

Lovereadings Reader reviews of We Are Not Ourselves by Matthew Thomas

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereadings members.

Sarah Musk

A dark story but at the same time strangely uplifting. Eileen Leary becomes a tough fighter in life when her clever husband becomes stricken down in middle age.

This could have been a very dark book but I actually found it strangely uplifting. The devotion and love that a wife shows for her stricken husband is exceptionally moving and shows human nature at its very best. Eileen Leary is a tough fighter in life and the book documents her childhood with a charismatic Irish father and an unhappy, drunken mother right through to late middle age.

Eileen's powerful love for her husband shines throughout the book and her belief in marriage is inspiring. The story is tragic but Eileen's duty towards her husband remains steadfast throughout. She has ambitions and dreams to live a comfortable life in a nice neighbourhood but her idealistic husband turns down lucrative job opportunities in order to teach at a local college. Eileen eventually persuades her husband to move to the house of her dreams but then everything goes wrong for both of them. The resilience and courage which she shows towards the downturn in their fortunes turns this book, which is about a very sad and difficult situation, into a testament to the fighting spirit of a strong, brave woman.

I admire Eileen Leary and you will too at the end of this book.



Diane Hinchley

*Wow, what an interesting book. Charting Eileen's life from a young age through to her fifties. The novel incorporates daily/weekly happenings that are significant to the main character and the writer makes you feel you are there in her life, living her life with her. Makes you think what would you do in those circumstances that Eileen encounters. Don't let the huge amount of pages put you off. Short chapters wrote as "snapshots" of time, take you on a journey through her Eileen's and her families' lives. **Very well written and a joy to read - a book you won't be able to put down until the last page has been read.***

Christine Waddington

This is Eileen`s story. It demands your complete attention and concentration and it will enthrall you. It is an epic read.

Eileen is the only daughter of Irish immigrants and the book charts her life - the influence of her parents, her husband, her child, her work, her home and much more.

The first half of the book slowly and skilfully builds up to a shocking climax. I found this part a little long-drawn out and for me it is the second half of the book where the author`s strengths are best demonstrated. It deals so well with its subject, one the author clearly knows a lot about. The heartbreak, the loneliness - all are beautifully and masterly portrayed.

This is a book you will not want to put down and the story will remain with you long after you`ve reluctantly closed the last page.

Julie Bertschin

A sensitive and moving portrayal of a family dealing with the onset of early Alzheimer`s, this is a tender and emotive story that wraps you up and carries you along. Wonderful.

Having a father myself who is suffering with dementia, I was drawn to this novel which portrays a family's struggle to navigate through life with someone who suffers at the hand of this terrible degenerative disease. I found it painfully cathartic and yet wanted to slow down my reading, to thoroughly explore the

dynamics of how Eileen and Ed try to stoically carry on with their lives through this crisis. Eileen's determination that she should care for her husband and continue to work and strive for the future, along with Connell's inability to fully take on board the complete comprehension of what has happened to his father portrays how differently we each deal with such difficulties in our lives. Frustrations and fierce loyalties, love and loss, this novel explores our human frailties with exemplary tenderness. A beautifully written piece, profound and utterly absorbing.

Glenda Worth

A brilliant insight into the life of someone with Alzheimer's disease and living with someone who has this dreadful curse. The life of Eileen from a child of Irish immigrants to looking after a sick husband.

*A brilliant insight into the world of Alzheimer's disease from the perspective of a loving wife and a son who can't cope with his father being diagnosed and the suffering. The story revolves around Eileen from a childhood as an immigrant with her Irish family, the abuse and lifestyle. The progression into a house converted into flats with her husband, the support of the other family. Eileen doesn't know which way to turn when Ed is finally diagnosed after months of uncertainty, and as his illness progresses she reaches out in different directions for comfort and advice, while trying to keep Ed at home. Even after Ed's death Eileen cannot settle into her new freedom, while Connell the son has his own demons recognising the signs of Alzheimer's in himself. **Thoroughly enjoyed reading this novel.***

Beth Winsor

A surprisingly engrossing read, spanning most of one woman's life from childhood to marriage, motherhood and widowhood.

This is a huge doorstop of a book, with a rather unencouraging blurb about the story of a woman's life. I was surprised I enjoyed it as much as I did.

The characters were sensitively drawn and felt real, as did the stories of her life. I was very surprised to see (after I had read it) that it was written by a man!