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The Knitting Circle: A Novel



Synopsis

An intelligent, moving read • (Pages) and a testament to women's friendship and to Ann Hood's talent • (Hilma Wolitzer). After the sudden loss of her only child, Mary Baxter joins a knitting circle in Providence, Rhode Island, as a way to fill the empty hours and lonely days. The women welcome her, each teaching Mary a new knitting technique and, as they do, revealing their own personal stories of loss, love, and hope. Eventually Mary is able to tell her own story of grief and in so doing reclaims her love for her husband, faces the hard truths about her relationship with her mother, and finds the spark of life again.

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Customer Reviews

My first Ann Hood novel proved to be for the lovers of deeply moving and emotional reading material that grabs through the pages and squeezes the heart until tears come out. This semi autobiographical work, mirroring her personal loss and her way back into the world of living is a magnificent journey, best savored late at night with a hot cup of cocoa and a box of tissues nearby. At first the book grabbed my attention because I love to knit, but when I read the dust jacket I knew this book could appeal to pretty much anyone who loves to read. The Knitting Circle followed the life of Mary Baxter, a Rhode Island resident who lived a pleasant life with her husband Dylan and five year old daughter Stella. She wrote reviews for the local alternative newspaper, following her own schedule, living to her own beat immersed in the world of books and restaurants, pink tutus and happy family days spend grilling outdoors and making fresh lemonade. Her life was so good

she would often stop everything and cry from sheer joy until one day those tears turned dark and swallowed up her whole world, the day her beloved little girl died. Unable to go on after her loss, Mary was urged by her mother to join a knitting circle in Providence. The idea seemed absurd to her since she didn't even know how to knit, but she decided to go, unsure of what to do next once she was there. Welcomed by Alice, Harriet, Scarlett, Lulu, Beth and Ellen, she quickly found a spot for herself trying to live her day one moment and one knot at a time. The therapeutic qualities of focusing on knitting those tiny little knots relived her mind and heart for her devastating loss. Instead of slowly losing herself in the inky depths of the black hole her heart felt she found purpose in knitting and talking to the women. Each one as it turned out had her own dramatic tale, reminding Mary that people are more similar than different. As she cracked her hard shell exterior to these women their tales of sorrow made her heart come to life, she felt the need to be there for them even if her own life was slowly unraveling, her work being difficult to do, her hair and clothes no longer important, her husband coming home later and later...The story had a very smooth flow, the writing ornate in details of the scents and tastes of fresh baked lemon cake and espresso, the scent of the wooden cottage, fresh falling snow, the painted porcelain at Alice's shop and the colorful and moving stories the women shared melted my heart and made me care for the characters more than I have in a long time with a book. Mary's journey was long; her transformation was not happening overnight and with her efforts to be there for her friends who dealt with death, divorce, betrayal, heart breaks and dark secrets she slowly found the first step on the ladder of her own salvation. The Knitting Circle was a beautiful book that touched me deeply; I wish that I could have spent the rest of my life getting to know all the wonderful people in it, especially Mary. I can say with great relief that I finally read a book where the main character was a strong woman who lost her grip but was not pathetic and desperate, she was a loving mother and a gracious friend with a non-nonsense approach and refreshing strength that splashed across each page and made me wish that the ending wouldn't come too soon. Mary's journey from dark depths started slowly but ended with a marvelous finish.- Kasia S.

THE KNITTING CIRCLE gets my vote when it comes to reading a good book about people and their lives, the kind of book I most enjoy. Was this book perfect? Well, maybe not, but it the kind of book that kept me reading on into the night to find out what the next person's story was. I was somewhat reminded of HOW TO MAKE AN AMERICAN QUILT (Whitney Otto) in which a group of women also have individual stories to share with the young woman. But these stories were different from those and even though it was a bit sad, it was definitely well written, as are all of Ann Hood's books. Mary

has lost her five year old daughter and her attempts to get back into her routines of life are just not happening. Her mother encourages her to join a knitting circle and so she eventually does, meeting a group of women with stories of their own. One by one, you learn of the sadness and the success of the others in the group and watch as Mary grows stronger. By the way I must admit, reading this made me want to go learn how to knit! :o) I understand that author Ann Hood has actually lost her young daughter and that this book is a reflection of what she went through and has continued to experience since that event occurred. I admire her more than I can ever say. I admire her courage in writing about her loss as well as writing about tragedies in the lives of others in this fictional setting. I'm glad to see Ann Hood back again!

It's been a tough one to walk away from. This book left me numb (extremely close to the feeling left after reading *The Kindness of Strangers* by Katrina Kittle). *The Knitting Circle* by Ann Hood is a self written autobiographical novel about a young couple, more so the mother, coping with the loss of their only child, their daughter, after a quick battle with Meningitis. This book was penned by Ann Hood after the loss of her own child after dealing with viral strep. The story in *The Knitting Circle* is painful and yet full of slow healing. Mary, the mother spends her days in a complete fog, unable to grip the change that has come into her life so suddenly. Mary used to be a reviewer for books, restaurants and movies, but now spends her days in baggy overalls watching TV and crying or sleeping. Mary has a non-existent relationship with her mother; former alcoholic. But her mother, calls, persists and irritates Mary to the point that she finally shows up at a knitting studio an hour from her house. Mary struggles to fit in with the circle, complaining about the littlest knitting task. She looks around the room to each Wednesday night slowly learning about the people in this group. This group is not ordinary, for each member has a horrid story of pain, loss and suffering... but the truth is where they are now. Because of Alice, the store owner. Mary finally starts to open up to her grief, finds time to learn about each other with her mother and finds life again... In my humble opinion, I know this book could be better based upon reading about the author. However, the basis behind this book.... the quality of writing through a desperate, heartfelt struggle is amazing. This book is such a lesson in learning just how to live and breath; one step at a time... (in the words of knitting... one stitch at a time...) So, based on all of the above, this book should be picked up and enjoyed in both tears and laughter!

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