



Where We Belong

Emily Giffin

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Marian Caldwell is a thirty-six year old television producer, living her dream in New York City. With a fulfilling career and satisfying relationship, she has convinced everyone, including herself, that her life is just as she wants it to be. But one night, Marian answers a knock on the door . . . only to find Kirby Rose, an eighteen-year-old girl with a key to a past that Marian thought she had sealed off forever. From the moment Kirby appears on her doorstep, Marian's perfectly constructed world—and her very identity—will be shaken to its core, resurrecting ghosts and memories of a passionate young love affair that threaten everything that has come to define her.

For the precocious and determined Kirby, the encounter will spur a process of discovery that ushers her across the threshold of adulthood, forcing her to re-evaluate her family and future in a wise and bittersweet light. As the two women embark on a journey to find the one thing missing in their lives, each will come to recognize that where we belong is often where we least expect to find ourselves—a place that we may have willed ourselves to forget, but that the heart remembers forever.

Where We Belong Details

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From Reader Review Where We Belong for online ebook

Jennifer says

Where We Belong is a standalone, chick-lit novel written by author Emily Giffin. This is the first book I have read by Ms. Giffin and I so enjoyed it. Where We Belong is a glimpse at how adoption has impacted the biological family, the adoptive family, and most of all the child: Kirby. It is sensitive and fairly realistic as far as the emotional aspect goes. I enjoyed the complexity of Kirby, I sympathized with the adoptive family and the suspense they undoubtedly endured during Kirby's personal journey, and I was entertained by the drama involving the biological parents. Past and present parallel storylines were featured in this novel and I felt completely engaged in both stories. I admire that Ms. Giffin (view spoiler). However, I thought things turned out quite well for Kirby, as ultimately, this was her story and her journey. If you think you may enjoy reading adoption through the eyes of a chick-lit writer, then add Where We Belong to your TBR list.

My favorite quote:

"I certainly never felt rejected because they had given me up. My parents knew nothing about my birth mother, yet always explained with certainty that she didn't "give me up" or "give me away" - she made a plan for me, the best one she could make under her circumstances, whatever those were."

Alaina Meserole says

It's been a while since I've read a book by Emily Giffin and I have no idea why!

Where We Belong was so freaking good! The characters were amazing! I was hooked from the very start and I right now I have no idea what day is or month. I just fell in love with this book and for some reason it just felt perfectly written! I don't think I've ever said about a book from start to finish but I swear this book was it!

Okay so it's basically about this mom who is suddenly reunited with the kid who she put up for adoption 18 years ago. Talk about shocking and mini heart attacks. Now I know this sort of things does happen but I also have no idea what I would do if I was ever out in that situation.

Now Marian, the Mom, has kept her daughter a secret from everyone. Her new boyfriend. Her first love (who is the dad). Meanwhile once I have alcohol every secret someone ever told me or that I had would be out in the open.

This book is a dual POV from both Miriam and Kirby. I really enjoyed seeing them get to know each other and develop a relationship. I also really liked seeing Marian's relationship with Conrad (baby daddy) which did end up breaking my heart a little bit.

In the end, you'll end up rooting for a happy ending for everyone. Just like me.

Overall?

The beginning? Amazing.

The middle? AMAZING.

The ending? Completely perfect!

I have zero complaints about this book and that's saying a lot. Maybe it's because I just happened to read such amazing books today but I'm in SUCH a good mood. I need more books from Emily STAT!

Meridee says

I have been a fan of Giffin's writing because her prose evokes emotions and connection with the characters. I have liked most of her books. I'm not sure how I feel about this book, though. I was most interested in how the main character, Marian, would interact with her teenage love. This didn't happen until the last few pages of the book. I had hoped to see where this relationship went. It was of the most interest to me. The rest of the book was fleshed out nicely, I just felt that another 100 pages was needed to wrap up loose ends and see where the parent's relationship went in the present. I was left feeling disappointed.

Gail says

I'm not sure I ever would have picked up an Emily Giffin book had it not been for this being the September book club pick for my Muncie book club. Prior to now, her work was lumped on that pastel-hued shelf of chick lit authors I'd pass up in favor of other (what I considered smarter) reads on the bookshelf.

For what it's worth, I DID find myself getting sucked into the story: Marian, a 30-something NYC TV producer who has to deal with a knock on the door one night and the presence of a stranger who turns out to be her long-lost, 18-year-old daughter, Kirby. A daughter she gave up for adoption but never stopped thinking about. There are a few (predictable enough) plot twists in the book that I don't want to say too much about, only that I became a BIG fan of Conrad. (if you read it, you'll do the same, trust me ;))

It's clear from the get-go that Giffin's books aren't meant to be serious reads. While the subject material does delve into serious matters, the writing is such that it reads more like a movie script than a serious novel.

And that's the thing, I'm sure it already IS a movie in the works. And sheepishly enough, while I didn't care to see her "Something Borrowed" adaptation in theaters (which I hear stunk), I might have to see this one. If only, remind you, because I REALLY want to know who gets cast to play Conrad!

Britany says

3.5 Stars

A book about broken relationships being placed back together again. Marian Caldwell is a hotshot TV producer living the life in NYC, when one night a knock on her door changes everything. Kirby Rose (the most beautiful name!) standing there wanting an answer, but more importantly, acceptance. As the book progresses, we flash back and forth between past and present, alternating between the two voices chapter after chapter.

Lighter book, perfect for summer reading. I listened on audio, and the narration was spot on! I may have enjoyed this one a little more due to the audio. I was pleasantly happy reading this one and found myself satisfied with the path the author took me down.

Stacy says

Ugh. What a disappointment. How many ways was i disappointed?! I love this author - i think she writes smart chick lit. Not an easy feat! Her characters are well-written, realistic and her writing is very true. I always feel like i walk away with something when i read her books. I was really looking forward to her new book and then i read it. it started out interesting - Marian lead a fascinating life in NYC as a producer of a popular tv show - she wants to marry her boyfriend, he is hesitant...then we meet Kirby. Marian's 18 year old daughter who she put up for adoption. The book goes back and forth between the two characters - each narrating a chapter. I really did not like EITHER of these chracters. I though Kirby was a total brat at first and there was no depth whatsoever to Marian. Who takes their long lost daughter to BARNEYS to shop the first time she meets her?! It never really gets any better and in fact, the last 50 pages i just breezed through. No doubt about it, this was a book all about adoption. I also felt this was MUCH more Kirby's story than Marion's. I didn't feel like we really got to know this shallow woman - perhaps because half of the book was written from Kirby's point-of-view. This book was so focused on Kirby - i would even say this was a YA book. Such a disappointment to a book i was SO looking forward to...

Tamara says

More often than not I come across a book I really don't love. When I find a book I love my spinning world stops. Kids, friends, and even dishes are ignored. I find myself glued to my Kindle and forgetting everything else around me. Laying awake in bed at 1:00am not thinking of the fact that i have to be up at 5:00 am to meet with clients. When this rare event does occur I am at my happiest. There are few greater joys for me than finding a book I absolutely can not put down. This recently occurred after purchasing Ms. Emily Giffin's "Where We Belong". I have read every single book Ms. Giffin has published and was especially excited for this book, because I received small taste in the back of one of her other recent books. Normally, I completely shy away from books that take turns sharing the character's perspective, however Ms. Giffin pulls it off very nicely. Smoothly enough that I believe she broadened her reading audience by the small maneuver. I really loved this book. I loved that it wasn't completely predictable and that it dealt with things that people deal with everyday and still remain normal. I appreciated the missing dramatic tragedy and got to take the characters for what they were worth and grow with them. While I will not give away any spoilers, I will say the book fell a little flat with the ending. I have never liked the lets end the book when the reader knows the character is going to be okay and let the reader come to her on conclusions on the future. I am the reader who loves the happy ever after. I like knowing instead of speculating. While this didn't bring down the tone of the book, it definitely left me wanting more.

Jennifer Hufford says

The story was a bit cliched: Kirby, an adopted daughter (the "ugly duckling" of her adopted family) seeks her birth mother Marian. It seemed too easy that Kirby and Marian would strike up an easy friendship, that their relationship would develop so quickly and simply - and that Kirby wouldn't have more anger toward Marian once she sees the lavish life Marian lives as a network television producer in New York City. When together they seek out Kirby's birth father (who didn't know he fathered a child), the story fails to bring any real issues, emotion, or substance to the table. The one character I would've liked to know more about was Kirby's adoptive mother; her side of this story wasn't explored and I could only imagine the discomfort, pain, and worry she must have felt as Kirby sought out her birth parents. To me, the story of Kirby's adoptive mother would have added a welcome layer of complexity and richness to the novel, and as a mother myself I

felt the most for her character. I won't say more, I don't want to give away any plot points. Giffin is a VERY popular author and I know friends who are crazy for her books. My criticisms could be particular to me and I should admit I had these same issues with SOMETHING BORROWED, the only other Giffin novel I've read - and I should note that Entertainment Weekly gave WHERE WE BELONG a glowing review. It's well-written and mildly entertaining but neither the plot nor the characters manage any true depth. It's probably a great summer read for those who enjoy a good story without too many complications.

Sandra says

This is the most appalling book I have read in a long time. I read a lot of great reviews on amazon about it, but I had not understood this is the kind of author who apparently has a group of fervent fans who tend to review with exaggerated enthusiasm. The moral side of the story is appalling, the characters are flat, the class-divide is stereotyping and shallow, the men are all strong and reassuring, the girls all die for a good dress, with the supposedly rebel girl who acknowledges that deep down she actually loves all the conventional things she was reacting against... I just wanted to scream all the way. Especially reading this book after the exceptional 'Sharp objects' by Gillian Flynn - that's writing.

Paige PBJ63010 says

I won this as an ARC from Goodreads and was so excited to read it. Since you can easily look above to read the description of the book I'm going to skip over telling you all about it to get to what you want, the review.

I have been a fan of Giffin's work since her first book and have read all of them but her last release. This book did not disappoint. I felt that the characters were relatable, though I didn't necessarily agree with all of their decisions. That is what makes Giffin's stories so interesting. She doesn't take the easy route, she makes things realistic to true life. I loved the back story flashbacks, without it the book wouldn't have worked. I really enjoyed seeing the same story line from the perspective of 2 people.

This is a book I will definitely be recommending to my friends.

Eileen Patterson says

I was ecstatic to receive an advance copy of this book to review, because I really loved Emily Giffin's other two books I read. Well, I LIKED "Something Borrowed" but I did love "Something Blue," the follow up book...something about getting both sides of a story is satisfying. Also, it's not really both SIDES of a story, just two different perspectives, because whatever Giffin's faults may be, she seems to have a good grasp of empathy and why nothing in love and friendship and human relationships is as black and white as we sometimes make it out to be. I definitely loved that aspect of her books, but I have to be honest, I couldn't relate to her characters much. I mean, as a human being with struggles I could relate to them on that level, but I come from a dirt-poor background and somehow seeing a character turn up her nose at earrings from Tiffany's because she didn't like the SHAPE of them kind of made me throw up in my mouth a little bit. That's not to say I don't think that upper class people don't deserve books about their lives and struggles, I do, it's just that I saw Giffin's talent and was hoping that someday she'd try her hand at writing a book with characters I could more easily relate to.

I said all that to say this: Giffin fans rejoice, that day has come! While Marian is definitely affluent and doesn't worry about money, Kirby and her family are decidedly on the lower end of middle-class, and there's a great exchange where Kirby, an 18 year old adoptee who seeks out Marian, her birth mother, in hopes of building some kind of relationship, returns a bunch of expensive clothes that Marian buys her not because she doesn't like the clothes, but because accepting them makes her uncomfortable. It's a great moment in the book. It's clear that Marian doesn't know what to do when the baby she gave up for adoption shows up at her door 18 years later. Marian opted to keep her address current with the adoption agency in case the child wanted to contact her someday, so she knew this day might come, but she's still unprepared for the emotions and awkwardness that happen when Kirby, not a child but a young woman, shows up at her apartment one night. Marian kind of freaks out and does what she's done for a long time when problems have shown up: she tries to solve them with money and avoid any deeper contact because she's unsure of how else to express her feelings. Marian isn't a bad person, she's a flawed person who has everything she SHOULD want in life but isn't sure why she feels something is missing. She's a successful writer for a television show, she has a doting boyfriend who is equally affluent (though he seems unsure about committing to marriage) and Marian doesn't really know if these things are what she wants out of life. As a Natasha Josefowitz poem I once read puts it: "I have arrived...is this where I was going?"

For Kirby's part, she hasn't really grown up feeling ostracized because she's adopted. Her parents are clearly very loving, in a stable marriage, and they treat their two daughters (one adopted, one not) as equally as any parent can. If Kirby gets treated differently at all it's not because she's adopted, it's because she's very rebellious and difficult to deal with. She doesn't do drugs or party, but she doesn't apply herself in school even though she could ace most classes if she wanted to, and she rebels against her parents' offer to pay to send her to college because she's not sure what she wants to do in life and she doesn't know if college will help her decide that. Furthermore, she purposely pushes back against her parents at every turn, picking fights and throwing the fact that she's adopted in their faces because she knows that it will upset them to hear her say that they look down on her because she's not "really their kid," even though she knows this isn't true. I really think Kirby does this because she's a teenager. Her parents try to support her, but they don't understand that things like her love for music are more important to her than good grades, and that this could be a viable career for her because she has talent. Her parents don't mean to stifle her, they just don't get it, and likewise, Kirby doesn't mean to really hurt her parents, she's just frustrated and confused about her future. Kirby is on the cusp of a huge life change, graduation from high school, and she doesn't know where to go from there, and she takes her frustration and fear out on her parents. She fantasizes about what her birth parents might be like, if that's where she gets her passion for music, if they would understand her better, if finding her "real parents" might help her life make more sense. In other words, she dreams that the grass might be greener on the other side of the hill because she knows the grass on her side so well and she wonders what else is out there.

These characters are vastly different, but when they come together, their interactions teach them both a lot of lessons about love and life and family. There are a lot of twists and turns in the plot here, including a huge secret surrounding her pregnancy that Marian has kept to herself for over 18 years. Finding out what really happened back then, and what needs to happen now, forms the plot of this novel, and it was fascinating. I couldn't put it down, honestly, except when I passed out to sleep with the book in my hands because I was exhausted but wanted to keep reading. I highly recommend that fans of Emily Giffin's other books seek this one out, and even those who haven't read Giffin's work in the past might want to give this one a chance. I had already planned to buy this book when it came out, and getting an advance copy turned out to be a great gift, because I loved this book even more than I thought I would. Bravo, Emily Giffin. You made my day not just as a fan of YOUR books but as a fan of all books.

Amy says

Contains Spoilers

I have been a long time fan of Emily Giffin's books. *Something Borrowed* and *Something Blue* will always be my all time favorites. However, her books have seemed to go downhill lately. *Heart of the Matter* was the first time where she introduced a story that was told from two points of view. I thoroughly enjoyed that book and it looks like she tried to create the same success by writing from two points of view again.

However, she failed.

Marion is incredibly unlikable and unrelatable. I found myself relating more to Kirby, Kirby had spunk, however, the adoption issue overshadowed the whole book for me. Giffin's views on adoption are entirely cliché and have no real bearing on true adoptions. Not all adoptees feel lost, and not all people that choose adoption for their child hide the fact from every single person except for their mother. Kirby's feelings seemed to be something that Giffin picked up from advice column's or some other fluff area and didn't seem to have any merit.

I think if she had done some true research into adoption and the true feelings associated with the process, then the book would have been better.

The part that disgusted me the MOST about this book is that Marion kept the adoption secret from the birth father for Kirby's entire life, and then Kirby and Marion show up on the birth father's doorstep and go out to lunch. I enjoy the fact that Kirby and her father have potential for a birth father/daughter relationship going forward. That's about all that I enjoyed from that part of the book.

At the end of the book, Giffin leaves the door open for a romance between the birth parents... REALLY??? WHY would ANYONE who was lied to about having a child want ANYTHING to do with the person that caused him so much pain EIGHTEEN YEARS after they first met? They met EIGHTEEN years ago, dated for a few weeks (when they were eighteen) and parted ways when Marion found out she was pregnant. And yet... we are supposed to assume that there is lingering love there, AFTER the birth father found out about the eighteen year lie??? I don't think so.

It doesn't make any sense to me. I will be incredibly disappointed if there is a sequel about a romance between Marion and Conrad.

One other thing that I usually enjoy is the updates from characters from prior books thrown into her new books. This update was not like any of the others, this update from prior characters was just thrown into one chapter of the book at a group dinner. There was no context to the update, it was almost as if she just HAD to update SOME CHARACTER and she just chose an outing to say "oh hey, this is so and so, and this is where they are now".

As a long time fan, I am very disappointed in this book. I'm actually sorry that I pre ordered it and paid extra shipping to have it on my doorstep on the day it came out.

Dawn says

I won this book from a Goodreads giveaway. I'd seen Emily Giffin's books are bestsellers. I do not read what is generally called "chick lit" (a term I find rather disconcerting) but wanted to give her books a chance. So this was my opportunity, and I do appreciate receiving this free copy. That being said, *Where I Belong* was a rather contrived, simplistic story. I truly felt the story line was something a 9th grader could easily conceive of, and not something a successful author would bother to take the time to turn into a novel. I do not understand how writing like this can make someone a New York Times bestselling author, but so be it. Any novel that begins with a successful, attractive television producer dating a gorgeous network CEO is going to be hard to swallow for me. The last few lines of the novel were somewhat redeeming, as every single character didn't receive the Cinderella ending, but even so, I just require more depth and character development in what I read. This isn't literature or a work of art by any means. It is something to pass the time, and if you are a fan of this so-called "chick lit" genre (how does being a chick have anything to do with reading a mindless, insipid story? that is simply insulting.) you will probably not be disappointed. Clearly there are many many 5 star reviews of this book by readers who look for a lot less from what they read.

Melissa says

I started reading this book, and wasn't enjoying the storyline as much as I had hoped I would. I had attributed it to my reading slump (I must have picked up and put down three or four books in the past week), but then worried that, if I couldn't get into a chick lit book, what could possibly inspire me to read?!? Then, I heard about the scandal erupting online, with the author, her husband, her assistant, and a few brave reviewers who dared to be honest about their opinions on the book. (Seriously, isn't that what reviewing is supposed to be about anyways? Sometimes we like a book, sometimes we don't, but each of us is completely entitled to express an opinion about what we've read). So, I decided to give up on the book and try something else. And the next book that I picked up immediately grabbed my attention (*Under the Never Sky*) and I haven't been able to put it down since then!

P.S. If you've missed all the drama, check out Corey Ann's website, who was in the middle of all of it: <http://coreyann.me/?p=141>. Can we just go back to a time when we could all play nicely in the sandbox together?

Dana says

For the first time, I was NOT blown away by an Emily Giffin novel. I have read every one that she has written, and always eagerly await her newest one, as I did with "*Where We Belong*." Unfortunately, this time the payoff was a bit disappointing. The novel starts out slowly (I was bored) and did little to make me care about Marion or Peter or their relationship and histories until, about 70 pages into the book, Kirby arrives. Finally, the story took off and I enjoyed a few hundred pages that followed. Marion was a single girl, madly in love with Conrad when they were 18. Kirby is the result of that love but Conrad never knew she had been conceived, and Marion knew nothing about Kirby, other than she had given birth to her, and relinquished her to be adopted at birth.

Kirby was the best character, a really plucky, spunky, tough on the outside girl trying to figure out her life and where she would fit in. I loved her guidance counselor, Mr. Tully, at her high school. He was someone who had total faith in Kirby and encouraged her to go to college. Kirby and Marion get to know each other, slowly. There are complications (like Peter, grandparents, Conrad) and all of that made for a good read.

Ah, but then came the ending which left me feeling as if someone started to tell me a secret, and then didn't finish the sentence. We don't know how this story ends. I felt betrayed by Emily Giffin for leaving me hanging. All I can think is that a sequel is in the works. If not, her unfinished ending makes me think less of her as a writer. I say this as a former HUGE fan! I hope she is busy writing the sequel. If not, I will give her one more chance in whatever she produces in the next year or two, but I will be fearful that she, like so many young writers lately, is banking on her name, rather than her true talent, to sell her books. She IS talented, but she didn't use her talent as well as in the past in this one. It was ok, but only because the middle to near the end were really fun.
