



Death Be Not Proud

John Gunther

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Death Be Not Proud

John Gunther

Death Be Not Proud John Gunther

Death Be Not Proud chronicles Johnny Gunther's gallant struggle against the malignant brain tumor that killed him at the age of seventeen. The book opens with his father's fond, vivid portrait of his son - a young man of extraordinary intellectual promise, who excelled at physics, math, and chess, but was also an active, good-hearted, and fun-loving kid. But the heart of the book is a description of the agonized months during which Gunther and his former wife Frances try everything in their power to halt the spread of Johnny's cancer and to make him as happy and comfortable as possible. In the last months of his life, Johnny strove hard to complete his high school studies. The scene of his graduation ceremony from Deerfield Academy is one of the most powerful - and heartbreaking - in the entire book. Johnny maintained his courage, wit and quiet friendliness up to the end of his life. He died on June 30, 1947, less than a month after graduating from Deerfield.

Death Be Not Proud Details

Date : Published August 5th 1998 by Harper Perennial Modern Classics (first published 1949)

ISBN : 9780060929893

Author : John Gunther

Format : Paperback 206 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Classics, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography

 [Download Death Be Not Proud ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Death Be Not Proud ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Death Be Not Proud John Gunther

From Reader Review Death Be Not Proud for online ebook

Lspinna13 says

The book I read was worth reading. This book is about a boy, his name is johnny. Johnny is a sick boy that has trouble in life but is full of joy. Johnny has a brain tumor, although he has a brain tumor nothing stops him from being happy. John Gunther wrote a good book, the story was touching.

My opinion about this book was that it was good. This book was as sad as a crying panda bear. While I was reading I had no more tears to cry I cried all my tears. Also I like the book for its theme. The theme was never give up, the theme is this because johnny never gave up even though he had a brain tumor. I also liked the tone. The tone was inspiring and sad. It was inspiring because the main character johnny never gave up and pushed on, it was sad because he was trying so hard but could never get enough. This is the only book I read by John Gunther and I enjoyed it. I really liked this book and I recommend you read it too.

Ryan Holiday says

I picked this up at a used book store prepared to throw it away if it wasn't good. In my experience, the better the title of a book you've never heard of, the more likely it is to be disappointing. By that standard, I was willing to take a chance on Death Be Not Proud but fully expected to be disappointed. I wasn't. Written in 1949 by the famous journalist John Gunther about his death of his son-a genius-at 17 from a brain tumor, DBNP is deeply moving and profound. As a young person who has accomplished a lot yet is fully aware how little those accomplishments mean, I connected with the boy who knows he will die too soon and struggles to do it with dignity and purpose. Midway through the book, Johnny writes what he calls the Unbeliever's Prayer. It's good enough to be from Epictetus or Montaigne-and he was 16 when he wrote it.

BookishStitcher says

This was a hard book to read. The death of a child is always sad, and intense medical descriptions are something (for me personally) that induce queasiness. I did feel like he was trying to convince me that his son's death was more tragic than other children's because he felt his son was more brilliant than others. This novel also comes from a place of privilege when you have so much money that you can afford the best hospitals and doctors for your child without thinking about it. It made me feel sad for all the parents who have sick children with added stress of huge medical bills they have no idea how they will pay.

Brooke says

i read this book because a student of mine had to read it for summer reading at FLC (franklin learning center). mostly, the book left me with a sad, disappointed feeling. i think that the topic of death is an important one, especially because my students are well-acquainted with it and should be given avenues through which to discuss it, but i'd like to think there's another, better book out there.

Kate Fletcher says

I found this drab. A sad story. It was difficult to relate to the situation. Though Johnny Gunther seemed to have had a spirit even his overbearingly proud father could not dim even through his(father's) storytelling. I felt it was a rather inappropriate publication and seemed to have served the purpose of easing his(author's) own pain rather than enlightening the public with the triumphant soul of a helpless child, which is understandable. This story might better have been told with outside assistance.

Breanna says

A profound little book. I started reading this ages ago, before I was fully able to understand the subject matter. Now, reading it again as a young adult I am more apt to understand and appreciate this work. I am fascinated by Johnny's selfless tendencies - to care more for his parents than his own trials. He does express his upset occasionally, but for the most part he is consumed by his passions in science and his aspirations for the future.

I wonder if he is so optimistic about his recovery because of the way in which his parents refuse to describe the severity of his condition. I think particularly to the instance in which the parents remove the definition of Johnny's terminal brain tumor from their medical journals - something that would not stop a modern teen but is enough to quell Johnny's curiosities.

I wonder if Johnny is so selfless because of the time and place which he inhabits - the era being specifically important. In that era, children were more obedient and common courtesies were more prevalent in society - certainly more-so than in modern society where children rarely seem to show their parents any respect, and fewer still seem to be able to accept illness as Johnny does so graciously. This memoir raises more questions than answers for me, it seems - but provokes thought and questions of the human condition - which is always something for which I search in a piece of literature.

This is definitely a book worth reading - and one that should be re-read periodically throughout one's life... I feel when I am drawn to read it again in a few years time, I may be able to answer some of my current pontifications, though fear I may only find more on which to speculate.

Tony says

DEATH BE NOT PROUD. (1949). John Gunther. *****.

This is a very moving account of the sickness and death of the author's son, Johnnie. His boy, seventeen-years old at the time, was diagnosed as having a tumor on the brain. We are taken from the early stages of the diagnosis to the point where they have fully characterized the tumor, and know that there was ultimately no hope for the boy. Through his father, mostly, we meet Johnnie, and learn a lot about his life before his sickness. We follow him as a young boy, the pride of his parents, through his school days, into his last year at a premier high school. Johnnie was a very bright boy and had an intense interest in science. He was also a sociable boy, in his own way, and everyone liked him. He excelled at solitary sports, and loved music: he never left his recorder behind. He was a whizz at chemistry, and planned to enter Harvard to take a degree program. Once we have outlined Johnnie, we settle down with his parents and all of the doctors (23!) who were involved in his case, to follow the stages of treatment. The schedule of operations and day-to-day treatments were horrendous. His condition see-sawed from dire to hopeful throughout his long stay at the hospital. The end-game was pre-ordained, however, and we look on helplessly along with his parents and friends, waiting for the end. You have to remember that we are reading about medical treatments that are now about 65-years old. Advances have been made since then, but would things have been any different

today? The author – at the time – was a leading best-seller of his “Inside” books. It was a lucky thing that he was since his expenses for Johnny exceeded \$50,000 per month over a period of 13 months. Johnnie’s parents are with him constantly, and we can only mourn with them as they go through this horrendous process. This is a memoir unlike any other you will ever read. Recommended.

Rachel says

reread this memoir, after many years, of a teenage son's 15-month fight against brain cancer in the mid-1940s. it's moving, and fascinating not only in itself but as a time capsule...

for one thing, gunther references the intelligentsia of the 30s and 40s (somehow without seeming like he's name dropping - but that could also be because the names are older... and some have fallen into obscurity). in a weird way, it reminded me of the movie Quiz Show, in its portrait of a time and (certain) place where knowledge and thought was unapologetically valued.

for another, you get a tour of orthodox and unorthodox cancer treatments circa 1943/4.

i was also struck by the depiction of a teenager who, we'd now say, clearly has ADD!

and finally, i noticed that the mother's approach to raising a child was like something out of salinger: she instructs him in all world religions, especially buddhism. at the end of this edition are excerpts from johnny's journals and you can see the effect of this.

and finally, and finally, and also, and fascinating too was...

back to work for me.

Mischenko says

This book is featured on Shabby Sunday @ <https://readrantrockandroll.com/2017/...>

This isn't a book I normally pick up, but I purchased it in a box of books from a church sale years ago, and after going through some of these books recently, it caught my attention. I love reading memoirs, but not so much when it's a story about a child with cancer. I took a chance and continued reading because I'd already read the blurb and knew what to expect. If you plan to read this book, you may want to skip my review altogether. The edition I'm reviewing is from 1965.

In the beginning of the book, John Gunther writes about his son Johnny and describes him as a happy child who loves to spend time with his parents when he's not in school. Not only is he a happy and active child, but he's extremely intelligent and loves school. When he returns home in 1946 for a break, he begins to have some strange symptoms and eventually is diagnosed with a brain tumor. Of course, this was back in a day before there were better treatments for cancer like there are now, and some of the treatments that Johnny undertakes are unorthodox. In fact, this is the first book I've read that documents a patient's story after attempting Dr. Gerson's methods for battling cancer.

The book is written in two parts. In the first part, the reader learns about Johnny, his diagnosis and some of

his treatments. This was definitely a difficult part for me to finish. It's heart-wrenching, but Johnny was so strong. His parents are with him constantly and move mountains to find him the best treatments possible. They continually search for a cure.

The second part contains a short diary that Johnny wrote and also letters, many from before his diagnosis. I would've liked to read the letters from before his diagnosis first, before reading Part 1, but this isn't the way the book is organized. The final pages in the book contain a note from Johnny's mother, Frances. In the note, she discusses the many questions you ask with the impending death of a child and there's a statement that we all hear too often. A statement that reminds us we are never guaranteed any exact measure of time.

“Yet at the end of them all, when one has put away all the books, and all the words, when one is alone with oneself, when one is alone with God, what is left in one's heart? Just this: I wish we had loved Johnny more.”

Overall, even with all the agonizing parts of the story, I'm glad I finished the book. In my opinion, it's written very well. I'd recommend it to anyone who likes to read memoirs.

4****

Lisa Vegan says

My mother died from cancer shortly before my twelfth birthday and this might have been the first book about a cancer patient that I read; I did read it around that time. The first of many books as since that time period I've developed a rather morbid interest in reading books about cancer and cancer patients. I remember appreciating this one because it unflinchingly described what it was like to live with and die from cancer (the honesty extremely unusual for its time) and because I liked the exceptional 17 year old boy with the malignant brain tumor. Particularly wrenching as it's a memoir written after he dies and it's by the kid's father, and there's an essay in the back of the book by his mother as well.

Elise says

This book first caught my attention when I read the title, a reference to a John Donne poem by the same name. I was immediately intrigued, and decided to read this story of a young boy who dies of a brain tumor.

The book was written by the boy's father after his death, and in many ways is the eulogy of a bereaved father who desperately loves his son. He writes of the genius of the boy, and we, the reader, come to believe with the father that this young man would have truly changed the world had he been permitted to live.

I first read this book many years ago and came to love the young man who will never reach adulthood. My heart broke at his parent's (and the world's) loss. Many years later, I lost my dear friend Elizabeth to the same illness, and I again revisited this book as part of my own grieving.

It is a story of hope and striving, and ultimately, of loss. It is one of my personal favorites, and I recommend it to anyone who has a heart and enjoys feeling wide and varied emotions when reading a book. I imagine this book will make all but the most hardened person cry, and yet it is a cleansing cry: it does the soul good to empathize with father and son and to take their grief as our own.

David Kuhn says

This memoir about death is full of life.

Sarah says

Although according to Goodreads I read this years ago I am not so sure that is the case. If I did read the book it must have been a speedy perusal for I am positive it would have stayed lodged in both my memory and heart. *Death Be Not Proud* is a father's tender portrait of his young son's brave battle against incurable cancer in the form of a devastating brain tumor. John Gunther was already a well-established writer when, in 1949, two years after his son's death, he penned this memoir. Part tribute, part cathartic release of emotions, Gunther manages to capture the essence of his son's spirit whilst chronicling the details of his last fifteen months of life. What I found most striking was the pure, noble character young Johnny displayed. He truly was, as Anne Shirley would describe, an angelically good human being. Riveted by science, blessed with a highly intelligent mind, and studious to a fault, Johnny fought valiantly to his last breath. Throughout his horrific ordeal he remained witty and resolute, never once failing to fully live each moment of his life.

Jill says

I think it is too easy to talk about children who die before adulthood as though they are saints. They are unflawed and therefore able to be exalted as perfect after their deaths. They are - in the eyes of the storytellers - eternally brave, friendly, and hopeful. While the copy of *Death Be Not Proud* that I have includes Johnny's diary and letters, I do not believe that this account of his life was true in the sense that it tells his story from his own mouth. How do we know that he was not just keeping a brave face for those around him because he did not want to disappoint them? We know this could be possible, yet we continue to write these tales, which further limit the ability of currently suffering children (and adults) to admit their pain, fears, and despair.

Despite these misgivings, the book itself was written well and is undeniably heartfelt. As the reviews suggest, it has the possibility to give us all hope by reading about the example of one who had so much to lose and kept a brave face through it all.

Gabriel Campos says

Fighting to survive is not easy, especially when one is diagnosed with a brain tumor. John Gunther Jr., also known as Johnny, struggles to hold on to life with the support of his family and friends. During his fight to survive, Johnny forms relationships with his caring doctors and becomes close friends. With the support of his family and friends, Johnny is confident that he can get through this stage of his life. Being a teenager, Johnny is eager and willing to do anything to continue on with his life. Undergoing many different procedures and operations, Johnny demonstrates his sheer mental strength by maintaining his knowledge, surprising his doctors. Johnny's passion for learning never falls short, and he strives to get well so he can continue his education in college.

My favorite character was Johnny. He never gave up hope and was courageous. I liked how during the heat of things Johnny was more worried about getting behind on his schoolwork than the grave illness at

hand. All he wanted to do was continue his passion for science and school, and I admire that. I know a great many people would enjoy getting out of school, but Johnny wanted to get back in. He was willing to do anything to continue learning and he was never scared about possible death. The characters in this book actually cared for Johnny as if he was one of their own. Many of the doctors cut their vacation or break short so that they were there for Johnny. Also, most of them took the time to write to Johnny to express their feelings. The passion that was shared for Johnny was real. It was their top priority to do everything they could for Johnny. This made the characters in this book who they were, selfless, which is an important aspect to character. My favorite part of the book was when Johnny wrote a letter to Albert Einstein. The fact that he got a response out of a famous person was surprising. Also, Johnny took it very casually and begged his parents not to brag about getting such an honor. This was my favorite part of the book because it showed that Johnny was modest which is an aspect I admire. I also liked it because it made Johnny happy to know that he might meet Einstein someday. Another thing I liked about the book was that the author, John Gunther, expressed that he looked into tumors and discovered types of tumors that had the prefix "glio" which is fatal. He brought this up with the doctors and they said his son did not have one. Later, when the doctors had x-rayed Johnny, they discovered that Johnny's tumor did undergo a glioblastomatous transformation. I liked this scene because I thought that it was well written. It was brought to the reader's attention that Johnny could have a fatal tumor, and then it left us in suspense and worry until we found out.

There were things that I did not like as well, one of them being that it was primarily written from Johnny's father's point of view. Even though there were letters from Johnny and others in the book I still would have liked to see Johnny's point of view. I feel that Johnny may have kept some comments inside, and I feel that those comments would have made the book more intriguing. Another thing that I disliked was that the book told us that Johnny died on the first page. I thought that the book could have been a good mystery as to if Johnny survived because Johnny's health kept going back and forth. He would get really sick and then make a miraculous recovery. This was persistent throughout the memoir, and would have contributed to the mystery outcome. One last thing that I did not like about the book was that the second part of it contained many of Johnny's letters as well as his diary. This made it difficult to recall everything that Johnny was talking about and when it was. I feel that many of those letters could have been incorporated into the first part of the book where they chronologically happened. This would have made it easier to understand as well as giving the reader both Johnny's point of view and his father's at the same time.

I think this book deserves a four star rating. It deserves this because it captivates the reader to keep reading to find out what went wrong. The book also delivers comical dialogue from Johnny as well as entertains the reader with Johnny's hobbies and experiments. It demonstrates a struggle for life in a positive way. The book tells Johnny's story exceedingly well. However, I still think the book could have had the mystery outcome of whether Johnny lived or died. Overall I enjoyed the book and I would recommend it.

Angie says

This must be my month for memoirs - on my last trip to the library , of the 5 books I checked out all 5 are memoirs ! When I looked at Gunther's *Death Be Not Proud* in my stack of books , I wondered why it was there , since like most people I had read it for an assignment in High School . After the shocking fact that High School was 30 + years ago ran through my head , I remembered that I loved this book back then and it was worthy of being a re-read .

A few things happened before , during and after my second go round with this touching book . Taking it from the stack of books , looking at the cover I suddenly remembered an awesome family that had briefly been a part of my life .

I had not thought about " Mary " and her family in years . I'm sure the memory washed over me because of the similarities between her and the Gunther story . I had met Mary at Albany Medical Center when I was young - my brother there frequently for cornea transplants , patch grafts and numerous other eye surgeries - her only son there fighting a brave battle against cancer . I mentally relived the days of watching her never ending love and devotion , her strength and determination , her confusion and sorrow when her child lost his life . I wondered where the years had taken Mary and her husband since that terrible loss - I hope the years since have been good to her and I pray she has been blessed with at least half the comfort she brought to her son .

As I re-read this beautifully written memoir , I cried - again . Sometimes we nurses don't allow ourselves to cry or perhaps we forget how to . I smiled to myself as the tears rolled down my cheeks .

I read the last page , closed the cover , dried my eyes and was amazed when I thought " That's odd ...I remember crying the first time through at Johnny's losses - his what if's and what could have been's that would never come to be . This time I really identified with his parents - their losses and what might have been ." Thirty some years passing since the last time I read this book suddenly didn't seem to be such a bad thing , but more a reminder of how we all grow , mature and are able to see things in many ways .

So glad this book was worthy of being a re-read

Sophia Mendoza says

A heartbreaking tale that would give you a positive look about being ALIVE. Be thankful. Be stupefied. We should feel blessed that we still have a wonderful life to live. Johnny had the same age as mine when he left this world. Too young for such a man than takes every single day of his life to be very very vital. He could've done so many great and indescribable things, if it had not been for that evil thing we call 'brain tumor'. Johnny, I salute you! I admire your courage and willingness to live.

I'm glad that this book became the first memoir that I have read. Deeply moving indeed.

- Science cannot outrun death. It can slow it, but it cannot escape from it.

"No fear of Death, no fight against Death, no enmity toward Death, friendship with Death as with Life. That is – Death for myself, but not for Johnny, God, not yet. He's too young to miss all the other parts of Life, all the other lovely living parts of Life. All the wonderful, miraculous things to do, to feel, to see, to hear, to touch, to smell, to taste, to experience, to enjoy. What a joy Life is. Why does no one talk of the joy of Life? Shout, sing, write of the joy of Life?"

–Frances Gunther

Yulia says

Someone (okay, mt therapist) suggested I reread this. Was he comparing my MS to a grapefruit-sized brain tumor? Why is it that everyone who has a real medical issue wants to believe it's psychosomatic and everyone with a psychosomatic condition wants it to be real?

My new take on the book, after fourteen years passing since I first read it:

Tonight, I read someone's review of "Death Be Not Proud" on Goodreads.com, a great review for a classic book, but for some misguided search for understanding I sent this message to the reviewer:

"I, too, cried when I first read this book and I'm sure I'll cry again when I read it this weekend, as I plan to. But I wonder how much my intervening years will change my perspective on the truth of the portrait. Certainly the boy was a gifted and courageous human being and his father loved him as any parent would. But had he survived and remained disabled, would his father's love have shown a different form: frustration that his son was now pursuing goals that didn't match his father's expectations of brilliance and success; anger that his son couldn't work full-time like his healthy classmates and earn as many bragging rights as they; pity at himself for being given a wonderful child who'd had an awful physical curse? And had the son read the book in his thirties, would he recognize himself in his father's depiction of him: would he see his actions as brave and noble, would he understand he had a choice in reacting to his diagnosis as he did, would he cry for his father for not being able to find a cure? I suppose you'd have to know me to understand why I question this portrayal now, when I could otherwise leave it be as a beautiful and heart-wrenching story. But as a former star student who did get all the academic awards despite dealing with disability and did work her way through Harvard, getting summa cum laude because my mom would expect nothing less, and whom everyone called brave and unfazed, I wonder what the boy would grow up to think. No, my mom isn't proud of me anymore. I didn't apply for the Rhodes Scholarship, you see. I'm just an adult disabled child, according to the government, trying to find meaning in each day. As for another disabled Presidential Scholar I knew who ended up a classmate at Harvard, he did end up going to grad school in mathematics and he did seem strong or pretended to be for others, but he died several years ago, from suicide I believe.

"I know I put too much of my own perspective in these hypothetical questions, but they are real questions."

I did send another email apologizing for my confession but I don't know if I simply dug myself a deeper (premature) grave:

"P.S. Sorry for the Gunther diatribe. I just wonder if it'd be easier on more parents of chronically ill children if their kids died while they were still perfect."

The last sentence in the Aftermath, from a doctor of his, Dr. Traegar: "He had the most brilliant promise of any child I have ever known."

Yes, he died still full of promise.

Jeremiah says

This book, a true story told in the most depressing but straight forward manner you could read it in. The writer, the boys father, tells it from his point of view. The sadness he felt, the total love he had for his son. The story is about the life of a tumor with in you Johnny Gunther JR. One that should've killed him within months but he outlasted it for years. It made me cry by the truth in it. The will of the human spirit. I would recommend it to everyone. Which is saying a lot as I rarely read nonfiction. I myself could take it very personally as my own father almost died from a brain tumor. One that is showing signs of returning. Some people have called the story drab and just plain sad. I found it to be a real page turner and yes very sad. The last line in Death be not proud says "And then like a thief, death stole him". I couldn't put the book down. Johnny was probably the bravest teen I have ever read of. To take death in a joking manner as if it did not concern him, but secretly he feared it, as we all do. We got to see his decent, his parents desperate search to save him, his doctors struggle to save him, and the saddest part the fact that he had so much potential and everyone loved him. This book was truly inspiring and should be read.

Heather says

I don't like the goodreads rating system. I want to give this book 3 stars, but the designation "it was OK" is more fitting than "I liked it." Yet, 2 stars seems like an unnecessary slam.

The book is a little saccharine for my taste. Basically it comes down to a father who loved his son and was full of justified or unjustified pride. According to Mr. Gunther, his son was: better, smarter, nicer, braver, etc than any other person on the face of the planet. I understand why he felt that way and I think it's a nice thing when a parent holds their child in such esteem. But, on the other hand, it became a little tedious to read after a while and I found myself wondering if Johnny would have been a rather arrogant person from his parents constantly blowing sunshine up his a**.

At one point Mr. Gunther quotes his son as saying, "My mother and father think that anything connected with me is remarkable. These strange parents...." I thought to myself, "Yep. Basically."

Overall the book was OK. Based on the description I was expecting a more philosophical look at the struggle to accept death. But really it was just an account of his son's last months of life.

At the very end of the book Johnny's mother (the author's ex-wife) included some remarks. I found what she had to say about death and losing her son to be very touching and I wish the book had been written by her.
