

# "Books that Made Me Cry"

Disclaimer: I cry. A lot. Not in an alarming way, but cursed with a life of being an empath, I often shed a tear or two at a moving film or piece of writing. If I had to guess, I'd say only one in every ten books I've read *hasn't* made me cry, so below is a small sample of all of the others that have.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Monday's Not Coming*—If, like me, you read in bed at night before you go to sleep, you are familiar with the "point of no return." Essentially, if you are within fifty or so pages of the end of a book, you have to stay up to finish it. I don't make the rules, I just follow them. I finished this book in a quiet house, on a quiet night, the skin on my face taut with the salt of dried tears. My partner slept peacefully beside me while I felt my world had been flipped upside down. I had to stay up and watch something light and fluffy just to be able to fall asleep. The following day, I went into school with a vendetta against my school's media specialist who had recommended it, but, in the end, the best books are the ones that haunt you like this one did. (book by Tiffany Jackson)

*Where the Red Fern Grows*—I sobbed when I finished this book in 7th grade. I remember because I was reading it at home, and I must have known I was going to cry because I took it out to our sunroom to be by myself. Unfortunately for me, my family was getting ready to go somewhere. I hadn't quite finished when my younger sister (who at the time was no older than six) came out to get me only to find me bawling curled in our parents' papasan. She approached me slowly, hesitantly, like children do and asked in her quietest voice if I was okay. And in my most reassuring big sister voice, I told her yes, I would be fine, just give me five minutes. (book by Wilson Rawls)

*Felix Ever After*—"Books about queer, trans demiboy of color that make you cry tears of joy are the kinds of books we need more of in this world." I wrote that review after reading this book nearly two years ago, and it is a statement that feels as true now as it did then. Maybe even more so. Trans people are not a monolith. Neither are their stories. They deserve diverse representation within publishing and so, so much more.

*The Hunger Games*—Occasionally a book will make me cry in the very earliest chapters, usually because it resonates with a place inside of me that is already sensitive. This book did just that. My sisters and I are incredibly close. I am in the middle, one older sister and one younger. Naturally, when Katniss took Primrose's place, I lost it. (book by Suzanne Collins)

*Leaving Atlanta*—Maybe there are ways to read a book based on the serial murders of Black children in Atlanta during the 1980s and not cry, but I clearly do not know them. (book by Tayari Jones)

*In The Wild Light*—I have yet to read a book by Jeff Zentner that didn't make me cry. This one was no different, and in fact, it made me cry \*multiple\* times. Luckily, by now my partner is accustomed to me bursting into tears mid-page, or else the sheer amount of crying I did while reading this book probably would have alarmed him. Maybe it still did. A quote from the book itself sums it up quite well, actually. "I guess you don't get good at mourning. There are no grieving muscles you can train. You start over each time." I am no stranger to crying, but no matter how many times I read about heartbreak, it doesn't hurt any less. Even with the multitude of tears I shed, this book still managed to make me feel hopeful and buoyant, and honestly, right now, that is a miracle.

*If You Come Softly*—There are times when you are reading that you can feel what is going to happen. I saw what was coming with this book, and I came close to putting it down altogether just to avoid the hurt I knew I would feel. But I couldn't, because it is a hurt that so many people are forced to endure, and part of the beauty of reading is that for a moment I can better understand the depth of their pain. (book by Jacqueline Woodson)

*The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise*—One of the worst things about always crying when you read is that you occasionally end up crying in public. It's unavoidable. You learn how to sob quietly, a skill I perfected in movie theaters. But even for those of us most practiced at it, the quiet cry is not always achievable. I knew this, and I also knew I was reading a book about a dad and daughter outrunning the grief of losing the rest of their family, not to mention I've never escaped a Dan Gemeinhart book without shedding tears. Cue me, a teacher, crying at my desk in a room full of middle schoolers trying valiantly to ignore me.

*The Darkness Outside Us*—This book was a rollercoaster of emotion and I was not at all prepared. You see two boys on a spaceship gazing longingly at one another on the cover and you think, ooh, cute space romance. WRONG. Oh so wrong. There is mystery and intrigue and philosophical questions about human existence, and yes, some romance. A story about two young men from the two remaining superpowers on earth piloting a ship to a faraway planet that may be able to sustain human life seems both hard to imagine and, at the same time, not farfetched at all. Either way, it had me shedding tears on one page and laughing on the next. (book by Eliot Schrefer)

*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*—Perks is one of the few books I have read and reread. It's not a long read, but it's also not an easy read. When I was in middle school, my friends and I had a single copy that we each took a turn reading and then signed when we were done. We were weird, I know, but I think we did it because some part of that book spoke to each and every one of us. Reading and sharing it gave us a way to acknowledge that we all suffered from something without ever having to verbalize that suffering to one another. I would give anything to know where that copy is now. When I reread it after college, I was in a profoundly different place. In middle school I cried for myself and for my friends who were struggling. When I read it after college, I cried for all the kids I hoped I would be able to reach when I became a teacher. (book by Stephen Chbosky)