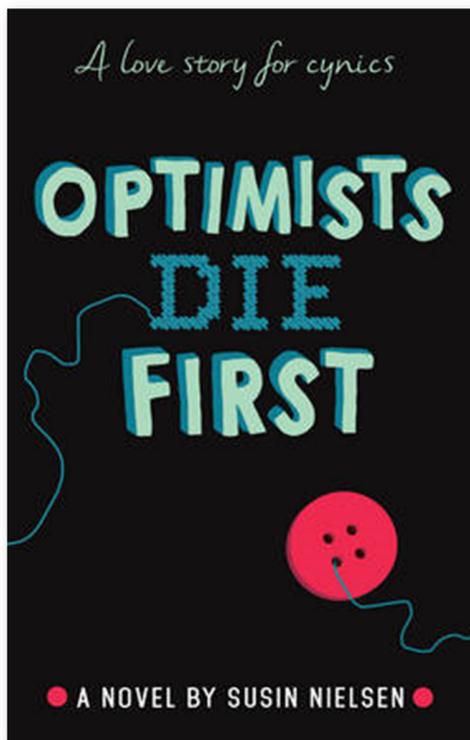


## LoveReading4kids Reader reviews of **Optimists Die First** By Susin Nielsen

Below are the complete reviews, written by the LoveReading4kids members.



**Kyra**

*I read this in two hours as I was utterly entranced by the moving story that Susin Nielsen crafted - I fell deeply in love with this book and I'm sure you will too!*

*A thought-provoking, heart-warming novel that blends the ache of grief, the beauty of our flaws, the anchor of guilt and the incredible miracles a sprinkling of kindness and acceptance can work, to form a beautifully poignant love story that is raw and real. Not only does it contain a romance that will make you feel warm and fuzzy inside, it is filled with friendship, love, forgiveness and cats – what more could you ask for?*

<http://www.blogofabookaholic.blogspot.com>

Twitter: @Bookaholic007

**Rebekah Marsh, age 14**

*'Optimists Die First' has changed the way I look at grief, the book portrays Petula's grief in a way that I've never seen before and I loved it. I was unable to loosen my grip on the book for days. I was totally and utterly hooked into the story line of the book, the grief stricken love story was unlike any I've seen before and I was in love with how it was portrayed. **The book enlightened me on how we may judge people at first, but we may not appreciate their unique personality until we get to know them as a true person.***

### **Izzy Read, age 16**

*Now a pessimist to the bone, Petula looks for dangers everywhere. Jacob is the new boy at school who is a clear optimist. What could go wrong?*

**'Optimists Die First' is foremost a tale of guilt and forgiveness** but mostly just fun while being easy to read even if (like me) you have hit a ginormous reading slump. All the characters are heart-warming and undeniably human. **It is to the point but messy in a way that replicates life perfectly.**

[www.fromcovertocoverr.tumblr.com](http://www.fromcovertocoverr.tumblr.com)

### **Jenny Duffy**

*Following a family tragedy, Petula De Wilde lives in fear of the world. She sees danger everywhere, and lives in a constant state of anxiety, worried that an accident could befall her at any minute. Her life has pretty much shut down – she has stopped crafting, she has fallen out with her best friend, and she is consumed by paranoia. She is a reluctant participant in YART, a youth art therapy group. There she meets Jacob Cohen, who is annoyingly optimistic. As time goes by, Jacob helps Petula face her fears and brings the members of YART together. However, when Jacob's own past comes to light, can he regain Petula's trust?*

*This was a very moving book. Petula's anxieties come across so strongly, as do the struggles of the other characters. **Nielsin writes with warmth and sensitivity, creating relationships that are believable and nuanced.** The development of the characters is done well, and gives the reader hope. Written with sensitivity and humour, this is a wonderful book. The dialogue is brilliant, and the characters really got into my head. **It's a book I couldn't stop thinking about.** I will definitely be checking out Susin Nielsin's other novels. **But seriously, Optimists Die First features a re-enactment of Wuthering Heights starring cats, how could I not love it?!***

<https://thebookstheartandme.wordpress.com>

### **Rosa Boran**

**This is a wonderful novel. I read it in one sitting.** Petula is a teenager obsessed with keeping herself safe. She is terrified of being killed by fallen masonry or from the germs in a handshake. She is also guilt ridden because she

believes that she was responsible for the death of her toddler brother. Forced to attend an art class for teens with mental health issues, she finds herself in a world populated by troubled teenagers and fascinating characters. She falls in love but the path to happiness is far from easy and she faces danger and betrayal along the way. This book reminded me of John Green's 'Fault in Our Stars.' **There is tragedy but Nielson sweetens it with laugh out loud moments and a great understanding of what it is to be a teenager.** I think the greatest strength of the book lies in its characterisation. Everyone in the cast is a real three dimensional person, totally plausible and created with empathy. Even though some of the material is dark it is hope that shines through and the indomitable nature of the human soul. Well done Susan Nielson!

**Emily Price, age 14**

***I could not put this book down! It was such a good read and an unexpected ending. Overall a brilliant book and highly recommended.***

**Jess Kenny, age 11, Rodborough School**

***This is a very moving book, which has you on the edge of your seat. I loved it!***

*It has a slow start but from the beginning you have questions in your head that you have to find the answers to so you read on. The build up is both slow and steady but still gripping and tense. There are twists and turns you don't expect to happen. It doesn't end how you expect it to, the end is very moving. Also, I like the fact that even though the book has finished you feel as though it hasn't. It doesn't give you a definite end so you could just imagine what happens next for yourself. It is very well written and well laid out. I was glued to it and couldn't put it down. I particularly liked the parts where there were tense moments and then happy moments.*

**Dani, age 25**

***'Optimists Die First' was a mixed experience for me and is a tough one to review. In some ways, I really enjoyed it. However, it also had its limitations, and I'm not sure how well the good outweighed the not so good.***

*On the positive side of the seesaw, the characters were all very quirky. I started out really enjoying it, particularly Petula's pessimism. I could relate to it a whoooooole lot. I mean, I like to call my personal strain of pessimism "realism", but it's essentially the same. Prepare the worst mentality, you know, except Petula took it a lot further than I did. I also liked the positive slant on teen sexuality, with certain moments that are typically not included in YA even though they're natural for teens.*

*However, I found myself getting bored a lot after a while, and it seemed like the story only scratched the surface without really digging into some of the emotions and back-stories of the supporting characters. Normally, this wouldn't be too bad, but with those back-stories forming such a huge part of the main story, it brought the book down.*

***So while it had some very funny moments and an odd array of characters, I wasn't really able to connect with the book as much as I'd have liked.***

<http://danireviewsthings.com>

### **Francesca Hughes**

***This book was a quirky, original page-turner. It was my first Susin Nielsen read and it won't be my last.***

*Petula was a witty but anxious character with a past that had defined her until she met Jacob and became close with the YART gang. I think that being shaped by the past is something everyone can relate to and that's what makes that aspect of the book interesting. The book was well written and dealt with some serious issues like separation, grief, divorce, sexuality and addiction but was funny at the same time. I really enjoyed the character development in Petula, Ivan, Rachael, Alonzo, Koula and Jacob. Nielsen also included some great cultural references e.g Tarantino and Harriet the spy.*

### **Year 10 pupil from Dormston School**

*When death took Petula's beloved baby sister, Petula learnt to see danger everywhere. Worse, Petula blames herself. If only she had sewn the button Maxine choked on better, if only.... When I started reading 'Optimists Die First', it took me a while to understand the storyline but eventually it clicked. **I loved the book because it shows you that happiness can be found in the darkest of times.** This is very important in this story because Petula tries to*

block new friend Jacob out of her life, just like she did previously with her best friend, mainly because she didn't know that letting people into her life is the best way to heal from the death of a loved one. However, she begins to learn that every dark cloud has a silver lining. Petula found hers in the form of Jacob's love and the friendship of her former best friend. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to read 'Optimists Die First' before publication. I recommend this book to young adults because I feel that it relates to that age group.

### **Humaira**

**'Optimists Die First' just got better and better as I read on.** One moment I was laughing, the next I was crying. I think I cried a little extra because I read this book whilst my two-year-old sister slept by me and you'll know why when you read the book as to why it pulled extra hard on my heartstrings. Also I haven't had a good cry with a book- I haven't been emotionally invested in a lot of the things I have been reading lately so I took the chance to bawl out my eyes- it was a bitter-sweet feeling. I just love the fact that a book can move you so deeply with few words. 'Optimists Die First' isn't all that sad though. **It was hilarious. It was Sweet. It was a beautiful book about Loss, Love and Taking a leap of faith.** Definitely one of my top five reads of the year.

### **Maddy Faulkner, age 14**

This novel, is about a girl traumatised by a devastating family disaster who meets someone she can open up to is heart-warming and I very highly recommended read.

Ever since tragedy struck her family Petula has learnt to see danger everywhere. Her life is ruled by anxiety and grief. Then she meets Jacob, who is a bona fide optimist, much to her disgust. There will be tears. There will be fears. They will even be Wuthering Heights reimagined with cats. But will there be a happy ending?

16 year old Petula De Wilde is anything but wild. The protagonist in this book, which you grow to love and admire, shuts herself off from the world after a family tragedy occurs which she blames herself for. She begins to become paranoid that life is out to get her. The worst element of Petulas life is a llame and unfortunately for her, mandatory art therapy class along with a small group of her peers. She begins to warm to a new boy called Jacob "the bionic

man", an amputee who teams with Petula in a group project they are set. However as the truth behind Jacobs appearance at these classes becomes apparent, Petula is forced to take a huge risk. Petula heads full speed into a dangerous zone. **Nelson writes with warmth, humour, empathy and with startling truth** and I enjoyed previous novels written by her. **You become familiar and grow to like each character in a way never experienced before.** I loved this book and I would love to read more by her.