



# Swallowing Stones

*Joyce McDonald*

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It begins with a free and joyful act--but from then on, Michael finds it impossible even to remember what it felt like to be free and joyful. When he fires his new rifle into the air on his seventeenth birthday, he never imagines that the bullet will end up killing someone. But a mile away, a man is killed by that bullet as he innocently repairs his roof. And Michael keeps desperately silent while he watches his world crumble.

Meanwhile Jenna, the dead man's daughter, copes with desperation of her own. Through her grief, she tries to understand why she no longer feels comfortable with her boyfriend and why a near stranger named Michael keeps appearing in her dreams.

Suspenseful and powerfully moving, this is the unforgettable story of an accidental crime and its haunting web of repercussions.

## Swallowing Stones Details

Date : Published May 22nd 2012 by Laurel Leaf (first published 1997)

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Author : Joyce McDonald

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Genre : Young Adult, Fiction, Academic, School, Realistic Fiction, Contemporary, Teen

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## From Reader Review Swallowing Stones for online ebook

### Tommy Benson says

Swallowing Stones written by Joyce McDonald, is about two characters. Michael who was the one who shot the rifle and killed Jenna's dad, Jenna is the second main character. Throughout the book they both go through struggles, Michael's struggle is trying to cover up the killing and Jenna's is trying to find the murderer, now for the review. This book is god awful it was one of the most boring books I've ever read and I've read the bible, now McDonald does a great job with detail in the book but his characters are just boring and most of the time plain stupid. Right from the start of the book you can see what's gonna happen in the end and there's no suspense whatsoever throughout the book. All the characters including the side ones have boring stories and are so generic and the ending oh god the ending was terrible, the book built up all this "Suspense" to just end it in a really boring forest scene. This message goes out to anybody who is going to read the book or wants to DON'T just pick up hunger games or something fun, you need to avoid this book as much as possible.

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### Shalee says

Starting with a murder on the first page and revealing the killer on the second may not be conventional, but Joyce McDonald made in work in *Swallowing Stones*. It tells a story from two drastically different perspectives, each their own protagonist and partially the antagonist of the other. Jenna, who watched her father die, wants justice. Michael, who shot his new gun into the air a single time and accidentally killed a man, want the whole thing to blow over without getting caught. Throughout the book the ideas of everyone having their own story is emphasized. Anyone can relate to this book's focus on making hard decisions, though generally not as drastic as the ones the characters must make. I picked this book primarily for its uniqueness, telling a story from conflicting viewpoints is something I've never seen before. Though not as exciting as what I had hoped, it definitely met my expectations, and, in some ways, exceeded them. Overall, *Swallowing Stones* is a good, very unique book that I would recommend to anyone looking for something outside of the usual.

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### Charley Harpole says

Michael MacKenzie and a friend decide to shoot of a rifle on the Fourth of July at a family party; he had no idea of the consequences that would follow as a result of their actions. The bullet that they fired traveled through the air hit a man named Charlie Ward several blocks away in the head as he was fixing his roof. Michael finally realizes that he fired the shot that killed a man and he becomes a suspect in the case. So he decides to bury the rifle in his back yard under a pile of wood. When the police come looking for the rifle, he claims that it was stolen from a friend's car but this implicates his friend as an accessory. It is not long before Michael's whole world starts to fall apart. Charley Ward had a daughter who, throughout the whole book is searching for her father's killer. She soon hears, from gossip that the shot came from the Mackenzie house during a party.

I thought this book was okay. It took me a while to get into reading it but once I did, I got sucked into the pages. This is a book about two lives that are separate but deeply intertwined. This book teaches a valuable lesson that even a harmless action can have unmistakable consequences that can affect you for the rest of

your life.

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### **Sara says**

The internal conflict that Michael Mackenzie endures throughout the novel *Swallowing Stones* and the lies he must come up with to cover up his crime are some of the best features of this novel. The novel starts off with Michael Mackenzie carelessly firing off a new rifle he received as a birthday present; what Michael does not know is that his bullet traveled far enough in the air and ended up hitting a man that was fixing his roof. The next day, Michael learns of the man that was killed by a stray bullet and right away, he and his friend Joe know that it had to have been Michael's bullet that killed the man. The two friends come up with a plan to cover up Michael's crime and quickly put the plan into motion. However, as Michael begins to understand the severity of his crime, he begins to feel guilty and hates the fact that he is lying to everyone, including the cops. In addition, Michael feels bad to the man's family, especially for Jenna (the man's daughter) that also attends his school. Since the novel drifts back and forth between what Michael is going through and what Jenna is going through, the reader gets a thorough understanding of how both characters are feeling and what they go through as they try to cope with this tragedy. I would highly recommend this novel to teachers because I believe that the novel can help students understand that actions have consequences and the themes in the novel are applicable to many scenarios and settings.

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### **Mashfee Alam says**

Joyce McDonald did a great job with creating an immense amount of suspense in this book. It starts off with teenager Micheal shooting a rifle on his rooftop as a new year's celebration. The most unexpected thing happened after this. He ended up killing a man from a mile away. As soon as he heard the news, he's been trying ever since to cover up all his tracks so no one would find out it was him. However, he stills feels a lot of guilt, as shown when a kid in his school said it was his friend who shot the gun, he punched him. His personal life was also being extremely affected by this. The book does a great job on showing his true feelings and how he truly regrets the act. It shows how every single day he thinks about it and even when he's about to do the smallest thing, he thinks about how it would affect them finding out that he was the one who shot the gun. I would recommend this book to people who like suspense and self-to-self conflicts. Overall, it was a great book.

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### **FANCEYY GURRAL ZARI AYE says**

This book was so mysterious and captivating, I could not put it down. Michael received a gun on his seventeenth birthday, and fires it into the woods. That bullet hits a man that was working on his roof and kills him. After firing the rifle Michael hears on the radio that the police is looking for the gun that matches the bullet. The police start rummaging Michael's neighbors, looking for the rifle. As all of this goes on, Michael becomes paranoid and tries to convince himself that that bullet did not come out from his rifle. To make things worse, the man's daughter, Jenna, attends the same school as Michael. Jenna starts having recurring dreams with Michael in them. They eventually form a friendship, and Michael starts going crazy from the guilt he feels, and turns himself into the police. I usually am not attracted to mystery books, but the way that the author wrote this book was amazing, and it was very hard for me to stop reading it. She definitely established the effect in this book, and I would recommend it to anyone.

### **Lily Gatto says**

"Swallowing Stones" by Joyce McDonald is a mysterious realistic-fiction novel with just the right amount of suspense that makes you want to keep reading until the very end. In this book, the characters are learning all about life lessons and facing reality. This novel shows you how it can sometimes be hard to make the right decisions when you know they can come with difficult consequences. I recommend this book to any teenager who is looking for an easy mystery read.

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### **Taylor Gwinn-bowles says**

This book was so mysterious and captivating, I could not put it down. Michael received a gun on his seventeenth birthday, and fires it into the woods. That bullet hits a man that was working on his roof and kills him. After firing the rifle Michael hears on the radio that the police is looking for the gun that matches the bullet. The police start rummaging Michael's neighbors, looking for the rifle. As all of this goes on, Michael becomes paranoid and tries to convince himself that that bullet did not come out from his rifle. Well then Michael every night he sat on the church steps across from Jenna house with his head down.

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### **Jena Guthrie says**

Swallowing stones is a story about a seventeen year old boy named Michael who on his birthday receives a rifle. He shoots one shot in the air, which changes his life; for the worse. A mile away, he has taken the life of an innocent man. As time progresses, Michael finds out he is the murderer. Jenna, the daughter of the man killed, has been completely devastated. Her relationship between her boyfriend and friends begin to change as she starts having dreams about Micheal, the boy in which she never met. This accidental crime turned for the worst as the guilt haunts the mother, Jenna and Michael. As the story unfolds, Jenna and her mother become filled with guilt, examining all the precautions they could have taken so that the father wasn't outside at the time the gun was drawn. They begin to separate themselves from their friends due to this guilt. Michael on the other hand, has a specific reason as to why he should be guilty. As the story is unfolding, Michael watches Jenna's everyday moves and begins to feel even worse about the accidental crime. I would recommend this book to anyone that loves a suspicious and powerful story that brings guilt from crime, to life.

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### **Karol says**

This book was so mysterious and captivating, I could not put it down. Michael received a gun on his seventeenth birthday, and fires it into the woods. That bullet hits a man that was working on his roof and kills him. After firing the rifle Michael hears on the radio that the police is looking for the gun that matches the bullet. The police start rummaging Michael's neighbors, looking for the rifle. As all of this goes on, Michael becomes paranoid and tries to convince himself that that bullet did not come out from his rifle. To make things worse, the man's daughter, Jenna attends the same school as Michael. Jenna starts having recurring dreams with Michael in them. They eventually form a friendship, and Michael starts going crazy

from the guilt he feels, and turns himself into the police. I usually am not attracted to mystery books, but the way that the author wrote this book was amazing, and it was very hard for me to stop reading it. She definitely established the "sink in your teeth" effect in this book, and I would recommend it to anyone.

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### **Deb says**

Swallowing Stones is a terrific young adult novel, posing some tough ethical questions. Jenna Ward's father is killed in a freak accident after a teenager shoots an antique Winchester into the air. The story is told from two different points of view: Jenna's and Michael, who fired the gun. As Jenna deals with her father's sudden death, Michael is wracked not only with his guilt, but with the pact he made with Joe, his best friend, to keep the circumstances of the accident secret. The portrayal of the two teens, their interactions with their friends, and their struggle with doing what is right, is quite realistic. The story was gripping, and I couldn't put it down! There is some mild sexual content (the description of very realistic emotions and physical reactions) that might prevent me from using this book with my 7th graders, but it's certainly a book that would capture their interest, and I think that the questions the book poses are probably worth a few "embarrassing" lines.

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### **Erin Reilly-Sanders says**

Good, but I was reading rather quickly and didn't really get drawn too far into it. The "dream" scenes with the "Ghost Tree" were vaguely annoying because it sort of steps beyond the realm of realism but are probably necessary to deal with these types of deep feelings, similar to how fantasy can deal with issues of good and evil that would be cheesy in contemporary realistic fiction. The characters felt real and I thought that the realistic part of the ending was nicely and sensitively done.

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### **Valerie says**

The ENTIRE novel you're waiting for the moment when the two characters finally interact face to face...and the book ends right as it's about to happen. Seriously?

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### **Stacy says**

I HATE the ending of this book!!! I seriously want back the hours that I wasted reading this book!!! The story had such great suspense, building up to what could have been such a supreme moment of plot, but then it falls flat - no, worse than that, it ceases to exist as a narrative. It's as if the author couldn't write the ending that was destined to exist!! When I am forced to teach this book, which I avoid doing if I can, I have the class stop reading right before the last few pages to have my students "Beat the Author." They work in pairs or triads to write the ending that they think should occur. Then I mix all of the possible endings together, including the actual ending from the novel (which I type out so it looks like all of the others), and we do a read around and try to guess which is the actual ending. My students' versions are ALWAYS better!!! The original ending ruins everything that came before it! What a waste!!!

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## **Jacqueline V says**

Very well written book, i enjoyed how it had different chapters for the different characters point of view on the whole situation that happened with Michael McKenzie and Jenna Wards father!! I would totally read it again:)

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