



# Daddy-Long-Legs

*Jean Webster*

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## **Daddy-Long-Legs** Jean Webster

When Jerusha Abbott, an eighteen-year-old girl living in an orphan asylum, was told that a mysterious millionaire had agreed to pay for her education, it was like a dream come true. For the first time in her life, she had someone she could pretend was "family." But everything was not perfect, for he chose to remain anonymous and asked that she only write him concerning her progress in school. Who was this mysterious gentleman and would Jerusha ever meet him?

## **Daddy-Long-Legs Details**

Date : Published 1912 by Hodder & Stoughton

ISBN :

Author : Jean Webster

Format : Hardcover 249 pages

Genre : Classics, Fiction, Young Adult, Romance, Historical, Historical Fiction

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## From Reader Review Daddy-Long-Legs for online ebook

Ahmed Ibrahim says

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Mariei says

It's probably one of those sad things about me that I take rootless interest in people I don't know and do a whole lot of aimless wondering. It feels creepy on bad days. Daddy Long Legs is weird for me 'cause it felt both not creepy and totally creepy. It must have been delicious for "Daddy" to get letters from someone who didn't know who she was writing to, be privy to hopes and desires and not have to figure his own out. (Too bad the sense that he knew them too well was creepy.) He had eight legs and none to hold with. (He was thinking with another appendage anyway.)

I like this review of Daddy Long Legs that asks why Jean Webster is so popular in Iran. She's right! It is interesting to me that things that were loved and cast aside will be still loved somewhere else. EBM in

Germany, Phil Collins in Soviet Russia (um....whoops), old fashioned Jean Webster in Iran. When I was a teenager I had friends who belonged to ultra strict families (religious grounds). No freedom of choice. I used to go off into reveries about what I'd survive on if I were them. "I'd still have Anne of Green Gables," I'd say, as if to reassure me for worst case scenarios. I'd also take it further back and decide what I'd have been reading if I lived in another time and country (presuming I was lucky enough to be able to read. I never want to be female in "what ifs" in other countries and times). My favorite part of Daddy Long Legs is reading about how they survived on what they had then! Jerusha/Judy loves Jane Eyre, Stevenson, Little Women (only in college. She didn't have them before then). I've been thinking about Iranian readers of Jean Websters books. I used to email a Malay girl a few years back and she'd tell me about movies she had to watch in secret. Sometimes I'd disappoint her because I didn't value stuff like family honor. Are Websters books popular because they approach the line of freedom and step back behind firm lines of society and family? I would mentally shelve Webster under the heading of "Safe to have".

(Okay, I had been on a goodreads "diet" of no pictures in reviews. Today I am bingeing and tomorrow I will throw up all over a new review.) (It's all for the sake of the orphans.)

Daddy Long Legs is cozy and warm like inside the belly of a taun taun. It would keep you warm and it also smells kinda off, even rotten at times. Not fishy but taun taun-y. (I have that taun taun with the figures! This is a picture I pulled off google images. I'm too lazy to do my own reenactment. Since I am lazy this does not count anyway.)

She calls him daddy. Ewwww. The nick name is cute (daddy long legs 'cause his shadow looked spidery and long legged). It wouldn't be creepy if she didn't ask if she should still call him daddy in the last letter, now that they are engaged. (What if he says yes?! I know a guy who calls his wife "Mama". So not hot.)

Did he choose to sponsor her for college as grooming for future wifedom? That's gross. That's what was creepy to me. She's supposed to become a writer. Jerusha doesn't know what she wants. Sure, parents pressure their kids to be doctors or something. (If he was paying for her to attend med school she'd dump him as soon as she graduated.) What is this vicarious living slash wife hunting? Don't know if I like it... Jerusha/Judy doesn't roll over for Jervis the man she knows, at least. It's lucky for her that she didn't figure it out (at first I forgave her because she grew up in an orphan asylum. Once she begins reading voraciously it is more troubling that her imagination couldn't do the numbers) because she felt so grateful to the "trustee" (this was creepy because inmates with special benefits are called this now) for her opportunities. It's a trap! (Picture your favorite Admiral Ackbar picture here. He smells fishy.)

His condition is that she write letters to him, letters he'll presumably never read, as well as standard great grades stuff. Jerusha/Judy takes to writing these letters with glee, sometimes annoyance or resigned longing, because she's never had anyone in all her life to write to. The relief to finally talk was the good part. The charm of Daddy Long Legs are the confidences that she makes in those letters. I liked how the girl tried to catch up to all the girls her own age, reading books she missed out on, the newness of academia and bigger social circles that can be taken for granted by those who have them. The weaker part is that it is the "safe" and "allowed to have". (I'm not begrudging anyone who has to have that. This is with me as a reader in mind. I wonder what other people want even as I'm hopeless at reading for anyone else.)

The downside is that it is one sided. Daddy/Jervis does not get to speak and over her shoulder it was easy to view him as someone who wanted to bottle her innocence and vibrance and direct it himself. When the world should have widened it cut off. Daddy Long Legs ends too soon and footnotes the growing up past the newness. Sometimes people tell themselves things. Jerusha tells herself she's over her past of being an orphan. She's not, it made her who she was. The telling and back and forth on that felt like a nervous tic, something to do with your hands when nervous, that one cannot disguise. Other things, being "grateful" and learning to smile through tedium was telling. Who wants to read a self help book? Letters should be like

talking to yourself and to someone you care about at the same time. Mantras are not going to keep The Beatles from splitting up.

Yeah, yeah it was written eons ago. She marries a bossy man who "knows what's best" for her. If I were her friend getting letters about this guy I'd not worry about her because she knows when she's taken advantage of and told to be grateful (like the mistress of the asylum she tries to scorn with tongue and cheek but cannot help biting the insides of her cheeks not to scream). I liked Jerusha/Judy. I didn't fall in love with her. I'd have written back and asked questions. Maybe then.

Can you believe that I used to be a letter writer? Shared correspondence is a good place for sad wonderers who want to know. Daddy waited too long to write letters (he does eventually, as Jervis. We don't get to read them). He could get to be warm too.

It could have been worse. (I have the Jabba playset somewhere too! But I am not posing in a bikini.)

The movie version stars Fred Astaire as Daddy. I've not seen it yet. Astaire was movie star playing a movie star kind of guy to me. I never warmed or really wondered about him. (Coughs except for a bio I read for a project many years ago. Don't remember any of it! See?) (Leslie Caron was annoying in that movie she did with Kirk Douglas. She's Jerusha. I'll probably hate her.)

There's also a sequel, Dear Enemy, that sounds awful. I did like My Dearest Enemy which sounds like it was influenced by the awful sounding book.

List!

Most optimistic orphans:

1. Pollyanna
2. Little Orphan Annie
3. Anne of Green Gables
4. Jerusha
5. Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (I only know the name. Maybe she is sunnier?)

Shirley Temple was insane. My mom had dolls of her in all of her movie incarnations. I had to look at them while she pestered me to be more upbeat. I'm only 1/2 orphan! That's like glass half empty.

P.s. Goodreads says Webster was great-niece to Mark Twain. Did she sit around quoting him a lot? Did she say "My great-uncle Mark Twain said..." and repeat back everything everyone else ever said to her? "But \*I\* said that to you last Christmas!"

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## Wafa'a says

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**WARNING!** To follow is a highly illustrative review/plot summary of the book Daddy-Long-Legs.

As a kid, I totally loved the cartoon Judy. I actually miss it sometimes, but then thanks to Goodreads, I discovered that it all started with a book.

Jerusha Abbott is an orphan at the John Grier Homes. She always gets into trouble and has been overstaying for two years. She works her stay by taking care of the younger ones. She's actually scared that they might turn her out, but one day, Miss Lippet calls Jerusha to her office. On her way, she sees a man's shadow who appears to have extremely long legs.

As she enters Miss Lippet's office, Miss Lippet tells her that she is to be sent to college by an anonymous man, whom she could call Mr. John Smith, which is of course is an alias.

Jerusha is very thankful. She sends Mr. John Smith letters on almost about anything, ranging from her studies and silly exploits and how a foundling like her strives to keep the secret of her roots. The letters, some silly, some serious, some showing what she learns, but all are funny and touching. She calls him **Daddy Long Legs** since his shadow is all that she could tell of him.

She does very well at school, ends up being called "Judy" and gains friends, Sally Mc Bride (the one with glasses) and Julia Pendleton (blonde).

But despite the constant sending of Mr. John Smith of gifts, she can't help but be depressed writing to someone who never writes back. A girl couldn't help but cry.

Ah hah! Then she meets Jervis Pendleton, a rich uncle of her classmate Julia Pendleton. Jervis understands her, and in some way, they have the same flow of thinking.

But somehow along the way, she happens to fall in love with him, despite the 14 years age gap.

And ah, the ending is so refreshing. I remember feeling the same amount of lightheartedness, because the ending is so touching.

And now that it's over, I look wistfully like this:

Well not as cute as that, but teary eyed since my longing for the cartoon is somehow eased, but still there.

Daddy-Long-Legs is a sweet tale, not just of romance, but also how an orphan girl strives and blends in the normal world. Judy is a heroine that is very admirable and whom everyone must set an example of. She is strong and hardworking. And her roots never interfered with her dreams, and she somehow made it an inspiration to aim higher. And also, she is not perfect, and as she constantly points out, she is just a girl of whom all of us could relate to.

But somehow, I couldn't get enough of this, so, off to get a copy of the sequel Dear Enemy.









## Christy says

I highly recommend that men DON'T read this, and I highly recommend that women - particularly girls who enjoy Little Women, Jane Eyre, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, etc. (basically old-fashioned chick flick books with substance) - DO read this. It's sweet and funny and different, not hard to get through in a day or two, and leaves you with a good feeling.

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## Mahsa says

70 years ago, a young girl named Annie was orphaned and sent to live with her great-aunt, Miss Gloom. Annie was a bright, cheerful girl who loved to read and to help others. Miss Gloom was a stern, no-nonsense woman who had a high opinion of herself. Annie's life with Miss Gloom was not easy, but she found a friend in Miss Gloom's dog, a small, scruffy creature named Spot. Annie's story is a heartwarming tale of friendship and resilience.

Annie's life with Miss Gloom was not easy, but she found a friend in Miss Gloom's dog, a small, scruffy creature named Spot. Annie's story is a heartwarming tale of friendship and resilience. She overcomes many challenges and eventually finds a home where she is loved and appreciated.

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## zahra haji says

"Daddy-Long-Legs" is a classic children's book that has stood the test of time. It's a story of a young girl who is orphaned and sent to live with her great-aunt. The book is written in a simple, easy-to-read style that is perfect for children. It's a story of friendship and resilience that will touch the hearts of all who read it.

## Mahdi Lotfi says

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## Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

*Daddy-Long-Legs* is a delightful short novel written in 1912. Basically it's along the lines of "Anne Shirley goes to a girls' college." It's mostly epistolary, told in the form of letters written by the main character where she talks (and jokes) about her daily life.

At the beginning of our story, Jerusha is a 17 year old oppressed but imaginative girl who lives and works in an orphanage, where she's grown up. She's unexpectedly given the chance to go to college when one of the orphanage trustees reads a humorous English essay that she wrote and offers to pay her way. He insists on remaining anonymous to her, but wants her to write him monthly letters telling him of her progress. This novel consists of the letters Jerusha (who quickly dumps her unliked name at college and tells people to call her "Judy") writes over the next four years to her benefactor.

It's fun to get a glimpse of life at an all-girls college 100 years ago. A sample from one of Judy's letters:

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

I hope you aren't the Trustee who sat on the toad? It went off--I was told--with quite a pop, so probably it was a fatter Trustee.

. . . Every spring when the hoptoad season opened we would form a collection of toads and keep them in [window wells by the orphanage's laundry room]; and occasionally they would spill over into the laundry, causing a very pleasurable commotion on wash days. We were severely punished for our activities in this direction, but in spite of all discouragement the toads would collect.

. . . I don't know why I am in such a reminiscent mood except that spring and the reappearance of toads always awakens the old acquisitive instinct. The only thing that keeps me from starting a collection is the fact that there's no rule against it.

Judy/Jerusha is a likeable main character with a lively sense of humor and an independent streak. In many ways the book is dated, understandably, but at the same time there are some unexpectedly progressive views. Given the times, it's not too surprising that Judy also makes some positive comments about socialism, as well as a few snarky comments about religion.

But overall this is a gentle, humorous coming-of-age story with just a bit of romance. Minus one star for the overly pat and somewhat disturbing ending -- I didn't care for the way the author glossed over some major personal trust issues (view spoiler)

I'd recommend *Daddy-Long-Legs* to those who enjoyed *Anne of Green Gables* and who like light, old-fashioned historical fiction. You can read a copy free online or download it here at Project Gutenberg.



