't like it.

Kyli says

I really liked the writing style in this book - it was lyrical and visual and it grabbed my attention right from the start. It was absolutely enchanting at times. I loved the Irish folklore that it included and how it was woven into the story itself. The geographic detail was impressive too and it allowed me to feel like I was really there.

After the loss of her mother (to cancer), Grainne is a scared, angry teenager seeking comfort in the wrong places. There is such heartbreak and pain in this story, in Grainne's chapters, as well as Grace and Cliona's.

It's a story about women and motherhood, but it didn't settle for stereotypes, it went deeper and managed to paint a clear picture of the various struggles women face and the intensity of which we face them with.

I also really appreciated how it was so honest - in one chapter Cliona mentions that she and Grace just never got to a place where they understood each other, where they could have a healthy mother-daughter relationship. There was wisdom in that realization and eventually, we learn that there's common ground after all - Grace missed her mother when she knew she was dying and Cliona missed her own mother after she was gone. There's such a lesson to be learned in that, and by the time I reached the end of the novel I found myself hoping that Grainne would be the last woman in their family to have to feel that way (and it seems she just may be).

I really liked the sad, destructive passion that was weaved through just about every storyline and the way it pertained to mermaid stories. After awhile Grace's character did seem almost mythical - she was the type of woman who was always just out of reach, even before her death, which is why her mystery captivated Seamus and why her death has the extreme effect it has on Grainne (obviously any child is extremely affected by a parent's death, but the book seems to convey that Grainne and Grace had a totally different mother-daughter relationship, in which Grainne was probably constantly both confused and fascinated by her mother).

Other reviewers felt there were too many sex scenes in the book, but I felt like they were important to the story. It just further conveyed that these women were both passionate and reckless and that their fear and grief often fueled their need for sexual intimacy - and let's not forget that there are so many romantic and sexual associations with mermaids, which is exactly what the book was trying to convey. But I agree with the reviewer who mentioned the part towards the end where Seamus gives Liam a box of condoms as a gift - it seemed out of place and tacky and took away from the scene a lot.

As much as I liked it, I'm giving it 3 stars, because like others said, the 3 narratives and similar story lines really confused me at times. I had a difficult time remembering who was who and who did what. And even though I appreciated the raw honesty of the characters and understood that their pain is what fueled their often mean and abrasive behavior, it was at times, hard to identify with them, because they were all so hard and shut-off. It would have been nice if at least 1 of the characters felt warmer, because I think it would have allowed me to connect more with the book as a whole.

Melissa says

Yeah I am going to be polite and refuse to review this one.

Al says

Three generations of unreasonably angst-filled women have unprotected sex.

Done.

Sierra Miller says

I suppose it had great imagery and an interesting story, but for me it was ruined by how unlikeable the three main women are, particularly Grace, who is so selfish throughout the story it borders on being a sociopath.

Tory says

The story of mothers and daughters, their differences and their likeness... a story of family.

I was hesitant to read it, as the mother/daughter relationship, and all the cliché's that go with it, is a relationship I'm hesitant to explore too much. Am not usually a fan.

But I liked this one a lot. I liked the characters, I liked the lyrical writing style. And contrary to some of the other reviews, I didn't think that the sex was unnecessary... I think novels that truly expand on the sexuality of young women, and the confusion that comes with it, in an honest way, are rare. Also, it was something that bonded the characters, something that probably many mothers and daughters could relate to if it were something spoken about. But wasn't that one of the main themes of the novel? The things not said?

Rrshively says

If only we daughters knew our mother's whole story and our daughters knew our whole story, would those daughters understand the mothers when they are in their difficult teens? On the other hand, maybe it's best that mothers remain mothers with their own unknown past. This book tells the story of a grandmother, mother, and daughter. It has a lot of rebellious teen angst in it, some of which is justified. For instance, losing a mother with whom one is close can explain a lot of self-destructive behavior. My experience with such extreme rebelliousness has been second hand, so I was appalled by some of the behavior. However, the end of the book left me with tears in my eyes because the ending touched my heart.

Brandann says

Told from the points of view of three women, daughter, mother, grandmother, I really thought this book would have been more than a quest to find love and meaning based on what a man can fill in. I was looking for more of a "what the women in my life mean to me" kind of book, and thought that there would be a story of healing from damaged mother-daughter relationships over three generations of Irish women.

Instead, what I found was yet another story of the people who lost someone to cancer and how their lives were torn apart. A story of how sex destroys you if you aren't careful (oh, the slut-shaming messages!) and how good girls wait for a man who really loves you. Also, any woman who isn't nurturing is cold.

However, it isn't completely without good qualities. The women are not completely two-dimensional, and they have some fierceness to them. There is an element of Gaelic lore and mythology that adds a beautiful touch.

Elise says

"The Mermaids Singing" is the perfect book for women who have difficult relationships with their mothers because it shows through multiple perspectives--grandmother, mother, and daughter--just how much misunderstanding happens between perfectly well meaning but damaged and lonely generations of women, so it was great bibliotherapy. However, that is not why I read it, because my mother and I have a pretty good relationship with no drama (and boy did "The Mermaids Singing" remind me of how much I appreciate her!). I was drawn to this book because of the allusion to T.S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in the title: "I hear the mermaids singing, each to each. I do not think that they will sing to me." I am fascinated by mermaids and mermaid lore, and this novel delivered plenty of it. Also, I found the "Prufrock" allusion fitting in this context because of how mermaid lore intersects with its themes of mortality/aging, relationships, and regret in this book.

I must admit that I had trouble liking Grace's character, who seemed gratuitously mean to everyone (with the exception of her daughter, Grainne) who tried to show her any kindness. It's a good thing the other characters in the novel were sympathetic enough to pick up the slack. If Grace had been the main focus, I would have stopped reading. Also, difficult to take were some of the ways in which the author addresses Catholicism, which just didn't ring true at times. For example, I don't care how many sins a person commits or whether it's pre- or post-Vatican II, priests don't mutter "little tramp" to penitents in the confessional. That was just silly and over-the-top. Also, this book covers almost every woman's issue--female competition, teenage sex, miscarriages, single motherhood, unwanted pregnancies, anorexia, and abandonment. Where I am in my life, going there was not the best escape, and escape is why I read. Nonetheless, this book was beautifully written and full of wisdom--definitely worth reading.
