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## Hungry Heart: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing

Jennifer Weiner

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**Jennifer Weiner : Hungry Heart: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hungry Heart: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Memoir of a novelist By M's Mom I gave this only three stars because I too easily put it down. I have enjoyed several of Jennifer Weiner's novels, but her memoir, while insightful, at times raw (thank you, Jennifer, for your open, honest telling of your miscarriage), wasn't quite the page turner her novels have been. While it took me a couple of mo this to finish, I am glad that I did, as do enjoy getting to know the authors

I admire. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ... a longtime fan of Jennifer Weiner - I have loved all her books and enjoy following her on twitter ...By CustomerI am a longtime fan of Jennifer Weiner - I have loved all her books and enjoy following her on twitter and Facebook. I find her to be very human, and not just as a woman but as an overweight woman trying to be taken as more than a fat lady in her professional life, I relate all to well to her writing. This book did not disappoint. If anything, it made me love her even more. Aside from the fact that we could have been the same person as kids (the similarities are spooky in places) and that we have some of the same favorite books (although I didn't dislike the movie version of *Shining Through* as much as she did - c'mon it had Michael Douglas in it), I found her honesty to be refreshing. In particular, I feel as though her chapters about having a miscarriage and her father's death to be particularly moving. Those were details she didn't have to share in a memoir, but her willingness to do so will surely help some who read this book. I applaud her bravery. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Not as expected! Better!!By Cyndi5.0This book was fun to read so real. I bought it because of the weight loss surgery bit, it's there, but buried underneath real life. Kind of like weight happens, in real life. I really loved the transformation that Jennifer makes to her truest self, that was inside of her, waiting to be heard or uncovered. I found it really relatable as a woman and prior "good girl". Finding who I am took even longer for me. I would have liked to hear more about the surgery stuff, but still loved the book.

"Generous and entertaining." —Publishers Weekly (starred review) Finalist for the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay \* Nominated for "Best Memoir Autobiography" by Goodreads Choice Awards 2016 \* Named a "Best Book of the Year" by New York Post "You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll want to read it again." —TheSkimm "I'm mad Jennifer's Weiner's first book of essays is as wonderful as her fiction. You will love this book and wish she was your friend." —Mindy Kaling, author of *Why Not Me?* "Fiercely funny, powerfully smart, and remarkably brave." —Cheryl Strayed, author of *Wild* Jennifer Weiner is many things: a bestselling author, a Twitter phenomenon, and an "unlikely feminist enforcer" (*The New Yorker*). She's also a mom, a daughter, and a sister, a clumsy yogini, and a reality-TV devotee. In this "unflinching look at her own experiences" (*Entertainment Weekly*), Jennifer fashions tales of modern-day womanhood as uproariously funny and moving as the best of Nora Ephron and Tina Fey. No subject is off-limits in these intimate and honest essays: sex, weight, envy, money, her mother's coming out of the closet, her estranged father's death. From lonely adolescence to hearing her six-year-old daughter say the F word—fat—for the first time, Jen dives into the heart of female experience, with the wit and candor that have endeared her to readers all over the world.

Praise for *Hungry Heart*: "You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll want to read it again." (*The Skimm*) "In this generous, entertaining memoir, novelist Weiner, known for her plus-size heroines, authentic voice, and hilarious one-liners, offers her fans and others a front-row seat to the drama of her life. Weiner doggedly pursues her dream of becoming a writer who speaks to women's lives, insisting—and proving—that women's stories matter, and not just those of the slim and beautiful. Like her enormously popular commercial fiction, from its very first page this memoir will enthusiastically reach out to female readers and swiftly draw them close." (*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)) "Hungry Heart is a fiercely funny, powerfully smart, and remarkably brave book. With candor, wit, and insight, Jennifer Weiner writes beautifully about her darkest struggles and brightest triumphs, about growing up and getting on with it, about gaining and losing, about herself and also—ultimately—about all of us. I was spellbound by *Hungry Heart* from the first page to the last." (Cheryl Strayed, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Wild*) "Bestselling novelist Weiner has hit it out of the park with this moving collection of autobiographical essays." (*New York Post*) "In her new memoir, *Hungry Heart*, Weiner turns her understanding eye on her most compelling character yet—herself—and reveals the story behind some of her most beloved books. You'll laugh, you'll cry—and in true Jen style, there's a happy ending." (*Good Housekeeping*) "Weiner lays her heart bare in this memoir, which is insightful and affecting and affirms exactly why she is so popular—she is gifted in the ability to write honestly and easily." (*Booklist*) "I'm mad Jennifer's Weiner's first book of essays is as wonderful as her fiction. You will love this book and wish she was your friend." (Mindy Kaling, author of *Why Not Me?*) "Haven't we all wondered exactly how the many-splendored Jennifer Weiner became so many-splendored? This candid, poignant, and very funny memoir tells all, and I'm confident other readers will be as fascinated and moved by it as I was." (Curtis Sittenfeld, *New York Times* bestselling author) "Funny, fierce, feisty!" (*Glamour*) "Brave." (*People*) "This isn't a flossy, sherbet-hued real-life version of one of Weiner's best-selling novels. It's an unflinching look at her own experiences that will make you realize why she writes so persuasively about her characters' complicated issues: She's faced them herself. With the chatty, disarming frankness of a best friend, she tackles tough subjects like her decision to have gastric bypass surgery, her father's death from a heroin overdose, and the miscarriage of a much-wanted baby. Lest you think this sounds a bit grim, know that Weiner mines her life for comic gold, too—and throws in some parenting advice and body-image pep talks for good measure." (*Entertainment Weekly*) "For the first time, Weiner releases a collection of essays, and they are just as warm and funny as you'd imagine (and want) them to be. In *Hungry Heart* she takes on marriage, love, parenthood, and that one Summer that she was called 'the fat Jennifer' with grace, humor, and intelligence."

(PopSugar)“The essays investigate what it means to live as a woman today, navigating these labels and roles and how they all fit together.” (Allure)“Weiner’s mixture of pathos and humor fits right into the current cultural moment, in which funny women are writing memoirs left and right. But unlike some of the lady comedians cashing in on the trend, Weiner has the goods, and the talent to make the formula work.” (Flavorwire)“A beautifully heartfelt new memoir. Her honesty, charm and buoyant spirit come through on every page of this hilarious, wise, putting-it-all-out-there book.” (BookPage)“Witty, insightful.” (InTouch magazine)“The New York Times best-selling mastermind behind fictional characters such as Cannie -Shapiro bares her soul in a series of essays about family, writing, and body image. Weiner’s first journey into nonfiction, this aptly titled memoir chronicles her childhood and adult life with a dose of wit. Like the protagonists of her novels, Weiner’s voice is relatable and poignant as she shares the struggles that shaped the woman she is today.” (Library Journal)About the AuthorJennifer Weiner is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of fourteen books, including *Good in Bed*, *The Littlest Bigfoot*, and her memoir *Hungry Heart: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing*. A graduate of Princeton University and contributor to the New York Times Opinion section, Jennifer lives with her family in Philadelphia. Visit her online at [JenniferWeiner.com](http://JenniferWeiner.com).Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.*Hungry Heart* Hungry Heart The other day, I was walking from the hair salon to pick up my eight-year-old after school. It was a beautiful February afternoon, unseasonably sunny and springlike, with a sweet breeze rummaging in the tree branches that were just starting to bud. Also, my hair looked spectacular. I was feeling really good. I’d put in a solid morning writing; then I’d done a spinning class, where, according to the computerized rankings that I obsessively checked, I hadn’t finished last. I was wearing my favorite jeans, which are dark-rinsed, straight-legged, stretchy and forgiving, and the Eileen Fisher cashmere sweater that I’d snagged for 70 percent off at the cash-only sale. With my UGG boots on my feet and my purse, with its furry purse-charm, slung over my shoulder, I strode confidently down Lombard Street, feeling like I was on top of things, like this was a day when I had it all figured out. And then I fell. My toe must have caught a crack in the pavement as I hurried to cross Twenty-Fifth Street before the light changed. I felt myself leave the ground, saw my arms flailing, then heard myself shout in pain after I smacked down on the pavement, landing on my knees and the heels of my hands. This was not a cute stumble, not the dainty little stutter-step you’d see in a ZZ Top video right before the band launched into a paean to the high-heel-wearing, miniskirted heroine’s legs. This was a full-on pratfall, a wind-knocked-out-of-you, flat-out, oh-my-God, people-running-over-to-see-if-you’re-okay face-plant. I think I lay there whimpering for a minute before I hauled myself to my feet, assured my fellow pedestrians that I was fine, staggered through the school gate, and inspected the damage. There was dirt and grit and gravel ground into my palms. My jeans were torn. Both of my knees were bruised and bleeding. “Mommy, are you okay?” asked Phoebe moments later when she came out of the classroom and found me holding a paper napkin to my knee. “Yeah, I’ll be fine,” I muttered. I limped outside, where we waited for an Uber—no way was I walking home in this condition—and I realized that this was not just a trip, not just a stumble; it was a metaphor for my life, maybe for every woman’s life. You fall, you get hurt, you get up again. • • Last summer, the New York Times wrote a profile of the author Judy Blume, in which she described herself and her work. “I’m a storyteller—you know what I mean—an inventor of people,” Blume said. “And their relationships. It’s not that I love the words—that’s not the kind of writer I am. So I’m not”—she made a furious scribbling motion with her right hand—“I’m not a great writer. But maybe I’m a really good storyteller.” I don’t think I’ve ever identified so completely with a description, or the way it plays into the seemingly endless debate over what qualifies as literature. I, too, am a storyteller; I, too, eschew the furious-scribbling-motion kind of writing. I care about language and structure and pace, but I care about plot and characters more. I know I’m not the kind of writer who wins prizes and a place on the ninth-grade summer reading list, the kind of writer who gets called “great.” And, lucky me, if I was ever in danger of forgetting precisely where on the literary food chain I reside, there are people lined up on the Internet to remind me. But “great writer” was never my ambition . . . and I suspect was never within the realm of possibility. I believe that, through education and inclination, through temperament and history, all authors grow up to be a particular kind of writer, to tell a specific type of story. We could no more change the kind of work we do—the voice in which we write, the characters that call to us—than we could our own blood type. I am the proud and happy writer of popular fiction, and I would never argue that it matters as much as the award-winning, breathtaking, life-changing meditations on love and humanity and the *Way We Live Now*. I would also note that critics still stumble over the gender divide, where a man’s dissection of a marriage or a family is seen as important and literary, whereas a woman’s book about the same topic is dismissed as precious and jewel-like, domestic and small. Double standards persist, and in general, men’s books are still perceived as more meaningful, more important, more desirable. Last summer, a writer for the feminist website Jezebel revealed that querying six literary agents under a male name netted her five responses (including three requests to see the manuscript) within twenty-four hours, while the exact same letter, sent fifty times under her own name, had gotten a total of just two invitations to send her manuscript. “The judgments about my work that had seemed as solid as the walls of my house had turned out to be meaningless,” she wrote. “My novel wasn’t the problem, it was me—Catherine.” Clearly, there is progress to be made in terms of how we regard women’s work . . . and being the one who points out the problem does not earn you the Miss Congeniality sash. Particularly when your insistence on fair play and a level playing field is interpreted as a form of delusion about the kind of books you write

and the kind of attention you deserve. She thinks she's as good as Jonathan Franzen, my critics sneer. She thinks her stuff belongs in the New Yorker. Not true! As a lifelong reader of both literary and popular fiction, I am completely equipped to tell the difference, and I know what belongs where. What I believe is that popular fiction by and for women deserves the same regard as popular fiction by and for men. I believe that if the New York Times is going to review mysteries and thrillers and science fiction, it should also review romance—which remains by far the bestselling genre of all literature—and everything that comes under the catch-all umbrella of “commercial women’s fiction.” Maybe books like mine won’t win the National Book Award, but that doesn’t mean they don’t matter at all. Nor does it mean that the women who read them deserve to be ignored or erased. Women’s stories matter, the stories we write, the stories we read—the big-deal winners of literary prizes, and Harlequin romances, and documentaries, and soap operas, and PBS investigations, and Lifetime movies of the week. Women’s stories matter. They tell us who we are, they give us places to explore our problems, to try on identities and imagine happy endings. They entertain us, they divert us, they comfort us when we’re lonely or alone. Women’s stories matter. And women matter, too. • • • You fall down. You get hurt. You get up again. In my own life, I can trace the ups and downs, the things that have gone spectacularly wrong, and the things that have gone right beyond any imagining. There has been heartache. There has been embarrassment. There was that time I had to read about my father’s scrotum in the newspaper. (Fear not; we’ll get there.) But I’ve realized my childhood dream of becoming a published author and a contributing writer for the New York Times. I have a beautiful home in a city I love, and friends who’ve stood by me, and a wonderful, loving, crazy family that’s come with me for the ride. I’ve lived through a divorce and a miscarriage. I’ve seen my books become successful in a way few books do. I’ve taken stands, and taken heat, and—I hope—seen the world change, a little bit, because I spoke up. I had a father who left me. I have girls whom I will never leave. I had a marriage end. I have a man I hope will love me forever. You fall down. You get hurt. You get up again. • • • These are stories about hunger, that thing that women are taught to ignore or endure. They’re about wanting something from a world that instructs women that appetites are unattractive, that we should never push, should never demand, and should never, ever raise our voices. But we all want something from the world—love, approval, a boyfriend, a partner, a sense of belonging, a way of doing some good. We all desire, we all yearn, we all dream that if only I had this or lost that, if I could live in that house, marry that man, get that promotion, lose those thirty pounds, then my life would be perfect. As we get older we all learn that there isn’t a finish line . . . or maybe there is, but it keeps moving. It’s a rare moment where we look around, sigh with satisfaction, pull our spouse or kids or pets or parents closer, and say, This is perfect, or Now I have everything. Wanting is the human condition. It’s what led us to invent fire and the wheel and Instagram. There’s nothing wrong with desire, but just like every self-help book, bumper sticker, and issue of O magazine insists, it’s not the destination that matters, but the journey; not the summit but the climb. I know I’ll never get every single thing I dreamed of. I’ll never be thin. I’ll never win a Pulitzer or even, probably, the pie-baking contest at the Agriculture Fair in Truro every August (because I think the judges are biased against summer people, but that’s another story). I will never get a do-over on my first marriage, or on my older daughter’s infancy; I’ll never get to not be divorced. I will never give birth again, and neither of my births were what I’d hoped for. I’ll never get my father back; never get to ask him why he left and whether he was sorry and whether he ever found what he was looking for. But, dammit, I got this far, and I got some stories along the way, and maybe that was the point, the point of the whole thing, the point all along. • • • I know how lucky I am for this simple reason: I remember being six years old and telling anyone who asked that I wanted to be a writer. And now here I am—I got to be the thing I wanted to be when I grew up. How many people get to say that? (Besides every fireman and ballerina.) I knew I wanted to write, and I knew what kind of writer I wanted to be and who I was there for. To the extent that there was choice involved, I wanted to write novels for the girls like me, the ones who never got to see themselves on TV or in the movies, the ones who learned to flip quickly past the fashion spreads in Elle and Vogue because nothing in those pictures would ever fit, the ones who learned to turn away from mirrors and hurry past their reflections and instantly unfocus their eyes when confronted with their own image. I wanted to say to those girls and women, I see you. You matter. I wanted to give them stories like life rafts, or cozy blankets on cold nights, or a friend who’d sit next to you and tell you that whatever was happening, it was going to be okay. I wanted to tell them what I wish someone had told me when I was young and my own father said that no one would want me, that I’d never be worth much: to hang on and believe in yourself and fight for your own happy ending. I wanted to tell them that you can find friends who become like your sisters, that you can build a family that will cherish and support you, that you can find partners who will see your beauty, that you can find work that you love, that you can make a place for yourself in the world. These are my stories about hunger and satisfaction, about falling down and getting up and moving on. They’re stories about learning, slowly but surely, that the grace isn’t in the happily-ever-after but in the fall, and the pain, the bruised knees and bloody palms, and then the sheepish scramble back onto your feet. And now here they are for you.