

## Reviews

*"Thoughts and Prayers* is a *tour de force*, a gripping story about a subject society must face, no matter how painful. The story humanizes the tragedy of a school shooting, grabbing you by the elbow and collar and heart. The characters are complex and unforgettable, people you surely know well. Authentically told, this is a story that will make you think, pray, and feel. And also hope." --**Saralyn Richard**, award-winning author of *A Murder of Principal*.

**Sarah M.** (Reviewer)

**Rating:** 5 out of 5 stars

"It was a beautiful October day. The worst things always happened on the most beautiful days."

At my high school, it was an April day instead of October-but it was still a beautiful day. We were lucky. The gunman was stopped by the school liaison officer immediately upon entering the building. I've lived every day since then knowing that it could have been us.

I thought that this book was written by a teen. Not that it sounded like an inexperienced author, but because the writing seems to be closely related to how a teenager would think. Every voice seemed genuine, and the characters were made very relatable. I really loved how almost every point of view surrounding this incident was heard. It showed the larger reach of tragic events such as this one, and how so so many are affected. It made me sad, angry and, in the end, thoughtful. (HOW on earth has #thoughtsandprayers become a hashtag? As a society, how have we let things go this far?) Very well written and moving. One of the best books I've read on this topic, and I've read A LOT.

**Katie L.** (Reviewer)

**Rating:** 5 out of 5 stars

"Don't send us your thoughts and prayers. Don't tell us 'it is what it is' and nothing will change. This can't be how it is. Enough is enough. Don't tell us your right to own a gun is more important than our right to be alive. We won't let you. Not anymore."

I hung onto every word. I cried, I empathized with these characters. Each character so different and grieving in their own ways. This book was powerful, emotional, and heavy. It's also something I hope everyone will read. I will be first in line to purchase this book for my personal library when it is released in October. Bravo to the author for giving such a gut wrenching look into a subject that's so hard to think about.

**Shawna B.** (Educator)

**Rating:** 4 out of 5 stars

Gripping, frightening, maddening, heart wrenching. This book is all that and more. Told from multiple perspectives, it's the story of what happens when a teenage girl unwittingly allows her boyfriend access to her school resulting in the shooting deaths of 15 people. It gives us a glimpse into the psyche of all those affected: students, teachers, families, first responders. A little cliched at times but still worth a read.

**Amy F.** (Reviewer)

**Rating:** 4 out of 5 stars

The words THOUGHTS & PRAYERS, uttered so often after tragedy, particularly school shootings have become meaningless. To many those words are lip service and signify, Don't Expect Change. When a school shooter kills fifteen Lee Anne Post explores the lives of adults and students impacted by the

shooting, people who lost friends, children and a spouse and the police officer father of a girl who wasn't shot.

Told from multiple points of view, THOUGHTS & PRAYERS explores grief compounded by trauma and one girl's guilt, she let the shooter through a locked door, believing that he wouldn't actually shoot anyone. Post does an excellent job showing people's different reactions, their anger, inspiration toward activism and one act of retribution.

I read THOUGHTS & PRAYERS from start to finish in one sitting, captivated by the characters and their individual and collectible responses to tragedy and particularly enjoyed that both adults and teenagers points of view. I wish that THOUGHTS & PRAYERS wasn't as topical story or was something in the distant history of America. I wish that so many teenagers wouldn't have to relate to THOUGHTS & PRAYERS.

**Terina A.** (Librarian)

**Rating:** 5 out of 5 stars

This is one I had to put down because it was hitting me hard. Yes, it's about a school shooting, but it's really about the aftermath of a school shooting and how it affected everyone involved. Told from many characters' points of view, we see how students, parents, spouses, and faculty are affected by such a traumatic event.

\*\*\*The following is NOT a spoiler.\*\*\*

Super student, but always in the background Lily didn't lose anyone in the shooting but is tied into the event in a way no one knows nor would understand. She was the one who opened the locked school door to let the shooter in to kill her classmates and teachers. She was the unknown accomplice. Everyone is speculating who it might have been, while dealing with the immense loss in their own way. Lily didn't know what he had planned, or did she? Was this really what she wanted all along? As she sees the consequences of her actions in lives of her classmates, teachers, and community, the guilt eats at her, but coming clean would mean her life will be over.

This is a rollercoaster of emotions from beginning to end. Great read.

**Jiyoung S,** (Reviewer)

**Rating:** 4 stars out of 5 stars

We all know that the victims and survivors of mass shooting go through a lot... But I personally never fully understood the magnitude of what that is like until I came across Thoughts & Prayers.

At first, I thought Lily was the main character of the book; however, this book is organized in a way that each character has their chance to share their life from their perspective from the day of the shooting.

I definitely sympathized with Lily, especially in the beginning of the book, when things got out of control and many people were killed and hurt. I can't imagine being Lily and having to navigate that chaos and guilt trying to hide it from everyone else.

However, as the story continued, I wholeheartedly empathized with the rest of the victims and survivors of the shooting and could not hold my tears in. In many tragic events, it's easy to focus on the victims, not the survivors including victims' families and friends. But can you imagine having your loved ones taken away from you out of nowhere?

Reading about how the survivors from the shooting were coping with the tragedy, it gave me a lot to think about: Some people want changes to prevent another mass shooting, some people want to forget everything and slowly move on, and some people cannot simply move on... because they feel guilty for surviving.

I know simple Thoughts & Prayers are not enough for the survivors and victims of mass shooting. We need systemic changes to keep our children safe from guns and gun violence. I hope that day comes sooner than later.

**Danielle S**, Educator

5 stars

Thoughts and Prayers is a heart-wrenching story of a school shooting. I've read other books on the subject, but I liked the way this one was done from various perspectives. Many aspects are explored such as survivor's guilt and the push for stronger gun control. We see through the eyes of a grieving parent, friend, and wife. What makes this story unique is the unknown accomplice involved in the event. Reading this brought back memories of hearing these awful stories play out in the news and the lasting effects on the families, school, and community. I am curious how those who have lived through a tragedy such as this one would react to this book and if it reflected their own experiences. While devastating, books like this are important to bring awareness about an epidemic that has swept the nation and a call to action to prevent these senseless acts from occurring again.

**Rebekah B**, Reviewer

5 stars

This book.... will make you cry, think deeply about a horror that has swept too many of this nation's schools, and leave you with a fight burning in your spirit. Each author in this book did a fantastic job of putting together a heart-wrenching read and maybe it's just me but I found myself entranced with Lily. How her choices affected so many people and how she was unwittingly sucked into something so horrible as an accomplice.

**Erin M**, Educator

5 stars

This was a powerful, emotional and gut-wrenching book. I appreciated the multiple perspectives and insights to different characters. I did not expect a few of the surprising twists but they kept the pace moving along well. This was a tough topic and a hard read at times but I highly recommend it.

**Kris Z**, Reviewer

5 stars

Wow.

For some reason I have read a number of books about school shootings, and they're all sad, but this one was so beautifully written that it was sometimes difficult to read. Not just one but several of the characters have passages that I really found to be a lot to handle emotionally. Specifically, the relationship between Cat & Sofia is just wonderful, and I wish that every young girl had a friend like that. Since I do have a friend like that, who I can't imagine losing, their story line was really tough for me to read sometimes. The emotional response I had to her experience really illustrated for me the extreme trauma kids are experiencing when things like this happen or even when they worry about things like this happening.

I am a Columbine generation kid. We were shocked by Columbine, and though the immediate aftermath was a little scary for a high school freshman, it was an isolated incident on the other side of the country. I never went to school worried that it was going to happen to me. I was never scared that my best friend would be shot in front of me. I never lost a beloved teacher to gun violence or had the police interview me about classmates. The more I read about events like this the more frightening it is that kids today do. They worry about this. They worry about it because it's no longer an isolated incident, it happens literally every year. That's so much scarier than I think most people realize.

I've read a few books about this kind of event recently, and I really like the way they illustrate the ripple effect of one person's actions and the drastic impact these things have on people's lives. I think it would serve the country well if more people read books like this so they would really understand the magnitude of this problem. Kids shouldn't have to live like this, and after an event everyone agrees.....but two weeks later we're back to normal life. I LOVE that this title calls out the absolute slap in the face that an offer of 'thoughts are prayers' is to kids who need action.

**Katie L**, Reviewer

5 stars

"Don't send us your thoughts and prayers. Don't tell us 'it is what it is' and nothing will change. This can't be how it is. Enough is enough. Don't tell us your right to own a gun is more important than our right to be alive. We won't let you. Not anymore."

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**Shawna B**, Educator

4 stars

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