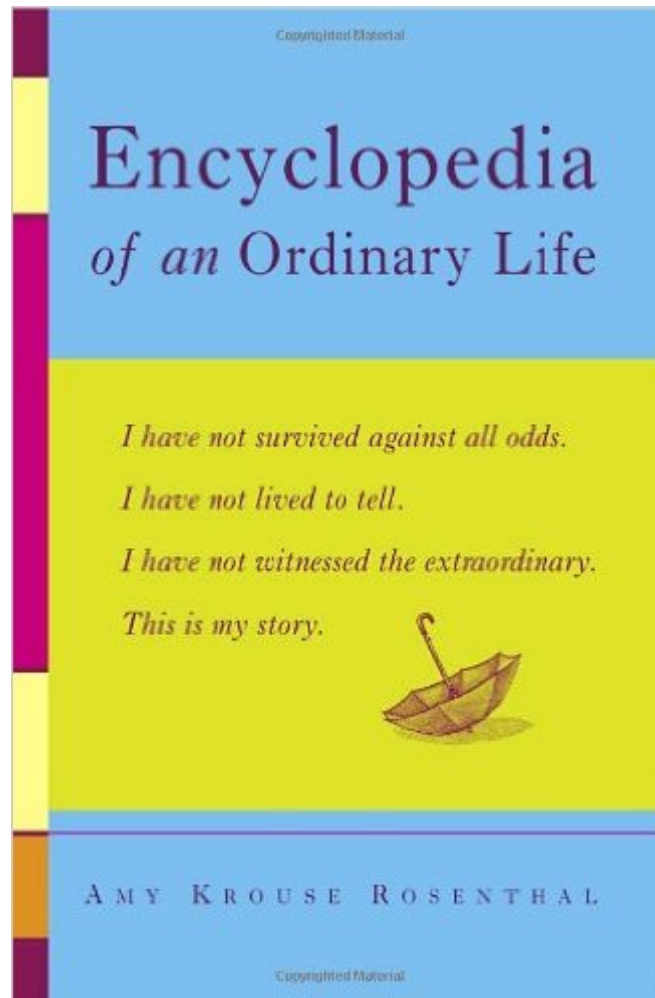


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Encyclopedia Of An Ordinary Life



Synopsis

If you're looking for quotes from newspapers and magazines, NPR, book reviews, endorsements from thousands of readers and bloggers, google Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life and just see for yourself how people everywhere are responding to this book. In Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life, Amy Krouse Rosenthal has ingeniously adapted the centuries-old format of the encyclopedia to convey the accumulated knowledge of her lifetime in a poignant, wise, often funny, fully realized memoir. Using mostly short entries organized from A to Z, many of which are cross-referenced, Rosenthal captures in wonderful and episodic detail the moments, observations, and emotions that comprise a contemporary life. Start anywhere— "preferably at the beginning"—and see how one young woman's alphabetized existence can open up and define the world in new and unexpected ways. An ordinary life, perhaps, but an extraordinary book. Cross-section of ordinary life at this exact moment: A security guard is loosening his belt. A couple is at a sushi restaurant with some old friends. They are reminiscing. In the back of their minds, they are thinking of being home. A woman is trying to suck on a cherry Lifesaver but will end up biting it in six seconds. A little boy is riding the train home with his dad after spending the day together at his office. A man is running back into a grocery store to look for a scarf he dropped. He will leave with the phone number of a woman who will become his wife. Words the author meant to use: Flair, Luxurious, Panoply, Churlish, Dainty, Folly. Wines that go nicely with this book: reds: Marcel Lapierre Morgon (France), Alario Dolcetto d'Alba Costa Fiore (Italy) whites: King Estate Pinot Gris (Oregon), Landmark Chardonnay Overlook (California). Book, standing in the bookstore holding it. I am standing there with the book in my hand, one of three things has already happened: Friend recommended it. Read a good review. Cover caught my eye. I can appreciate a cool cover. But it's like the extra credit part of a test—it only enhances an already solid grade. Getting it right won't help if most everything else is wrong. And getting it wrong won't hurt if most everything else is right. (There are countless books I cherish whose covers I don't like too much, or cannot even now recall.) The interior of the book—the terrain of its pages, where all those words took me, the tiny but very real spot it ultimately occupies in my mind—that becomes the book. Next I go to the flaps. The front flap needs to intrigue/not bore me, and the bio needs to tell me just enough about the author. I'll do my best to extract the author's entire existence from their 2-X-2 inch photo. Off to the back cover. I'll be momentarily impressed when I see a blurb by a hot writer like _____, but I know that it is just as likely that I'll like the book as hate it regardless of these quotes. I look at them in a more voyeuristic way, like a literary gaper's delay: Wow, the author knows So and So. Bet they send each other clever text messages. Really the only thing I can gauge from the

blurbs is my own pathetic jealousy level. To get a true sense of the book, I have to spend a minute inside. I'll glance at the first couple pages, then flip to the middle, see if the language matches me somehow. It's like dating, only with sentences. Some sentences, no matter how well-dressed or nice, just don't do it for me. Others I click with instantly. It could be something as simple yet weirdly potent as a single word choice (tangerine). We're meant to be, that sentence and me. And when it happens, you just know.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Looking at Amy Rosenthal's book, one of two things occurs to you: that it's an intriguingly simple idea and why didn't someone else, perhaps even you, think of it before; or that it is a tremendously boring idea and why should you be bothered? If you have got to the point where you are reading other people's opinions of the book, we can assume you are not in the second group. Set up like an encyclopedia, in alphabetical order, Rosenthal creates a memoir of her life. It's like reading a magazine or someone's website, with snippets of random thoughts, interesting facts, opinions, lists, diary entries, mementos, quotations, even a recipe. And sadly, you realize that if you tried to do something like this, it would not be this interesting. It isn't that Amy has had a particularly fascinating life. She is pretty up front about that, her disclaimer right on the book jacket says: "I have not survived against all odds. I have not lived to tell. I have not witnessed the extraordinary. This is my story." Why does *Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life* work? Why should I care that some woman in Chicago (Rosenthal) doesn't write down the order number when she buys something over the phone? I wouldn't, except that with Rosenthal, it's more like a confession, a conspiracy almost,

because she suspects you only pretend to write down the number too. There a lot of moments in Encyclopedia, sometimes trivial, sometimes not, when you think, yes, I know exactly what she means. I like the drawings in Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life. They are mostly done by Jeffrey Middleton, who recently illustrated a new edition of Webster's Dictionary. When Rosenthal read about him in a newspaper article, she knew he would be perfect for her book.

It would be so easy to hate Amy Krouse Rosenthal. Amy Krouse Rosenthal has written a raft of books about parenting. They have titles like "The Same Phrase Describes My Marriage and My Breasts...Before the kids, they used to be a cute couple." Amy Krouse Rosenthal has created sound files of her children. Like: kids slurping breakfast cereal. Amy Krouse Rosenthal once had a column called "15 Megabytes of Fame." Amy Krouse Rosenthal, asked what it's like to have three --- three! --- kids, responded thus: "It's just love to the third power." Amy Krouse Rosenthal's idea of five words that sound great: "They lived happily ever after." Amy Krouse Rosenthal asks herself questions like: "Are Christo's gifts amazingly wrapped?" Cute. Terminally cute, in that charming (but really, when you think about it: annoying), suburban, privileged, NPR way. You know, like she just happens to write down the cute things her children say and her mind serves up, and then --- surprise! --- a magazine calls and pries her notes from her reluctant fingers. I'm not buying it. I say Amy Krouse Rosenthal --- and, c'mon, what's with all the names? Is she an acolyte of Hillary Rodham Clinton? --- is a professional writer and a damn clever one at that. I say cute is a brilliant disguise for ambition and craft. I say 'Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life' is anything but a random tour through the days and thoughts of an ordinary woman --- there's not one ordinary thing about Amy Krouse Rosenthal. What's really going on here? Back in the day, Ms.

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