

LoveReading4kids Reader reviews of *Unbecoming* by Jenny Downham

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading4kids members.

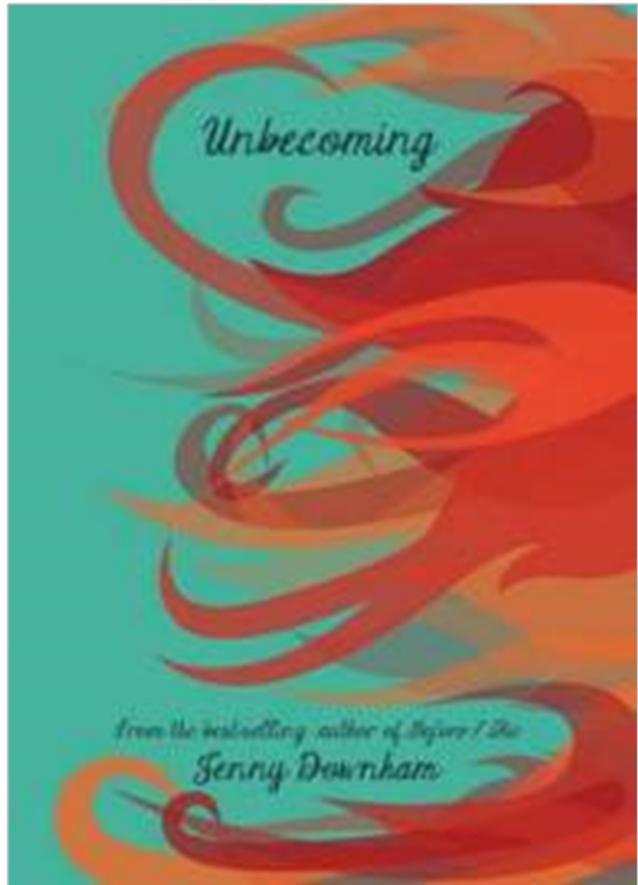
Abby Khaliq, age 13

'Unbecoming' by Jenny Downham is a bold and thought provoking story about family, hope and risks.

This book is centred around three generations of women; Katie, a seventeen year old girl facing the complications of love and sexuality; Caroline, Katie's mother, who is trying her best to hold her family together despite her husband having left her children without a father, and the unexpected return of her mother; and Mary, Katie's grandmother, who suffers from Alzheimer's. All three women must brave their own storms while finding the courage to be honest, and learn to appreciate their own stories as well as each other's'.

I thought that Mary's flashbacks were well written, and it felt very real to read about how her Alzheimer's affected her. We got to explore her dementia in greater depth when we saw how she was gradually losing herself as her memories began to slip away. While Mary was left exposed and with very little, it was her family – especially Katie – who kept her tethered to what she knew.

As romance is often the centre of YA books, I found it refreshing to read about family relationships for a change. Since Mary and her daughter Caroline were never close, her mysterious reappearance wasn't welcomed by everybody; however Katie became Mary's carer, and as their relationship blossomed



complications sprouted. Another interesting benefit that came with reading about three generations of women, was that I could really see the difference between the difficulties Mary, who grew up in a completely different society, was challenged by compared to those that Katie had to deal with as a woman of today's society. As a whole, the relationship between all three women was lovely to read. Their problems drew them together, and they overcame them with the reassurance that family is permanent, and they will always accept one another and be there for one another.

While 'Unbecoming' examines serious issues such as disability, incapacity, acceptance, coming out and dementia, it grew into an unexpectedly optimistic tale, despite how grim things seemed. It was an enjoyable, realistic and surprisingly funny novel, and it reminded me of the wonderful importance of family.

Francesca, age 13

A wonderful, relatable novel, written by a very talented author.

Every family has a secrets and so does Katy's. It's a great book about discovery and honesty. It taught me that lies corrupt and that family is important. A book bound to win many awards!

Alex McCalla, age 15

Once I got this book, I couldn't even put it down. It was so addictive, I had to read it again.

Parts of this book had made me feel like I was lucky to have some of the things I do have. For instance, when Katie met her grandmother, she didn't even know who she was. I felt like I was lucky enough to have a grandmother I knew. This book was so addictive because it would carry some of the story onto different chapters, this meant you would always want to know what happened next. One slight problem I had with this book, was that it was in third person. I usually find books in third person harder to read as they can get confusing sometimes, when they switch between different characters minds. This had made it slightly harder for me to read. I however do recommend this book to anyone who likes any of Jenny Downham's books, or likes books about teen romances.

<http://sleppinthe garden.blogspot.co.uk/>

Humaira Kauser, age 17

Poignant, beautiful and moving.

Essentially the book is about three generations: Katie, Caroline and Mary.

I love learning about Mary Todd. I loved reading what she was up to in the 1950's and 1960's. I loved her enthusiasm. I loved her fire that she had within herself. But now Mary suffers from Alzheimer's- a disease that makes people slowly forget things. She had her reasons as to why she left her daughter, Caroline in the late 1950's but Caroline is not having any of it.

Katie is Caroline's daughter and she shares a very strong and special bond with her grandmother- a woman she's only been reunited with for the first time- and Caroline doesn't seem to understand it at all.

But Katie is struggling to find herself. Who she is and what she wants to do with her life. She's confused with her sexuality and doesn't really know what to do. And to be honest there aren't many books that deal with the struggles of LGBT- especially from a female perspective.

I think this novel would make a good film/tv adaption.

Rose Heathcote, age 16

The most heartfelt and eye opening book I have ever read. Makes us understand the thoughts and feelings of people living with Dementia.

*This book was one of the best books I have ever read. I have read her other book 'Before I Die' and I fell in love with that one as much as I have with this one. The book skips between three people, Katie, who is struggling to understand her sexuality, Mary her Grandma who is scared and confused and a young Mary who tells the reader her past. This book is perfect for older readers like me as it deals with serious issues such as sexuality, dementia and suicide. 5*****.*

Destiny, age 14

*'Unbecoming' was a unique book which left me feeling different emotions at different times, such as sadness, nervousness, good humoured, curious and at times on the edge of my seat. **This novel celebrates being yourself and that it's ok to be different, which I think is a very positive message to***

share with the world. It's also very honest in describing the range of pressures in school. Overall 'Unbecoming' was **an excellent read and I loved it.**

Eloise Clarkson, age 13

This book is about a teenagers called Katie and her life. When a family member called Mary turns up unexpectedly her life is turned upside down. It explores how she finds out all these things she never knew. I thought this book was okay. Some parts were not as interesting to me as the rest and were a bit boring. My favourite bits were the flashbacks Mary had. **The characters were interesting and each had a unique personality. I thought this book was okay but not my favourite.** It wasn't really the sort of book I enjoy but I'm sure it will suit others.

Amelia Corrick-Gough, age 14

This is a really amazing book! I love it so much! Stop whatever you are doing and read this book! This book is one of the best books I have read in a long time. It is so engaging! I can't stop thinking about it!

Rebekah Marsh, age 13

'Unbecoming' is a book anyone can relate to. Whether you've had a parent walk out on you or had your friends laugh at you, the characters have gone through it all.

Jenny Downham has written the book in a way that the characters madness makes your lives just that bit madder. She makes it so you don't just read about the characters, you laugh, cry and sing with them. The book isn't something that I would usually read but from reading this, I can't wait for the next book!