



# The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, a Daughter, and the People Who Raised Them

*Amy Dickinson*

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## **The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, a Daughter, and the People Who Raised Them** Amy Dickinson

Amy Dickinson has made a career out of helping others, through her internationally syndicated advice column "Ask Amy." Readers love her for her honesty, her small-town values, and for the fact that her motto is "I make the mistakes so you don't have to." In *The Mighty Queens of Freeville*, Amy Dickinson shares those mistakes and her remarkable story. This is the tale of Amy and her daughter and the people who helped raise them after Amy found herself a reluctant single parent. Though divorce runs through her family like an aggressive chromosome, the women of her family taught her what family is about. They helped her to pick up the pieces when her life fell apart and to reassemble them into something new. It is a story of frequent failures and surprising successes, as Amy starts and loses careers, bumbles through blind dates and adult education classes, travels across the country with her daughter and their giant tabby cat, and tries to come to terms with the family's aptitude for "dorkitude." Though they live in London, D.C., and Chicago, all roads lead them back to her hometown of Freeville (pop. 458), a tiny village where Amy's family has tilled and cultivated the land, tended chickens and Holsteins, and built houses and backyard sheds for more than 200 years. Most important, though, her family members all still live within a ten-house radius of each other. With kindness and razor-sharp wit, they welcome Amy and her daughter back weekend after weekend, summer after summer, offering a moving testament to the many women who have led small lives of great consequence in a tiny place.

## **The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, a Daughter, and the People Who Raised Them Details**

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## From Reader Review The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, a Daughter, and the People Who Raised Them for online ebook

### Candy says

Strong Women Bounce Back could be an alternate title for Amy Dickinson's memoir. When her marriage fails, Amy's thrust into an unexpected new life as a single mom- a mirror image of her mother's life a generation earlier. But Freeville, her small rock of a hometown, is her cocoon and comfort. The hamlet is just as strong a character as any of the family members or residents who populate it. It's no wonder Amy's nationally-syndicated advice column oozes common sense. Reading this book, it's clear she grew up breathing it.

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### Wrighty says

This was a good story about an extended family of strong women. Amy Dickinson was left by her husband early in their marriage. Alone with a young baby she had to rearrange her life. She left their home in London and returned to her childhood home in Freeville, NY. She surrounded herself with her family which happened to largely consist of other single women. "Divorce runs through my clan like an aggressive chromosome" states Amy in the earliest chapters. Fortunately she wasn't witness to her parents fighting (her father abandoned them) and she chose not to expose her own daughter to an ugly relationship between her parents. Amy rebuilds her life with a move to Washington D.C. and later to Chicago for her career. Throughout the years she and her daughter Emily also maintained a small home in Freeville to return to each summer and for other special occasions so they would always be near family. She tells of the years spent raising Emily the best way she knew how to, adding humor as she reveals her mistakes and triumphs. She learns and she goes on, always with the support of her daughter and her family. Amy is able to share her wisdom in her advice column "Ask Amy" , a daily writing with over 22 million people. She was chosen to replace the late Ann Landers. This was an enjoyable, easy read that almost felt more like fiction than a memoir.

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### Betty says

The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, A Daughter, and the People Who Raised Them – A Memoir by Amy Dickinson

A wonderful, honest and heartwarming memoir of author and advice columnist Amy Dickinson (the replacement for Ann Landers after her death), and her family of women. The tale flows with a very comfortable voice, albeit a story of survival not only for Amy but for her entire family who, one way or another become single mothers over generations, the "Mighty Queens of Freeville". The family is about as close knit as anyone could imagine, whether at one of their weekly breakfasts, the barbecues after church on Sundays, or all in one house for whatever occasion.

Her sense of loss and aloneness in London when her husband leaves her, her decision to return home to the very small town of Freeville, on the edge of Appalachia in upper New York State, her fears bringing up her daughter Emily alone, and much later her attempts at returning to dating, all make for an entertaining read. Working in Chicago, she and Emily move there but find they make constant trips back "home" to visit, and

Amy buys a small house in Freeville, coincidentally one that had been in the family years before, so that they would have a place of their own to stay every time they came. Eventually, a time comes when she decides to give up the rental apartment in Chicago and move back to Freeville.

Amy is a great storyteller, funny and sad at times, but always true to herself. The growth and relationship between Amy and Emily are a joy to witness. I think her motto as an advice columnist tells a great deal about her character – “I make the mistakes so you don’t have to.” I loved this book and recommend it for an enjoyable, fascinating read.

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### **Lucy says**

My husband, Jay bought me *The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, a Daughter, and the People Who Raised Them* for Christmas. It is written by Amy Dickinson, a contributor for several NPR shows that Jay listens to, and he thought I'd enjoy her story based on the recommendations he'd heard. I laughed after reading the first few chapters and realized that a lot of the book revolved around the fact that Amy's husband leaves her and her daughter and their struggle to find an alternative happiness. What are you trying to say, Jay?

He claims ignorance (I believe him) and I did enjoy this book. It's very easy to read chapter by chapter, each one able to stand alone without the others. After all, the author is used to writing essays and answers to questions in her advice column (she is Ann Lander's successor for the Chicago Tribune) Amy Dickinson is extremely likable, in spite of her description of frequently weeping (there were a couple of times I wanted to tell her to suck it up) and the conclusions she reaches from her own life experiences are both entertaining and enlightening.

It's not the kind of memoir that will change your life, but you will certainly gain a few extra smiles in life should you read it.

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### **Leah says**

I love love love LOVE this book. I had completely abandoned the memoir genre but I'm glad I came back for this one. This book is probably more relevant if you are, or have been, a single mom, but I wouldn't say it is limited to that group. If, like me, you believe in the singular power of women to boost up, help out, and provide love when you need it most, this book will affirm all of those beliefs.

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### **Michele says**

These are the loose memoirs of Amy Dickinson, the woman chosen to replace advice columnist extraordinaire Ann Landers. Her childhood, failed marriage, single motherhood and wayward pets are all fair game for this humorous look-back at her life before and after Ask Amy.

Billed as a memoir, Dickinson's book is perhaps better described as a loose collection of cute anecdotes about her family, her divorce, her pets, or anything else that comes to mind. Pieced together a bit haphazardly, Dickinson nonetheless has a sharp, witty voice that shines through no matter the seriousness of the subject matter.

The ex-husband gets repeatedly skewered throughout the book (apparently time, in fact, does not heal all wounds), but that's the price one pays when an ex-spouse has a national platform on which to skew as she wishes.

While the anecdotes were very enjoyable, there is a lack of focus on the original focus of the book, namely the female family members who inspire the title. The snippets of aunts, sisters and especially her mother leave you feeling it just wasn't enough. What the reader does get, however, is a snapshot of life that is easy to relate to and produces a chuckle or two.

If you love humor applied to the human condition, we're willing to bet you'd enjoy this one, as long as you don't have expectations of a thorough and introspective autobiography. Uplifting and never trite, Amy Dickinson touches on struggles common to all of us, meets those troubles head-on and shows us why we should never, ever give up.

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### **Rebecca says**

I loved this charming little book. It was funny and sad and smart and very poignant. I read it because I used to live in Freeville and my sister, whose name is the same as the author's sister, Rachel, lives there now. When I go home to visit we always eat at the Queen Diner. Good fun to read a book about the old stomping grounds.

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### **Jean says**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It is an easy read and quick. What I truly loved about it is hearing about Amy Dickinson's family and just how regular and everyday they are. It is refreshing to read about people and their everyday lives and know that they are just like you and me. No "stars", no fakeness, no primadonnas, just people. It encourages one to know that nothing special has to happen in order for your own life to blossom. Family love and togetherness does count, whether it is a family of two or a family of twenty. It is just important to care about one another and be there for each other. I have always enjoyed the "Ask Amy" column, I generally agree with her advice, but more importantly I think she resonates with the times. You will want to share this with your sisters, mothers, daughters, and friends.

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### **Lori says**

I was slightly disappointed in *The Mighty Queens*, because it is not the book the title suggests. I guess I expected to meet (and love) lots of interesting women characters, but the descriptions of the women in Dickinson's life are sketchy, at best. The author is extremely likable and her writing is smart yet folksy, but her book reads less like a memoir than a series of essays about her experiences as a single mother. Her hometown of Freeville, NY and the people there clearly center her, but she is never able to convey why they are mighty (or even above average).

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### **Catherine says**

This was a pleasant little book of essays featuring Dickinson's appreciation of her close-knit family and lifelong affection and tie to her hometown of Freeville, New York. We should all feel such support and love in our lives.

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### **Pamela Pickering says**

**3.5 Stars.** I'm not sure why but this book didn't really hold my interest yet I certainly seemed to enjoy Amy's personality. Maybe it is just me, and my mood isn't what it should be to read something right now. At any rate, the book had some very charming, and humorous moments regarding Amy's quest to bounce back after a divorce. I especially enjoyed the relationship between Amy and her daughter--her daughter taught Amy many a lesson regarding the curves life throws us.

(So far, the only BN ARC I've liked)

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### **Linda says**

This was a great read of a mother and daughter and how they lived both without a father figure in their lives. Some funny moments and some serious ones make a special blend for a heart warming story. This is certainly a book of strong women and it illustrates it from the start. Most women will find it inspiring.....  
Linda Huff

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### **Christine Zibas says**

This memoir by "Ask Amy" columnist Amy Dickinson is a joy to read, a book I wish I could put in every woman's hands immediately. The pages slide away effortlessly, as Dickinson takes us through the stories of her life that bring us to the current day and her role as the next Ann Landers, a job she swears was just a lucky break.

Reading her memoir, you will soon understand that there are no lucky breaks, or if she had one, it was to grow up in the town of Freeville, New York, surrounded by a strong community of women, none of whom seemed to be very good at staying married, although they were all pretty darn great at family life.

This is the story of fathers who leave, husbands who disappoint, and the women who succeed despite the heartaches. Amy begins with her own heart-wrenching divorce, but never allows her narrative to get bogged down in self pity or sadness. Ok, there may be a little, but it is never depressing. Just how did she do that? I don't know. I can only say that this book is inspiring, the way real life can be at certain moments of our existence when we come across a person who has beat the odds and made some magic with his or her life.

Amy presents the unvarnished truth about her life and the women who inspire her, the hard choices people face, and the grace of small-town living. Somehow she manages to live both in Freeville and a series of big cities: London, Washington, and Chicago. Somehow she manages to be a both single mother and a successful writer. None of this is easy, yet she makes the answers seem simple and obvious. Each of her chapters seems to be a small vignette, a snapshot of an ordinary life that effortlessly tells the story of one extraordinary woman.

This is the sort of book that tells the truth about things, how she was raised in poverty, as she says "on a failed dairy farm ... of the ugly, muddy sort," how her marriage failed, and how she returns to Freeville for the support and strength of the community and ends up buying a less-than-perfect house. If there can be any criticism of Dickinson's book is that as readers we end up wanting more detail, more stories, more soul searching.

But she's a no-nonsense woman who doesn't read more into things than there is, perfect for the life of an advice columnist. She's the Ann Landers for the modern age, she's well on her way to becoming one of the Mighty Queens of Freeville.

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### **Nicole says**

Amy Dickinson seems like a nice enough person, but you really don't get to know her in her memoir. For example, both her father and her husband abandoned her for other women, but Dickinson doesn't talk about the impact these men had on her life. (She never even gives her ex a name.) Is she bitter? Does she fear commitment? She doesn't tell us. Her mother somehow put 4 kids through college and then went to college and grad school herself. How did she afford that when her ex, Dickinson's dad, sold their dairy farm out from under her? We don't find out. How did Dickinson replace Ann Landers as a syndicated advice columnist? Dickinson gives sketchy details, but never once describes what it is like to write her column, nor does she even mention that she works for NRR. All of this would be okay if the book was funny or explored other areas of her life. Instead, she goes the (lazy) route of "I'm a single mother so my daughter raised me as much as I raised her." There are a lot of memoirs out there worth reading. Get those instead of this one.

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### **Donura says**

DATE: March 15, 2009  
TITLE: The Mighty Queens of Freeville  
AUTHOR: Amy Dickinson  
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RATING: 4 out of 5

Your favorite bathrobe, your Birkenstocks, a bowl of Tapioca, whatever your favorite comfort is that is what I felt I was getting as I read more and more of Amy Dickinson's, The Mighty Queens of Freeville.

I read a lot of books of varying genre and topics, literary fiction, lots of memoirs, mysteries, and on and on. It seems that the subject matter can be more and more dramatic and touch lots of raw nerve these days. It seems the more dicey the subject matter, the more attention the press gives it, and it becomes the latest syndrome that everyone pulls up from their or their own family's past.

What I realized early on as I read Amy's memoir, was there were still everyday people out there that may have had the regular ups and downs in their lives but not the heavy, heavy, earth-shattering kind of drama

that seems to be coming up on a regular basis. They weren't completely free of pain or grief but the majority of their life was committed just sharing and learning from one another the value of family, of supporting the ones you love and caring about them to the best of your ability.

It was refreshing, and reaffirming to read about "normal" people across this land. And I don't mean that in a negative way. Maybe because "reality" TV tries to make us think we are "not normal", it was time for this book to come along and remind us what normal family life can be like. Thank you Amy, for bringing back some normalcy to my reading life.

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### **Marie says**

"This memoir is a perfect blend of storytelling and reflection. Amy takes on some of the tough things she's faced in her life (divorce, single-parenting, taking care of parents, her own father leaving). You might expect to read this and feel down or sad but Amy shares her story in a way that leaves the reader feeling uplifted and thoughtful. I enjoyed her honesty and humor. I also had a strong urge to move to Freeville myself and visit with those kindhearted Mighty Queens."

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### **Cheryl says**

The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, A Daughter, and the People Who Raised Them is The Chicago Tribune; advice columnist, Amy Dickinson's memoir. Amy shares with readers and fans an in-depth and personal look into her live. Nothing is keep back from her divorce to her ex-husband, being a single mother, friends, family and her job. Mainly though this memoir is really about Amy, her daughter, Emily and how they raised and took care of each other.

Amy takes us back to her hometown of Freeville, population 458, located in northern, rural, upstate New York. Emily, who is eighteen; one day up and declared her mother, herself, her grandmother and the rest of the women as The Mighty Queens of Freeville for the simple fact that they were all strong, independent women who could take care of themselves.

I found Ms. Dickenson's memoir to be fun, intriguing and full of laughs and smiles. I always find it interesting to learn where someone came from and what their life was like growing up. Amy and Emily did a great job raising each other. The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, A Daughter, and the People Who Raised Them is the type of memoir that every memoir should be like. Everyone who reads this book is going to enjoy it.

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### **Pamela Trawick says**

Advance Reading Copy. This is an enjoyable memoir by Ask Amy. She is humorous, unassuming, and accessibly honest. She's the type of friend we all love to have.

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## David says

I'm a regular Ask Amy reader and on that basis knew a little bit of her background as a single mom but nothing like the whole story of her extended family of (almost entirely) women living generation after generation in a very small town in upstate New York.

Book has little to do with the advice column, other than one chapter about her foibles in the career-building phase and the circumstances under which she got the job. Instead it deals with everyday issues [seeing her daughter off to college, arranging visitation stuff with her ex-husband, death of her aunt, dating post-divorce....) from her childhood through middle age.

Enjoyed it tremendously. Funny--but poignant, not slap-stickish. There are a few Erma Bombeck-type scenes (e.g., the saga of her Dad's truck getting stuck in the mud after making a delivery to a farm), but they're handled well and then she moves on. For the most part, the focus is on family relationships and other more interesting (to me) matters.

Highly recommended.

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## Jessica says

*I received this book for free from the publisher. All content and opinions are my own.*

Amy Dickinson, the author of *The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, A Daughter, and the Town That Raised Them*, is probably best known for her advice column, "Ask Amy," which replaced Ann Landers's column in the Chicago Tribune.

In this memoir, Dickinson traces her life from her divorce to being chosen as the next Ann Landers. I liked Dickinson's voice quite a lot. The writing is unassuming and clear. The stories were entertaining. Yet, it seemed like I was getting a look at the stories Dickinson is used to and willing to tell about her self. I didn't feel like I truly got to know her as a person she is, rather than the person she wants me to see. Also, though her daughter Emily makes the subtitle, there are only minor anecdotes about Emily in the book. And even in those stories, there is no action, only aftermath. While I understand protecting some details, the stories all seemed a little superficial.

Overall, the flow of the book was good - most of the stories were in chronological order. But there were a few chapters that were subject based that confused the timeline for me. For example, one of the chapters is a pontification on animals, with a story about the death of a cat. Then the story of the book continues on and the cat is suddenly back alive. Such narrative jumps took me unnecessarily out of the story.

I did like the theme of strength in family, though I think men were placed, as a whole, in an unfair light. For example, Dickinson blames her divorce entirely on her ex-husband.

Despite some complaints, I enjoyed this book and I now have an appreciation for Dickinson. I'll pay more attention to "Ask Amy" in the future, which was probably the point of the book anyway.

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