

Let's Pretend This Never Happened

Jenny Lawson
Discussion Questions



INTRODUCTION

When Jenny Lawson was little, all she ever wanted was to fit in. That dream was cut short by her fantastically unbalanced father and a morbidly eccentric childhood. It did, however, open up an opportunity for Lawson to find the humor in the strange shame-spiral that is her life, and we are all the better for it.

In the irreverent *Let's Pretend This Never Happened*, Lawson's long-suffering husband and sweet daughter help her uncover the surprising discovery that the most terribly human moments—the ones we want to pretend never happened—are the very same moments that make us the people we are today. For every intellectual misfit who thought they were the only ones to think the things that

Lawson dares to say out loud, this is a poignant and hysterical look at the dark, disturbing, yet wonderful moments of our lives.

ABOUT JENNY LAWSON

Jenny Lawson is a columnist and one of the most popular bloggers on Twitter (hundreds of thousands of followers). Her blog, averages between 2–3 million page views per month. Jenny lives in the Texas Hill Country with her husband and daughter.

Jennifer Lawson is an American journalist and blogger from Wall, Texas. She is the author of *The Bloggess* and *Ill Advised* blogs, co-author of *Good Mom/Bad Mom* on the *Houston Chronicle* and a columnist for *SexIs* magazine. She is best known for her irreverent writing style. She also used to write an advice column named "Ask The Bloggess" for The Personal News Network (PNN.com) until she quit because they stopped paying her. She suffers from rheumatoid arthritis, OCD, depression and an anxiety disorder.



She was recognized by the Nielsen ratings as one of the Top 50 Most Powerful Mom Bloggers and Forbes listed *thebloggess.com* as one of their Top 100 Websites for Women. She was a finalist in the 2010 Weblog awards for Best Writing and Most Humorous Writer, and a finalist in the 2011 Weblog awards for Best Writing, Most Humorous Writer and Weblog of the Year. In 2011 The Huffington Post named her the "Greatest Person of the Day" for her work in raising money for struggling families in December 2010.

She has written an autobiography called *Let's Pretend This Never Happened*, released on April 17, 2012 by Amy Einhorn Books which was, on May 6th, 2012, the number 1 New York Times bestseller.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What specific aspects of Lawson's childhood particularly intrigued or repelled you? Is it possible to have both reactions at the same time?
2. What are some ways in which the book explores themes of individuality?
3. Were you surprised by the ending of Stanley the Magical Squirrel? Is it possible to find laughter in such horrific stories?

4. Lawson describes her hometown as “violently rural” and struggles to find a point to its existence. In your opinion, did growing up in this town help or hinder her?
5. Some reviewers have said this book is about individuality, and others feel it’s a book about family. What do you believe is the overall theme of the book?
6. Lawson and her husband have extremely different personalities, beliefs, and political backgrounds, yet they’ve managed to stay happily married. What is behind the success of their relationship? In what ways can being opposites help people in a relationship?
7. Lawson wrote about her OCD, phobias, and other mental struggles. Did this make her more or less relatable to you? Have you or has someone you know had a phobia or mental illness so severe that it affected your life?
8. Lawson made the decision to infuse humor into even her most traumatic stories of dealing with infertility, loss, and arthritis. What do you think of this choice? Have you ever used humor for healing?
9. Lawson had family members read and vet the book before it was published, giving them the opportunity to give their opinions on the writing. Is this a good idea for a memoirist? Is it ultimately stifling or respectful? Are there times when someone’s life story is not his or hers to tell?
10. What did you think about the author’s voice, her use of run-on sentences, stream-of-consciousness narrative, profanity, and invented words to create a unique narrative?
11. In the chapter about infertility, Lawson discusses her struggles with suicidal tendencies. What purpose does this section have in the narrative?
12. This book deals with mental illness, poverty, suicide, miscarriage, disease, and other traumatic subjects, yet most people consider it a humor book. Do you agree with this classification?
13. What was your favorite story? Why?
14. Of all the people described in the book, whom did you most relate to or empathize with, and why?
15. What do you think Lawson was looking for in her life? Do you think she has found it?

REFERENCES

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