



Tiny Infinities

J.H. Diehl

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When Alice's dad moves out, leaving her with her troubled mother, she does the only thing that feels right: she retreats to her family's old Renaissance tent in the backyard, determined to live there until her dad comes home. In an attempt to keep at least one part of her summer from changing, Alice focuses on her quest to swim freestyle fast enough to get on her swim team's record board. But summers contain multitudes, and soon Alice meets an odd new friend, Harriet, whose obsession with the school's science fair is equal only to her conviction that Alice's best stroke is backstroke, not freestyle. Most unexpected of all is an unusual babysitting charge, Piper, who is mute—until Alice hears her speak. A funny and honest middle-grade novel, this sharply observed depiction of family, friendship, and Alice's determination to prove herself—as a babysitter, as a friend, as a daughter, as a person—rings loud and true.

Ages 10 and up

Grades 5 and up

Tiny Infinities Details

Date : Published May 8th 2018 by Chronicle Books

ISBN : 9781452163352

Author : J.H. Diehl

Format : Hardcover 352 pages

Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade, Fiction, Health, Mental Health, Realistic Fiction, Mental Illness, Young Adult

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From Reader Review Tiny Infinities for online ebook

Dee Dee (Dee Reads for Food) says

There are no simpler words to describe this book than as a tiny infinity of its own. It is understated in its beauty and brilliance. At first, you may wonder what the point of it is, because, in all honesty, nothing really happens. It isn't a grand adventure or an outright heartbreaker, but the little ways that it hurts you or lifts your spirit can almost go unnoticed if you're not paying attention. I loved every moment of it.

A nothing story told in subtle, yet beautiful, intricacies. We all need stories like these at one point or another.

(Very appropriately titled. Brava!)

Kathleen says

An extraordinary debut. Emotionally wrenching with nuanced characters facing realistic challenges. A dark horse for Newbery 2019.

Sara Cook says

I enjoyed the real characters in this book and the description of the struggle to find your own place in the face of chaos.

Elizabeth Steinglass says

This is a beautiful, important book about a 13 year-old girl struggling with very real challenges. Alice desperately wants her family back together the way it was before her mother's accident and her father and brothers moved out. She also wants to get her name on the swim club record board and earn enough money to pay for a cell phone. Life gets even more complicated when Alice meets Harriet, who seems to know more about researching fireflies than she does about making friends, and Piper, the four year-old girl next door, who has been losing her language and her connections to the rest of the world. As Alice navigates these new relationships, she makes mistakes, discovers she's not the only one dealing with challenges, and begins to make her way through a world full of sharp thorns and firefly magic. I would highly recommend this book to anyone.

Ben Langhinrichs says

All 12-year-old Alice wants to do is focus on getting her name up on her swim team's record board, but life is way beyond her control. After a bad car accident, her mother is sullen and will barely leave her room. Her dad has moved out, and her brothers have gone to live with her aunt.

Furious and confused by the scattering of her family, Alice decides to move out to a tent in the backyard, and not move back inside until her parents come to their senses and her dad moves back home. Thus begins a long summer where Alice struggles to meet her cherished swimming goal, find a way to get her family back together, and maybe even help the little girl next door who watches Alice but never says a word.

TINY INFINITIES is a lovely, complex story which will tug at your heart and make you smile as well. Alice and Harriet, her new and confusing friend, are such real early teens, with all the complexities of figuring out both what is right and wrong, and what is right and wrong for YOU. One thing I especially love is how every other character, from Alice's mom and dad to little Piper next door, are drawn with both warm and depth, none falling into simple stereotypes or roles.

This is a phenomenal book, and I strongly recommend it for 11-14 year olds, and anybody else who remembers that age when life was complicated, out of your control, and yet full of promise. STEM friendly.

To be released in May 2018, but available for pre-order now.

Reprint from My Comfy Chair review blog. From a borrowed ARC.

Aubrey Marie says

This book was given to me by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Even though I read the description of the book before I read it, I still really didn't know what to expect. I'm glad that I read this book. I think it is a perfect coming of age story where the main character is full of flaws and has a flawed life that is so relatable. We go on this summer journey with her as she deals with her life "falling apart around her" as she tries to put it back together. Alice seemed like such a mature little girl and her character was awesome. I would definitely buy this book and recommend it.

Dora Mitchell says

Alice's parents are splitting up. Her dad has just moved out to live in his own apartment. Alice's mom has been spending most of her time in bed, ever since a car accident left her deeply depressed. But this isn't a sad or dark book -- rather, it's profoundly joyful and inspiring, much more concerned with how we heal, change, and grow, rather than wallowing in sadness.

And it's also laugh-out-loud funny. Alice's new friend Harriet is an absolute delight, and so is Alice herself. I was hardly able to put this one down -- I read it in two days. And unlike many books I read that quickly, I found myself thinking of it -- remembering favorite scenes, feeling like the characters were still with me, wondering what they went on to do after the events in the book -- for days afterward. I would truly love to spend more time with all of these characters. Each one is well-defined, sharply observed, and entirely believable.

An all-around lovely book that I'd highly recommend to any middle grade readers who enjoy a good character-driven story.

Kem Sawyer says

The wonderful, quirky characters draw you in and make you care. *Tiny Infinities* has much to say about growing up, the strength of family (and the fear of losing it), trust, friendship, a competitive edge, and thinking outside the box. The pages are filled with warm insight and many lines will make you laugh—wry humor at its best. J. H. Diehl has a gift—connecting readers to a world full of challenges but also endless possibilities and characters who never give up.

Michelle Brafman says

TINY INFINITIES by J.H. Diehl is a novel for young readers that opens with a gorgeous ode to the backstroke. Washington D.C. area swimmers of all strokes, however, will relate to this story set in a fictitious Chevy Chase community pool during the summer when MCSL freestyler Alice Allyn flips over on her back to “race between walls she cannot see.”

There is no shortage of walls for Alice to scale in this compelling summer read. The book opens the night Alice’s father and twin brothers move out of the house. Her mother, angry and depressed as a result of a car accident, has not left her bed for months, and Alice’s troubles have alienated her from her carefree friends. In effort to glue her family back together, Alice pitches a tent in her backyard, pledging that she will live outside until her father and brothers return home.

Amidst the chaos of her family life, Alice clings to the familiar: summer swimming. Despite her “crummy” anatomy and ill-timed May birthday, she is determined to see her name up on the team record board in her new 13-14 age group. Enter Harriet, a Minnesota transplant and math and science whiz, who convinces Alice that statistically, becoming a backstroker will give Alice the best shot at attaining her goal. Not only does Alice break the team medley relay record, but she makes the All Star meet. How? By adhering to the adage: always bring your suit to the relay carnival. When a teammate gets sick, Alice slides right into a key backstroke slot. After the tenth time she checks the board for her new record, Alice muses, “At any moment life could give you what you most hoped for, even it came by accident.”

Diehl, a former swim mom and veteran of the MCSL world, gets the tiniest details of summer swimming right: the cheers that make no sense, the way the light hits the water at 6:30 a.m., coaches donning crazy costumes, the politics of sharing a lane, the extended All Star season, the minutiae of the MCSL relay rules, the swim team banquet awards, and more. From these details emerge the larger truths about summer swimming, sports, and life.

Like many swimmers, the pool, or, according to Alice, the “blue rectangle that holds up her body,” is a place where she can sort through the problems: “Whatever is on your mind, even if it feels like a ton, you don’t stop moving your arms and legs and let it sink you. You count on the water, and when you turn, you can depend on the walls to help you push you back in the opposite direction.” Wise Harriet offer other pearls that transcend the pool, “Good fortune takes preparation . . . if you try, you open up the possibility of succeeding.”

Through the haze of her confusing summer, Alice also discovers a truth about how little control she has over other people’s behavior. Harriet sullies her All Star dreams; the parents of a child she babysits reprimand her for overstepping, and her mother completely quits mothering. She can’t change Harriet’s plans, sleeping in a

tent doesn't bring her father home, and she comes to terms with the fact that, "No chores I did, no food I cooked, no words I said were going to fix Mom."

TINY INFINITIES is not only chock full of truths, but it's funny and hopeful. And toward the end of the novel, Alice suggests that swimming the backstroke may indeed direct us to our true north, "Every time I swam the backstroke now, I felt the sky expanding overhead with no limits. It seemed like you could go anywhere. At the same time, you could count on where you were going too." Perhaps the same could be said about this beautifully crafted novel. (from the Reach for the Wall blog)

Wendi Lee says

Alice is twelve years old, and her summer has begun tumultuously. Her father has moved out, and her younger brothers are staying at her aunt's for the summer. Alice is expected to go with her siblings, but she insists on staying at home with her mother, and pitches a tent in the backyard in protest. Her tent will bring her father home, will make her mother happy and physically well again.

Instead, Alice meets a new friend (the very scientific minded Harriet) through her swim team, as well as intriguing new neighbors with three children. She begins babysitting the youngest child, and builds a relationship with the middle one, Piper, a little girl who has mysteriously stopped talking.

I like middle grade books that tackle difficult subjects, which *Tiny Infinites* does with grace. By the end of the summer, Alice realizes that no amount of tents or backyard-living will heal her family. But she can, however, help Piper find her own way to heal. And just as importantly, she can help mend herself.

Thank you to Chronicle Books and Netgalley for an ARC.

Carolyn Injoy says

Tiny Infinites by J.H. Diehl Tiny Infinites by J.H. Diehl is a promising book about Alice, her troubled mother and her meeting an unusual new friend, Harriet. It's a middle-grade novel with unique observations about family relationships, friendship and Alice's determination to prove herself in all ways.

It's written for ages eight to twelve. I gave it five stars because it kept my full attention, start to finish.

"What I love most about backstroke is, it proves a person doesn't need to be looking straight ahead to know exactly where she's going."

The police left after Piper's parents claimed her from Alice's house. Her father was disgruntled. "He shut our front door, looking irritated and tired, as if he'd just put up with watching ten awful TV ads in a row, and now we were back to a show he didn't like anyway."

Alice met Harriet and was discussing how her parents met and she got her name from the dog. "But talking about Alice was like walking back over to that corner in my head and finding the box jammed full of mad, sad, and panic."

Alice's father is leaving. She is frustrated and upset. "Again the words came out madder than I expected, as if my voice had picked a mood without consulting me."

I received a complimentary Advanced Reader's Copy from Chronicle Books and NetGalley. That did not change my opinion for this review.

Link to purchase: <https://www.amazon.com/Tiny-Infinities...>

Mindy says

I adored this book. For those of you reading this review close to when I write it in 2017, I'm sorry you have to wait for the release of this book but it is completely worth it. I have to say I was a bit leery going into this one just because I knew it would rely on the characters and I'm picky with character building but the author did an amazing job of building the main characters. I especially loved Harriet. This is not your typical coming of age book but it's a great one for early teens as it's a clean book that deals with hard stuff and real relationships, including how to cope. It does a pretty good job of normalizing things that many kids struggle with and that's never a bad thing. Basically what I'm saying is if you've read the blurb on the cover and it sounds even vaguely interesting, buy it! You won't regret the read.

I would like to thank the publisher, author, and Netgalley for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review.

Enovins says

I enjoyed reading this novel for Middle Schoolers. It would make a good read aloud touching on different types of families through memorable characters. I particularly like the resolution involving the family going through parental separation. The child finds a strategy for her- a unique one- then finds that although it doesn't work, her family can change its living arrangements without losing touch with each other.

Book Nut says

Tiny Infinities is a beautiful story, exquisitely written and full of unique characters that ring real and true.

Alice has just turned 13 and everything around her seems to be falling apart. Her parents' marriage is in shambles, her father and brothers have moved out, her mother is barely coping with the trauma resulting from a car accident, and a little girl who cannot speak has just moved in next door. Alice wants to make all of it right.

During the course of a summer, Alice learns a lot about what she can and cannot change. From the ashes of her former life, Alice builds a new one, rich with friendship, generosity of spirit and full of unexpected possibilities.

Tiny Infinities will make you laugh and cry and think deeply about the challenges of life and how we choose to face them. This is a not-to-be-missed book that will linger long after you turn the final page.

Marzie says

There is so much that I loved in this middle-grade book, especially about its central character, Alice. In a world where there is so much unkindness going on these days, Alice's kindness, especially to younger children, is an important thing for middle-graders to read. Those years can be so hard, and Alice, who has just turned thirteen, shows it is not just okay to be kind, but that it can help you weather the storm of your own troubles to be kind to others.

A classic parentified child, Alice is the oldest of three. Her mother had a terrible car accident, six major operations afterward, is slow to recover, suffers from depression and her marriage to Alice's father has failed to the point that she asks him to move out. Alice processes all this from the perception of a thirteen-year-old girl. She blames her mother, even as she tries so very hard to care for her mother. She blames her father for giving up and for not sticking up for his family after he and her mother decided to settle down and have three kids. She tries to channel her anger, anxiety and sorrow into being productive- by training twice a day with her swim team and babysitting for her neighbors who have a toddler, Timmy, and an older child, Piper, who is nonverbal. Piper and Timmy's older half-brother Owen is in high school and visiting his dad's family. While Alice enjoys a good rapport with Joanna, the younger neighbor children's mother (Owen's stepmother), their father distrusts Alice because of events at the open of the book. The ambient distrust and painful fragmentation of her family (her father did indeed move out, and her younger twin brothers are spending the summer with her aunt) are very hard on Alice. She's not taking it all quietly, however. As Alice forges her way through her summer, with her new best friend Harriet in tow, she parses the infinity between how her life ought to be and how it presently is.

This book is in the category of things that are wise and wonderful. I strongly recommend it for summer reading.

I received a Digital Review Copy of this book from Chronicle Books and NetGalley, and a paper review copy.
