



Shug

Jenny Han

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SHUG

is clever and brave and true (on the inside, anyway). And she's about to become your new best friend.

Annemarie Wilcox, or Shug as her family calls her, is beginning to think there's nothing worse than being twelve. She's too tall, too freckled, and way too flat-chested. Shug is sure that there's not one good or amazing thing about her. And now she has to start junior high, where the friends she counts most dear aren't acting so dear anymore -- especially Mark, the boy she's known her whole life through. Life is growing up all around her, and all Shug wants is for things to be like they used to be. How is a person supposed to prepare for what happens tomorrow when there's just no figuring out today?

Shug Details

Date : Published May 1st 2006 by Simon Schuster Books for Young Readers (first published April 25th 2006)

ISBN : 9781416909422

Author : Jenny Han

Format : Hardcover 248 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Realistic Fiction, Romance, Contemporary, Childrens, Middle Grade, Fiction

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From Reader Review Shug for online ebook

Cristina says

Jenny Han always does this to me, every book of her is amazing, relatable and sweet. 4.5 STARS! Full review soon :))

Lady Vigilante (Feifei) says

5 stars!!!!

I was in the middle of a book that was boring me to death so I set it aside and started reorganizing my bookshelves and happened to find this paperback (back when it still had the cute red popsicle cover). I read it about seven years ago when I was still in high school and it made such a big impact on me it was one of the first books I cried over. Maybe it was nostalgia playing a hand, but I felt compelled to open this book again and the page I bookmarked pointed at the quote above, and immediately, I fell right back into the story like seven years hadn't passed by at all. A little sad, a little happy, and a whole lot of introspective, this is a book that perfectly captured the ups and downs of adolescence and what I'm willing to bet every 12-year old girl can relate to in some way, shape or form. There's nothing preachy about the story, just a clear, fresh, and genuine portrayal of what it's like for a little girl to grow up while facing normal struggles ranging from popularity to boys to family life.

Meet Annemarie Wilcox, fondly dubbed by her mama as 'Shug' (short for Sugar). She's not particularly beautiful, totally flat-chested, has a sprinkle of freckles, and what do you know, has a gigantic crush on the boy next door and lifelong best mate, Mark. This is a 12-year old girl who is the epitome of the word ordinary, yet it is that very quality that makes her extraordinary. Her childlike innocence, her inquisitive nature, and her curiosity for the unknown are things that I'm sure most of us in our younger years can relate to, or at least I definitely can. Her thoughts are pretty deep, and when pitted against her young age, the weight of her words just feel extra heavy and stirred up all these feelings in my heart.

For Shug, her biggest worry is how much her life is going to change now that she's entering junior high. All of a sudden, appearances start to matter more, popularity becomes the law, and your business becomes everybody else's business. Shug navigates through it all in a true pre-teen fashion and as I read every triumph, every heartbreak of hers I felt, because in a way, it reminded me of myself a decade ago.

It's amazing how the author's writing strikes hard and fast, and goes straight for the heart. Sometimes less is more and the writing in this book reiterates that sentiment and how simplicity is beautiful. Many pivotal parts of the story were bittersweet (okay, a little more sweet than bitter) to read and one scene in particular – it's *always* this same scene – made me weep, not because it's tragic or anything but because I needed to let out all the emotion that built up by that point.

I started this book thinking it'd be a quick trip down memory lane and a nice break from pure romance but what I got was a heart full of emotion and a big book hangover. At first glance, it may look like any other YA book, but the more I read the more I realized I was holding a priceless gem in my hands. And the ending of this book!!! It made me squeal like a little girl. Too cute, too precious, and too special for words really.

This is a book that's suitable for all ages, and a must-read for everyone. Who knows? Shug just might touch your heart too ;)

Shug is a YA fiction standalone, and is unrelated to this author's other books. Romance is a secondary element. I would love to see this on the big screen. Just sayin'!

Emma says

1 star for Shug. It was very boring, because the story seemed to be told a thousand times before. Girl likes boy, boy doesn't like her back, girl tries to impress boy, girl falls for the boy she's hated before, but now sees good in him.

Please. The thing that makes books good is something new, exciting, and interesting. Shug fit none of those categories.

I want 256 pages of my life back.

Arminzerella says

Annemarie, or "Shug" (nicknamed after singer and force of nature in *The Color Purple*) is twelve, entering seventh grade, and everything she thought she knew is about to change. First she finds herself attracted to her best guy friend, Mark, and now her feelings and his new friends are driving them apart. She wants him to like her – to feel about her the way she feels about him – but it's like she's invisible. And everything is difficult with her girlfriends – there are all of these different social strata that have to be navigated in order to be cool or popular or whatever. All of the girls (who matter) seem to be pairing off with guys and even Shug's best friend, Elaine, has a boyfriend (who Shug feels she spends way too much time talking about). On top of that, Shug's tall and skinny and freckled and doesn't have a graceful bone in her body. She's not pretty like her sister, Celia, and she's sure no one is ever going to love her for who she is.

And if you thought it was all about Shug's problems, you'd be wrong. Shug's family is a mess, too. Her parents don't get along – her dad spends all of his time working away from home (and possibly having an affair), and her mom soothes her hurt feelings with alcohol. Celia can't wait to get away from it all when she goes to college, and Shug doesn't know what she's going to do to hold it all together. She doesn't even talk about these things with most people, but she finds an unexpected friend in an obnoxious, angry boy – Jack Connelly- who knows exactly where she's coming from.

Shug is all about growing pains. It me strongly of Judy Blume's, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, because there were so many parallels – going into middle school, worrying about development and puberty, trying to figure out where you fit in, agonizing over how other people see you, being uncomfortable in your own skin, parties and dances, and also this thread of seriousness. For Margaret, it was religion, and for Shug it's the strength of her feelings for Mark (and his casual betrayal) and her family situation (alcoholism, possible divorce).

I really liked Shug by the end of this book. She's funny and smart. She believes in sticking up for what and who you believe in – despite what other people may be saying. She survives a terrible slumber party where the popular Mairi pressures her into having a beer (when she's already dealing with own mother's drunkenness) – it makes her sick. She reads whatever she gets her hands on. And she mostly likes who she is – except that other people keep not appreciating it. It's so hard to wait for that recognition and so hard not to want it or need it. When Mark remonstrates his friends, “Annemarie? Come on, she's barely even a girl...I only danced with her because I felt sorry for her. She doesn't even know how to *dance* like a girl” (p. 220), I curled up and watched my love die along with Shug's. People can be so stupidly mean sometimes – not just adolescents.

Though the book ends with a kiss, Jenny Han leaves a lot – realistically – up in the air. Shug's parents haven't had a miraculous reconciliation, nor have they completely blown up. Shug's still boyfriendless, and her friends are still boyfriended, so her social isolation may or may not get better. She's over her thing for Mark, but she's still in limbo as far as what's going to come next. She was finally seen, and appreciated, and she finally saw and appreciated that person she'd come to be. It may not stick forever (we're always reevaluating ourselves), but I'm happy with it as it is. Life continues.

If that's not enough encouragement to make you read it, it's also a quick read (good for reluctant girl readers!). Judy Blume fans should enjoy it.

Fares says

I loved it, this was sweet.

Buddy read with *The Girl Who Turns Dreams Into Reality*
I feel like this is going to be too sweet, I'd have cavities by the end.

Fuzaila ~ is on hiatus says

I cried. *I ugly cried*. You know who cries over silly middle-grade books? That's right. ME. This was all the more beautiful the second time around and I can't contain my emotions.

RTC later, because I need to be more coherent to come up with a review that'd make you read this.

My first ever buddy read with *The Cool Guy*. Thanks for making this even more fun Fares! I loved reading with you xD

Steph Su says

Twelve-year-old Annemarie Wilcox--nicknamed "Shug," which is short for sugar--is feeling anything but sweet right now. She's entering middle school, her parents are constantly fighting (when they're not drunk or

away for work), and things are changing between her and her friends. Mairi, Hadley, and even her best friend Elaine, a Korean American from up north, are eagerly venturing into the world of becoming a woman and meeting boys. But Annemarie wants nothing to do with that world...not unless it includes Mark Findley, her childhood best friend and the guy she recently realizes she's in love with.

Trouble is, Mark doesn't seem to reciprocate her feelings. In fact, Annemarie feels like she hardly sees him anymore, so busy is he with hanging out with other people. Instead, she's spending a lot of time tutoring Jack Connelly, which is too bad because they're sworn enemies and hate each other's guts. Annemarie doesn't want to grow up just yet, but she has to learn the hard way (like we all do) that it's a painful and necessary, sometimes heartbreaking, process with light at the end of the tunnel.

I love Judy Blume-esque books that focus on that painfully awkward and difficult transition right before puberty; thus, I LOVED Shug. This is a story that's full of characters that you'll want to be friends with. Annemarie in particular is a spunky heroine, unafraid to say her mind, the girl we all remember being back at that age and the girl we want to befriend. The supporting characters, too, are not caricatures but rather boys and girls (and men and women) with their own problems. I'm especially a fan of Jack right from the start; the dynamics between Annemarie and Jack are great.

If you want a growing-up novel that's more Southern than Judy Blume's and less sex-oriented than Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's Alice series, pick up SHUG. You won't regret it.

Vanessa (The Bookish Deer) says

Very cute, managed to read it all in one sitting which is rare

Mari Lara Jean says

4.5

Ladies and gentlemen, here's what Jenny Han can do with her writing talent.

I usually don't enjoy middle grade because I'm too grown up to relate to the characters, and at the beginning of this book I wished more than once that this was YA instead.

But then something shifted.

You can imagine how freaking surprised I am that I loved Shug this much. I related to a 12 year old? When I have double that age? What?

This entire book was so cute but also unexpectedly profound. Annemarie is dealing with problems that normally come when you reach that age, but not only, because she has a problematic family situation to bear on her shoulders as well. Jenny Han writes these cute contemporaries with romance and friendship, but a great part of her novels is always about family dynamics and I love it.

Shug was also really fast to read and so gripping that I didn't want to stop reading even for that single minute it could have taken me to get a glass of water.

I liked reading about these kids because they behaved like me and my friends when we were kids. So not like today's kids. I especially related to Annemarie: she was so close to me because of what she thought and did that she reminded me of my younger self or shockingly of my present self too.

There are some quotes in this book, some things that Annemarie thinks, that are practically *me*.

Btw I really enjoyed the romance too! And that ending! (view spoiler)

If you love Jenny Han's books then don't wait like I did. I thought I wouldn't like this because it's middle grade but trust me, you'll love this.

Gray Cox says

Everybody knows that twelve is the perfect age for your first kiss. (pg. 2)

*chokes on coffee**dies laughing*

I think I would've liked this book more if I was this way when I was younger, but I couldn't relate at all.

This was just so cringey and petty and also *SO* cliché.

I also love how this book completely glosses over Shug's body insecurities, it could of been such a good plot to let Shug realize her worth, instead we're stuck with her chasing a lame fruitcake of a twelve-year-old boy around until she (view spoiler)

Tran Thanh Tu says

Words probably can't describe how I love this book. It's gentle, soft and sweet, with all the fluffiness and innocence of a child. It's the time of the first kiss, first dance, and all things lovely. Having said that, this book is a realistic fiction one, with its own ups and downs and highs and lows, however, it still manages to make me feel good about life because after all, well...everything will fall into place, everything will be alright..right?

Aj the Ravenous Reader says

I'm so happy I made the right decision by choosing this book for a light and easy read. I was definitely not disappointed. The book cover alone is already a huge come on.

Oh, which silly girl like me would resist that? It suggests that this book will be sweet, enjoyable and comforting and I earned exactly these things after reading this. I love how the story is told in a POV of a 12 year old girl, Annemarie or also known as "Shug." It's this POV that is the very tool that made this whole book work so effectively and creatively. The narrative voice is so genuine and so poignant and I just couldn't help but feel **with** and **for** her. She keeps blurting out ideas that kept tugging at my heart so stubbornly. At times, even my tear ducts give in.

"Some girls are pretty and it's like they were destined for it. They were meant to be pretty, and as for the rest of us, well we get to exist on the outer edges of life. It's like moths. They're the same as butterflies, aren't

they? They're just gray. They can't help being gray. They just are. But butterflies...they're pretty. Who'd dare kill a butterfly?...But most anybody would swat a moth like it was nothing and all because it isn't pretty. Doesn't seem fair, not at all."

I love Shug's characterization. She's smart, humorous, independent, quite mature but childish at the same time. She kind of reminds me of my 12 year old me but she's way, way better.^^ I love how she's very keen on people and events. She learns a lot by merely observing and listening. She's also very strong for her age at a time everybody her age only seems to aim for wanting to belong, to be in a group. She accepts her flaws and is very easy to forgive. She understands so many things beyond the grasp of maybe some adults out there ^^

"When something that terrible, that horrible happens to you, you don't want to talk about it with anyone. You want to bury it deep inside you and let it rest in peace. You want to forget it ever happened."

The writing, oh the writing! There's something about Jenny Han's writing that makes me feel good, something that entraps my heart. I don't know how she does it. It's just simply refreshing. The plot is progressive. A story that is supposed to be only about trying to grab that first kiss turns out to be a great story about family, friendship, love and life. The conflict seems to start at something really petty but you'll be surprised at the amount of things that were resolved. And the ending, it's perfect!

"First kiss doesn't taste like a cherry popsicle but cherry Life Savers. Maybe better..."

This is me at the last few pages of the book. ^^

Manjish Adhikari says

You don't need to be perfect. Every one is flawed

The moment I started the book, I knew it would be good. I thought it would be about the love story of AnneMarie, nicknamed Shug, and Mark and those kids lovestory. But the story turned out to be something else.

The story is based on the perspective of a twelve year old girl and the flow of the story will continue to bind you even though the plot hasn't got much to offer. I had a pretty good time reading the story.

A not so beautiful school girl, her family problems and her life never seems to bore you. Jack, on the other hand turned out differently than expected. Life is what you can't expect it to be.

We always want that one perfect person but little do we realize that no one is perfect and love is not about two perfect persons but making each other perfect...**You never seem to notice that one less perfect person standing by your side.** .

I guess The story ended pretty soon but the little story seemed quite realistic and lovable.

4.5 stars for me

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Me for TeensReadToo.com

Annemarie Wilcox, known to her family as Shug, is twelve-years old, tall, flat-chested, and nowhere near the type of girl she wants to be. Shug also believes that, ow that she's twelve, she's at the perfect age to receive her first kiss, and she knows just who she wants to give it to her--her best friend, Mark Findley, the true and actual boy-next-door. Well, actually, the boy down the street, but it's close enough. The only problem is that Mark doesn't show any interest in seeing Shug in the same way she sees him. For Mark, the perfect girl is Celia, Shug's beautiful, popular older sister.

Thus begins the summer of Shug's twelfth year, and it's not going anything like what she had planned. She's suddenly seeing everyone in her life in a totally different way, and she's not so sure that she likes what she sees. Her mother, who she once thought of as deep and sophisticated, now seems the opposite. The North Carolina native who went "up North" to college isn't suave and chic--she's snobby, standoffish, and an alcoholic. Her dad, a businessman who frequently travels away from home, comes home less and less and stays for even shorter amounts of time. Even beautiful Celia, who seems to have the perfect life, seems to be changing right before Shug's eyes.

And then there's Mark, who she's almost given up hope on. Now that she has to help Jack Connelly, the bad boy of her school who has gotten in more trouble than she can name, with his homework, she even finds herself seeing him in a new light. Is he really as bad as everyone thinks? Can people change so significantly in even short amounts of time? And as for Shug, is she really the girl she thought she was?

Reading SHUG is like eating an entire carton of Rocky Road ice cream. It's a sweet indulgence that you know you should eat slowly, yet you still find yourself devouring it as if it's your last meal on Earth. SHUG is like that. You'll get caught up in the life of Annemarie and her family, in her friendships and heartbreaks, in her internal struggle to be liked and loved for who she is. At first glance SHUG is a normal coming-of-age story, but once you start reading you'll realize it's anything but normal. Kudos to Jenny Han for this glimpse into Shug's life, and that of her family and friends. It's a story you won't soon forget.

Stephanie (Stepping out of the Page) says

From the first page, I knew that I'd really enjoy reading this book. The writing was fantastic and I absolutely devoured it. The characters were realistic and likeable and the plot was simple yet a joy to read. This book shows that there's still probably a little bit of a 12 year old in all of us and even though the target range is around 9-13 year olds, I think a lot of older young adults would enjoy this too. Shug is a very realistic yet interesting character and her family life was really intriguing. I'm certainly looking forward to reading more of Jenny Han's books.

Vem Night says

I enjoyed it more than I thought I would!!!
It was amazingly cute.

Kimberly Russell says

I wasn't expecting to feel this way about a novel geared towards middle schoolers. I read this because it was the only Jenny Han novel I haven't read and, boy, was I missing out. This was told from a 12 year olds perspective but I was still moved.

Shug is about a girl moving from elementary to middle school and all of the emotions and tribulations that come with that. I can distinctly remember being that age. Everything felt so important and everything is the end of the world. *Shug* is a lot like that. *Shug* also has family issues and she ends up having to deal with adult things at a young age.

Han is still funny and charming and I love her even more now.

Ana Vizontim says

4,5 "sweet" stars

This book is a light and easy read.

I want to be "Shug's" friend!!!!

This book reminded me of my pre-teen, my first kiss, my first period, my first friend fight.

It is simple adorable!!!!

Marie says

Sometimes you'll read a book that will choke you up. Rarely will I read a book that makes me flat out bawl...in a good way. *Shug* by Jenny Han (Alladin Mix, 2007), is one such book, and it has instantly become one of my favorite tween YA novels. Han grabs you immediately with *Shug's* authentic voice and sharp point of view.

The novel is all about the way things change once you enter middle school, whether you are ready or not. It starts in summer just before school starts, and already things are different. For one thing, *Shug* is suddenly seeing her best friend in a different and romantic light, but he doesn't notice at all. And then there is the whole friend thing. What do you do when your other best friend (who is a girl) suddenly befriends some popular girls, and gets a boyfriend? Where do you fit in then? And how do you be a good person when you are sitting at the lunch table with this popular crowd, barely hanging onto the right to sit there, and another girl, who used to be your friend but also makes the popular's eyes roll, walks by, and obviously has no one to

sit with? Do you commit social suicide and invite her, or do you avert your eyes and shut up?

Oh how well I remember those painful moments. Shug experiences the guilt and the sadness of being on both sides of the story. She finds herself being part of the crowd that is nasty, as well as being shunned by the nasty crowd. We've all experienced both sides, and at some point we all have to decide just who are we? What do we stand for? What is really important? And can we ever forgive ourselves or others for being such horrible jerks?

If you are going into middle school, read this book. If you've ever been through middle school, read this book. And love this book. It is unforgettable.

Laurence R. says

This book is adorable and I loved it.

It's a short, cute and lovely story that I wish I had read years ago, when I would've been able to relate even more to Shug. Even though she's years younger than me, I relate a lot to her and I loved reading about her.

Shug's personality is really interesting, because she's authentic and honest, but she has flaws, too. She cares about her friends and family, but not so much about popularity, even though she wishes she could be with her friends without being excluded all the time. Her family has issues, but she understands them very well and she still loves her sister and her parents, which I thought was adorable.

I disliked Mark. I understand that he's at that age when you want to look cool and be in the popular crowd, but I hated the fact that he couldn't stand up for his best friend. I thought he would change and realize that he can't act like that, but I was disappointed to find out that he didn't. It's what felt the most immature in this book, the fact that so many of Shug's friends want to look cool and act horribly to do so. I'm really happy to be older than that.

I loved Jack. I could see why he would act like that, being older than him, and I thought he was really cute and nice. I was happy to see him grow up, unlike Mark, and stand up for Shug. He doesn't care much about popularity, which made me like him even more.

I smiled throughout the whole story (except once, I teared up a little because I could understand the deeper meaning of a conversation between Shug and her mother and I thought it was really sad) and it's so short that I would reread it anytime. I highly recommend it, no matter what age you are, because you'll find something adorable and easy to read.
