

Bounce Study Guide

Bounce by Natasha Friend

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Plot Summary

Bounce is the third novel by author Natasha Friend. The story follows the main character, Evyn Linney, as she transitions from a 13-year-old girl living with her father and brother in Portland, Maine to being one of eight children with her new stepmother, Eleni Gartos, in Boston. When Evyn was just one, her mother was killed in a car accident. She has never known what it is like to have a mother in her life. Because of this, Ev makes up a mother in her head, Stella. Ev talks to Stella and Stella even talks back to Ev.

Ev is having a hard time fitting in at home and at school. She misses her best friend in Boston and her old life. The only way that Ev seems to fit in is when the "It Girl" at school realize they can get them information about one of her stepbrothers, Ajax, who is a soccer star and one of the cutest girls in school. This backfires when the girls find out that Ev lied to them about whom Ajax likes.

When Ev finally stops resisting all of the change in her life, she starts to see things in a new light. It is at this time that Ev embraces her family and even the baby that is on the way the first of the children that will be a part of Eleni and Al. in the end, Ev learns that change doesn't have to always be bad. Sometimes, change brings good things into life.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Evyn Linney is at the best restaurant in town with her brother, Mackey, and her father, Birdie. Birdie announces that he and his girlfriend of two months, Eleni Gartos, are getting married and that the Linneys are moving to Boston. Ev is trying to figure out why anyone would want to marry her carpenter father, who wears dirty overalls all the time, has dirty fingernails and doesn't have much money. She also thinks about how she and her brother first learned about Eleni from the letters their father wrote them while they were away at summer camp. Eventually, Birdie brought Eleni to Visiting Day at camp. Birdie also reveals that Eleni is the mother of six children.

The announcement is on Ev's 13th birthday. She reveals that her real mother died in a car crash when Ev was one. Ev thinks that the only mother she can truly make up stories in her about is the woman she knows as Sarah Elizabeth Linney, the mother she knows only from pictures and her father's stories. Ev admits that she talks to her mother. She says that sometimes her mother talks back but sometimes she doesn't. In her dream conversations, Ev refers to her mother as Stella.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

It seems as if Ev is craving a female role model in her life. Since her mother died when she was a baby and she has always lived with her father and brother, she doesn't have much experience with a mother-daughter relationship. Ev dreams up stories and makes up her own memories with her real mother in her head.

Wishing for a mother could wind up in one of two ways for Ev. Since Eleni is about to become Ev's stepmother, it could be that the two hit it off and Ev finally gets the mother she has always dreamed of having. On the other hand, it could wind up that Ev and Eleni don't get along at all. This could create a very uncomfortable situation because Ev, her brother and father will be living with Eleni and her family in Boston by the time Birdie and Eleni are married.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

On Labor Day, Ev is saying goodbye to her best friend Jules Anthony. The girls have been best friends since they were in diapers and their backyards in Portland, Maine connect to each other. Jules begs Ev to move in with them so she can stay, but Ev says she can't. The girls trade the shirts they're wearing on Jules's front porch. Birdie, Ev and Mackey start the drive from Portland to Boston with the moving truck following them.

When they arrive at Eleni's house, Ev tries to convince herself and her brother that this is a great new life and a new adventure. Eleni and Birdie are all over each other, which is making Ev sick. Eleni greets the children but she doesn't try to hug them, which Ev thinks is a smart move on Eleni's part.

Ev is sharing a room with the Gartos twins. They are 15 and Ev thinks she will never be able to tell them apart. When Birdie comes to their room, Ev hugs her father. Then, each of the twins, calling him "Al" hugs Ev's father too. Later, Ev notices that everything in the house is extra large and her father explains that with a family this size, they have to buy econo-size items from BJ's. Ev asks her father how long she has to give her new life a chance. He tells her that she might just end up loving their new life if she gives it a chance.

At dinner, Linus, Eleni's 19-year-old son is visiting from his college campus. Ev thinks Linus is gorgeous and is disappointed that he doesn't live at the house with all of them.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Ev is dealing with the anxiety and frustration that comes with change. Ev has always lived in the same place and with the same situation. Now, she is forced to deal with a new city, a new house and an entirely new family. She is going through an adjustment period. While she is trying to have a positive attitude about it, some negativity is creeping into her mindset.

It seems as if some of the feelings Ev is experiencing is jealousy. She is used to having her father's attention and really only sharing it with her brother. Now Eleni's girls are part of her father's life too and she is having a hard time adjusting to this so far.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Ev is in the attic with Thalia, Eleni's 18-year-old daughter. Thalia is fitting Ev for her bridesmaids' dress for the wedding. It is bright orange, toga-style and topped off with a ring of flowers on Ev's head. This is when Thalia reveals to Ev that she and Phoebe, Eleni's six-year-old daughter, are flower girls. Ev protests because she is 13 and too old to be a flower girl. Ev tries to complain to Mackey about this later, but he doesn't seem to understand. Then, Ev lies in the peach bathtub fully clothed and talks to Stella, the name she made up for her mother.

It's the first day of school. Ev is dressed in her uniform for school, which she is not happy about wearing. She starts to feel less sorry for herself when she sees how nervous her bother is. Since he is very tall, lanky, nerdy and has zits all over his face, she realizes that his first day will probably be much worse than her first day. Ev feels completely out of place and invisible from the moment she gets on the bus until her school day ends.

When Ev arrives home, Eleni is in the kitchen baking baklava. She offers some to Ev, asks about her first day and tells Ev that her friends are always welcome. Eleni says this is Ev's home now. Ev goes to her room, where she finds her father building lofts. She tells him that Eleni is trying too hard and that he is supposed to be waiting for Ev when she gets home, not Eleni. Birdie tells her that Jules called and she can call her back. Ev asks if they are rich now and Birdie says they are comfortable.

Jules goes on and on about how great the first day of school was. Jules mentions that her uncle is a college professor, like Eleni, and that he doesn't make a lot of money. When Jules asks how Ev's first day was, Ev lies and says it and Boston are great.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Being 13 is a tough age because it is a transition between adolescence and teenage years. Ev is already feeling lost in life. When she becomes one of seven kids living in a house, she feels even more lost than ever before. Additionally, when she goes to school, she feels as if she is invisible. Birdie mentioning they are comfortable now foreshadows that Eleni has money coming from her ex-husband, or from something that happened to her ex, such as his death.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

The family is at Ajax's soccer game. Ajax is another of Eleni's sons. The twins, Clio and Cassi, start asking Ev about the girls that are at the game, but Ev doesn't respond because she doesn't know anyone. She has been spending the last five days at lunch inside a bathroom stall because she has yet to make friends with anyone.

Ev stares at Linus, who is on the sidelines yelling instructions at his brother on the field. Ev is sure that what she is feeling for Linus is illegal since he is going to be her stepbrother. While Ev is staring at Linus, a soccer ball hits her in the nose, causing it to bleed. Ev thinks it's worth it in the end because Linus gives her a piggyback ride to the car and touches her on the shoulder at the car.

When Ev talks to Stella that night, she sees concern in Stella's face. Ev tells her she only has to wear the splint for a week. She also tells Stella it's worth it because Linus talked to her and touched her. Stella looks at Ev as if she understands.

On Monday, Ev is walking to the bus stop with her new socks, shoes and splint on her nose. She got the new socks and shoes after mentioning to her father that she needed a small makeover. Eleni pulled out her credit card and sent the twins and Ev on a shopping excursion. When Ev sits down in her first class, everyone is looking at her, but in a good way. The two girls next to her start asking her about being Ajax Gartos's sister. They invite Ev to sit with them at lunch.

At lunch, Ev can tell that these are the popular girls. They ask her questions about Ajax and Ev tells them everything she knows. At the end, Ev realizes that none of the girls ever even asked what her name is.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Since Ev is talking to Stella in her head, it is as if Ev is playing two sides of the situation. For example, when Ev is being negative about a situation, Stella always seems to be positive and reassuring to Ev. In the past, Ev has always been able to make friends because of who she is. Now, she is finding that she is making friends because of who she knows. Her stepbrother is one of the most popular boys in school and all of the girls have a crush on him.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Al holds a family meeting. He hands out t-shirts that represent the Gartos-Linney Utopian Experiment. Ev goes into the backyard to visit Clam, their dog, who has been banned there because Thalia is allergic. When Ev tries to talk with Mackey about everything, she finds him playing video games with Ajax.

Ajax follows Ev out to see if she is okay. He explains that the wedding is hrad on all of them. Ajax tells Ev that their dad left five years ago and is now remarried with a 19-year-old wife. Ajax says their dad sends money but it's not the same. Ev decides to use the opportunity to find out if Ajax likes anyone at school and if he's going to the social. Ajax gives her a hard time and doesn't really give her any information.

In Latin class, where Ev is the only student, her teacher asks her what she has planned for the weekend. She tells him that her father is getting married. At lunch, the girls find out she is taking Latin and Andrea says that "Evelyn" will probably get into Harvard because Latin is the basis for the SATs. They ask if she's found out who Ajax likes yet and Ev says she'll know by Monday.

Ev talks to Stella that night. Stella is sad because of the upcoming wedding. Ev convinces Stella to attend the wedding anyway.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Ajax and Ev have more in common than she first thought. In fact, Ev and Mackey have more in common with all of the Gartos children than Ev thought. Each of them has lost a parent, although in different ways. Ajax knows that Ev is trying to get information out of him for the girls at school, which is why he is teasing her. There is foreshadowing that the Linney children and the Gartos children will end up uniting as one big happy family.

Ev is prolonging her "friendship" with the "It Girls." While a part of Ev knows they are using her for information about Ajax, another part is glad to have friends to talk to and sit with at lunch. This foreshadows a major setback when Ev is unable to feed the girls the information they want about Ajax. Not only will this put Ev back in her place without any friends, but it could also cause the girls to turn against her and make Ev's life a living hell.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Ev is in the limo riding to the church with Eleni, Thalia, the twins and Phoebe. The girls help Eleni finish getting ready in the bride's room at the church. Al comes to the room to get Evyn. He gives her a necklace that belonged to her mom. Al puts it on Ev. At the end of the ceremony, Ev finds out that Eleni took their last name. At the reception, Ev finds her brother out on the patio eating shrimp off a tray. She starts to complain to Mackey, but as usual, he doesn't have much to say. As Ev is leaving the reception, Linus asks her to dance. He tells her to take off her shoes so she can dance on his feet. Ev asks Stella in her head if she is watching all of this.

Eleni and Al leave for their honeymoon. When Ev gets to her room, the girls want to know right away who Ajax likes. Ev puts them off until lunch so she can think of what she's going to say. At lunch, she tells the girls he likes Andrea. Ev calls Jules when she gets home. Jules tells Ev she got her braces off and that she thinks Jordan is going to ask her out. Ev is surprised because they don't like Jordan for things he has done in the past. Jules tells Ev that people change.

At dinner, over pizza, Ev finds out from Thalia's announcement that Mackey landed the leading role in the play he tried out for. When the parents call to check-in from their honeymoon, they are thrilled.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Ev is mistaking Linus's attention for something romantic. Linus simply sees Ev as a little sister. Ev, however, sees Linus as her dream guy. When Ev finds out how Linus truly feels about her, she is going to be crushed.

Everyone in Ev's life seems to be changing. Ev is learning that life goes on without her and that people do change. While she wants to remain the same, Ev is being forced to face these changes. She is either going to have to learn to go with the flow or she is going to be very unhappy when she is left behind.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

The twins give Ev a makeover for the social that night. The social turns out to be just as Ev's biology partner describes it with all of the boys on one side of the room and all of the girls on the other. Ajax ends up dancing with and kissing Maya, one of the girls from the soccer team instead of Andrea. Ev overhears the girls saying they can't believe Ev lied.

Ev uses the cell phone Thalia gave them for emergencies to call Jules. Jules's mom answers, but says Jules is at a party of Jordan's house. Ev talks to Stella, who tells her to just let everything the girls say about her to bounce off of her. The next morning when Ev walks into the kitchen with hair sticking up and in her cowboy PJs, Linus is there cooking breakfast.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Ev is trying to learn that it doesn't matter what other people think of her. It is more important what she thinks about herself. This is a struggle because at 13, friends and peers and what they think of you is a very important factor in life. Linus continues to treat Ev like she's his little sister, but Ev is taking his gestures to mean something else.

Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

Al and Eleni come back from their honeymoon. They catch the kids up on their trip and the kids fill them in on everything that's been going on in their lives. As Eleni starts to catch up with Ev, Eleni starts to gag and runs from the room to vomit. Ev also admits to the reader that she knows when she is talking to Stella that she is really talking to herself and vice versa.

At school, all of the It Girls are giving Ev a hard time. They're saying she is a boy because her hair is short, she has a boy's name and because she doesn't have any boobs. When Ev gets o Latin class, she finds a boy sitting in her desk. She thinks it's the girls playing a joke on her because it is an all girls' school. It turns out that the guy, Travis Piesch, was the only Latin student at the boys' school. When the Latin teacher quit, they decided to create the first coed class in school history.

When Ev gets home, she finds Al in the kitchen cooking. He says it's because Eleni is still under the weather. Ev gets mad because not only has her father changed his appearance, but his actions are all new too.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Eleni vomiting foreshadows that Eleni is pregnant. Ev talking to Stella, even though Ev realizes she is talking to herself, is Ev's coping mechanism. Ev is resisting the change instead of embracing it. Even Mackey, who never has friends or is really successful at anything has managed to land himself the lead role in a play. All of this is baffling Ev.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Evyn gets home from school and grabs some grapes as she runs up to the bathroom. When she opens the door, she walks in on her father and stepmom having sex in the shower. Ev chokes on a grape and Eleni gives her the Heimlich naked. Ev calls Jules's house, but her mom tells Ev Jules is at the girl's house that Jules and Ev used to not like. Jules's mom gives Ev Jules's cell phone number.

Jules is laughing so hard as Ev tells her the story. Jules ends up telling the girls she's with and they all start laughing. Ev gets upset and when she mentions them being best friends, Jules says that's juvenile. Ev hangs up without saying goodbye. When Al tries to talk to Ev about what happened, Ev says she doesn't want to talk about.

Ev tells Stella that she isn't going to talk to her anymore. She takes off Stella's necklace and goes to sleep. A mother-daughter tea party invitation comes in the mail for Eleni and Ev, but Ev throws it away before anyone can see it. Her father hosts a family meeting, where he and Eleni announce that Eleni is pregnant. Ev takes a bunch of twenty dollar bills from Eleni's purse and leaves the house.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Ev and Jules are living different lives now. Instead of growing up together, they are growing apart. Part of this is because they live in two totally different worlds. The two cities and the people in the cities are different from each other. Now that Ev isn't there to share in the changes back in Portland, Jules is moving on without Ev. Ev is taking her anger out on Stella, which is really symbolic of Ev being mad at herself. The new baby Eleni and Al are having is symbolic of the two families coming together as one.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

Ev gets on the T, which is the train in Boston. She rides it until she gets off at one of the stations where she can catch the bus. She calls Jules to tell her that she's coming to visit her, but Jules says she already has plans. Jules tells Ev to see if she can stay with one of their other friends. Ev hangs up and takes the money she stole from Eleni's purse to buy ice cream until she is out of money. She wanders around the station until Linus finds her. He says they split up to check out the different stations after Jules called the house and told them where Ev was.

Linus calls home to let them know he has Ev and that she's going to stay the night with him in his dorm. When they walk into Linus's dorm room, Ev finds a beautiful girl there. She realizes it's Linus's girlfriend. The next morning, Linus tells Ev she can call him anytime, just like his other sisters do. When Linus asks if Ev hopes the baby is a girl, Ev says she has enough sisters already.

Birdie is thrilled to see Ev when she comes home. Ev points out to Birdie all of the ways he has changed—shaving off his beard, wearing name brand clothes and cooking real meals. Birdie says he's still the same person, that he wears those clothes because Eleni buys them for him. Ev goes up to her room and tries to talk to Stella, but Stella won't talk back. Ev sees an invitation for Clam's funeral, who Ev found dead outside right before she ran away to the train station.

Ev confronts her father about them having a funeral for a dog they didn't even know. Birdie points out that the family isn't hosting the funeral for the dog. Later that day, the family hosts the funeral, which is completely planned by the six-year-old, Phoebe. It ends with Eleni reciting a poem she recited at her own mother's funeral. It ends with Ev in tears, which everyone assumes is over Clam.

At two in the morning, Ev wakes her father. They go into the bathroom to talk. She asks him if he misses her mom. He says he does. He also says that he'll always love Ev's mom, Ev and Mackey. He also explains that he loves Eleni and her kids too. He says he knows everything has been hard on Ev, but he thanks her for continuing to try.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

While Ev is experiencing the loss of her best friend, at the same time, she is experiencing the birth of a new family. Even though she has been resisting it, she is starting to realize that Clio, Cassi and Phoebe are her sisters. Now that she knows Linus's attention is not romantic, she is starting to see him as a brother as well.

Birdie is not purposely changing. He is simply in love with Eleni and is happy for once in a long time. He is enjoying life. While Ev thinks he is changing, Birdie only sees it as an



exterior change, but still feels as if he is the same person, with the same feelings, on the inside.

Birdie is suggesting that the family is holding the funeral for Ev. They want to help her get through Clam's death and show their support to her. When Ev bursts into tears at the funeral, she is crying over the loss of her mother, not Clam. Ev is crying over the loss of a relationship that she never had the opportunity to have with her mother. In some ways, Ev is realizing that she can have a mother-daughter relationship, but that it will be with Eleni, not Stella.



Chapters 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

At school, the teacher moves the desks around. Ev finds herself sitting next to a girl that introduces herself as Kate. Kate is friends with Clara Bing. Kate invites Ev to have lunch with them. At lunch, the girls talk about books and movies. When Ev gets home, Eleni is waiting for her in the kitchen. Eleni asks about her day and tries to give Ev a snack. This time, Ev makes an effort to answer Eleni's questions. Eleni also mentions the tea party at school and how she's been looking forward to attending with Ev. Eleni knows about it because she is on the baking committee for the event. Eleni asks Ev what she should bake for it and Ev says something chocolate because everyone likes chocolate.

At school, Ev continues to sit with the Four-Foot-Two-Crew, which is what Clara, Kate and the other girls call themselves. Jules calls Ev to tell her that Jessie hooked up with Jordan. Ev tells Jules about her new friends and Jules admits she might be a little jealous. Ev also tells Jules Eleni is pregnant and she thinks she might have been pregnant at the wedding. Ev starts to question her father's reason for marrying Eleni.

Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

Ev is starting to transition into her new life. She is making friends at school—people who really like her and want to hang around with her for the person that she is. Additionally, Ev is trying to form a bond and a relationship with Eleni. Eleni has been trying to bond with Ev the entire time, but Ev has been resisting. Now that Ev is letting her guard down, it foreshadows that the two might become very close. Ev and Jules are learning who their true friends are and who they can count on when they need something.



Chapters 23 and 24

Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

Eleni and Ev go to the tea party at the school. Ev and Eleni both notice that Andrea's mother is very mean and critical of Andrea. They both end up leaving the tea party feeling sorry for Andrea. Eleni takes Ev to her favorite burger place. While they're eating, they talk about how Eleni's mom died of cancer when she was 12. Eleni asks if Ev remembers anything about her mom. Ev tells Eleni that her dad still loves her mom and Eleni says she knows. As they arrive home, Ev tells Eleni she thinks she remembers her mom's smell. As Eleni watches Al building something outside, Ev can tell that she really loves him. That night at dinner, Phoebe makes Ev make a wish on an eyelash. Ev wishes for the baby to be healthy.

The morning of Mackey's play, he admits to Ev in the back yard that he can't stand up in front of all of those people and sing tonight. He also admits that he was happy when Birdie told them they were moving. He said he thought it was his chance to start over, where nobody knew he is dork. Ev notices his acne has cleared up and Mackey admits Clio gave him some cream that is working. Jules arrives for a visit in time for Mackey's play. Thalia makes them all a scarf that represents the color of coats "Joseph" wears in the play.

Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

Ev is starting to refer to them as her family. Even though she tries to put up some resistance, she is giving in to being a part of the Linney-Gartos clan. While she has never wanted to give into the change, Ev now realizes all of the benefits she can enjoy if she is part of the family rather than trying to be the outsider all the time.



Characters

Evyn

Evyn "Ev" Linney is a 13-year-old girl. She lives with her single father and her older brother in Portland, Maine. Ev's mother died in a car accident when she was one. Her best friend is Jules Anthony and the two girls have known each other and lived behind each other since they were babies.

When Ev's father announces he's getting married and they are moving to Boston, she resists right from the start. One of Ev's ways for dealing with all of the change in her life is she talks to her dead mother in her head. She's named her make believe mother Stella. Stella teaches Ev that she needs to put a bounce in her step and that she should allow anything the mean girls at school say to her just bounce off of her.

As one of eight children in her new family, Ev feels lost and alone. She feels as if she is the only one that is not keen to the new family situation that is unfolding. Along the way, however, Ev realizes that her new step siblings have similar feelings and problems. She also sees that other people at her school have their set of problems. This is when Ev realizes all of the good she has in her life, even if it is a new life. This includes the upcoming birth of her new sibling since Eleni is pregnant.

Albert

Albert "Birdie" Linney is Ev and Mackey's father. He is a hippie and a carpenter by trade. Instead of calling him Dad, they call him Birdie. He is always wearing dirty overalls. He has a goatee, which always seems to have food in it. Birdie has been raising the children on his own since his wife died 12 years ago.

When Birdie meets Eleni, they fall in love and decide to get married. Birdie slowly starts to change the way he dresses, and even shaves his goatee off when Eleni tells him she wants him to be clean shaven for the wedding. Every time Ev gives Birdie a hard time about changing, he insists that he is still the same Birdie that he has always been.

Birdie's parents were both dentists. He is obsessed with brushing and flossing his teeth throughout the novel. Ev also points out that he often uses a toothpick after meals to dislodge food particles as well. Since Birdie is a carpenter, he is often building lofts, a dog house for the family dog, and numerous other projects throughout the novel.

Mackey Linney

Mackey Linney is Ev's older brother. Mackey is 15. He loves to read sci-fi novels and play video games. He is very tall and skinny. Mackey also has bad acne on his face, so the kids at school call him names, such as Pizza Face. After moving to Boston, even



Mackey starts to change and adjust to their new life. He even lands the starring role as Joseph in the school play. Mackey's acne clears up from some cream one of his stepsisters gives him and he even makes friends with the kids in the drama club at school.

Jules Anthony

Jules Anthony is Ev's best friend in Boston. Even though she is 13 too, Jules still has stuffed animals all over her bed. Jules has an older sister that is off to college at Yale. After Ev moves away, Jules starts to change. She gets her braces off and she starts hanging around with boys and girls that once made fun of her. Jules realizes that Ev is still her best friend after one of Jules's new friends starts going out with the guy that Jules was dating.

Eleni Gartos

Eleni Gartos is short and curvy. Ev describes Eleni's figure like that of Betty Boop, the cartoon characters. Eleni has dark curly hair and lips that form a bow. Eleni has six children, but five of them are still living at home. She is 42 and when they return from their honeymoon, Al and Eleni announce that they are pregnant.

Eleni is Greek and she is always cooking. She is an only child and her mother died of cancer when she was 12 years old. Eleni seems very sweet and she is continuously trying to connect with Ev and make Ev feel like she belongs.

Cassi and Clio Gartos

Cassi and Clio are Eleni's twin daughters. They are 16. Ev calls them the sweater twins because the first argument she witnesses between the two girls is over a sweater. Ev shares a room with the twins, who always seem to be bickering over something. The twins also seem as if they are very helpful. They are always trying to help Ev pick out her outfits, give Mackey cream to clear up his acne and other small acts of kindness.

Ajax Gartos

Ajax Gartos is the same age as Ev, so he is about 13. He is a soccer star and one of the cutest boys at school. Ajax shares a room with Mackey. The It Girls at Ev's school make friends with her so that she will tell them about Ajax and find out who he has a crush on. Ajax is one of the first members of the Gartos family Ev has a connection with. She feels as if she and Ajax have similar feelings about their parents getting married, and about each one of them missing a parent.



Linus Gartos

Linus Gartos is Eleni's oldest son and he is 19 years old. He is attending a local college nearby, so he lives in a dorm on campus. As soon as Ev sees Linus, she starts to have a crush on him. Linus treats Ev just like he does his other sisters. He even tells Ev that he knows everything has been hard on her and that she can call him anytime she wants. Linus is the one that finds Ev when she tries to run away after the baby announcement.

Phoebe Gartos

Phoebe Gartos is the youngest of Eleni's children. She is a precocious six-year-old girl. Phoebe is the one that plans the funeral for Clam when he dies. She is also the one that forces Ev to make a wish again, even though Ev had vowed not to make wishes anymore.

Clara Bing

Clara Bing is one of the girls in Ev's classes at school. Clara has bad allergies, so she is always sneezing, blowing her nose and always has weepy and crusty eyes. Clara invites Ev to her house the night of the social instead of going to the dance, but Ev declines. After the incident with the It Girls, Ev, Clara and the rest of Clara's friends all become friends.



Objects/Places

Portland, Maine

Portland, Maine is the primary setting when the novel first opens. This is where Ev and Mackey have lived their whole lives. It is from Portland that the Linney family moves to live with Eleni and her family in Boston. Ev leaves behind her best friend, Jules, in Portland when the Linney family moves away.

Boston, Massachusetts

Boston, Massachusetts is where the Linneys move to be with the Gartos family. This is the city where Ev has to learn how to make a new life for herself. Ev discovers how different the city and the people are when she tries to run away to go back to Maine.

Backyard

Ev likes to spend time in the backyard of the house when she moves to Boston. While the yard is much smaller and less lush than their yard in Maine, Ev feels as if it is a retreat. It is one of the only places in the full house that Ev is able to find peace. Clam is also banished to living in the backyard because Thalia is allergic to pet dander. For this reason, Ev often retreats to the backyard to spend time with Clam.

School Bathroom Stall

The first five days of school, Ev eats lunch in the school bathroom stall. Ev starts to do this again after she makes the It Girls mad. Whenever Ev is having problems at school and doesn't think she has anyone to sit with in the cafeteria, she hides in the school bathroom stall during her lunch period.

Necklace

Birdie gives Ev her mother's necklace on his wedding day. Ev wears the necklace during the wedding and after that. When Ev decides she isn't going to talk to Stella anymore, Ev removes the necklace and stops wearing it.

Dog House

Birdie builds Clam a dog house when they move to Boston. This is where Clam has to live now because Thalia is allergic to Clam. Even after Clam dies, the dog house remains in the backyard of the home.



GLUE T-shirts

Al makes GLUE t-shirts for the family. He is using the t-shirts as an initiative to join the two families into one. The family members wear the t-shirts during the funeral for Clam.

Multi-colored Scarves

Thalia makes multi-colored scarves for the family to wear as they sit in the audience for Mackey's play. The scarves are symbolic of the coat that Mackey's character Joseph has to wear in the play. Wearing the scarves is the family's way of showing their support for Mackey.

Overalls

Birdie is always wearing carpenter overalls. Ev says they are always dirty and have sawdust all over them. throughout the novel, when Birdie is working on projects, he is wearing the overalls. Birdie wears them less on a daily basis, however, when Eleni starts buying him new clothes.

Cafeteria

The cafeteria at school is a problem spot for Ev. She's always looking for someone to sit with while she eats her lunch. When she can't find anyone, she retreats to the bathroom stall. When the It Girls take an interest in Ev, Ev starts sitting at their table for lunch in the cafeteria. Later, when Ev becomes friends with Clara and her group, Ev sits with them for lunch in the cafeteria.



Themes

Relationships

One of the primary themes running through the novel is relationships. The novel reveals that even the individuals that make up a family have different relationships among the family members. For example, Ev has a very close relationship with her father. Mackey and his father, on the other hand, seem to be close but in a much different way.

Friendship is another type of relationship the novel tackles. It seems as if Ev loses her best friend, Jules, when Ev moves from Portland to Boston. Because Ev is not embracing her new life, she is also having a hard time making new friends. Ev settles for her friendships with the It Girls, which is superficial, because the girls only want to get information out of Ev about her stepbrother, Ajax. Eventually, however, Ev and Jules repair their friendship and Ev makes friends with girls at school that like Ev for who she is rather than because she is related to someone.

Even though Ev and Mackey are siblings, and there is an age difference, the two are also friends. Growing up, Ev and Mackey have only had each other and their father. As the Linneys move to Boston, Mackey and Ev start to grow apart because Mackey is embracing his new life, while Ev is still resisting the change.

Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as having a mother die, having a father remarry, and having to move to a new city and start a new life. Ev struggles with the fact that her coming of age includes having to learn how to transition into a new life, while she is also struggling with the trials and tribulations of becoming a teenager. Ev continuously tries to resist the change in her life rather than find the good parts of the change.

Ev also faces the fact that even though she has always been very close to her father that their new life includes sharing him with other family members. Ev believes her father is changing, but Birdie keeps insisting he is still the same person. By the end, Ev realizes that while her father looks different on the outside, he is in fact the same person that he has always been.

Family

Family is the central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of these two families—the Linney and the Gartos families—becoming one. While every family has their trials and tribulations, Ev's family has its own family dynamics that are the same and that are different from those of other families. In the end though, they are a family and they will get through it together, one way or the other.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first-person point of view, from the perspective of the main character, Evyn "Ev" Linney. The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with the main character, Ev. The book written in this manner allows the reader to get inside Ev's head, thoughts and inner struggles. The reader cares what happens to the narrator. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Setting

When the novel first opens, the primary setting is in Portland, Maine. After the Linney family moves, the rest of the setting is in Boston, Massachusetts during the 21st century. The main characters are involved in the daily life of learning to live as two families joining to make one large family. Ev is constantly resisting accepting her new life and her new family.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware that the main character is struggling with never having a mother around and all of the change she has had to endure in her short life. However, as events unfold, change is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters and even the outcome of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The language is from the 21st century, which is when the novel is set. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations and is detailed enough for the reader to truly understand.

Structure

The novel is divided into 24 chapters. Each chapter ranges from five pages to 10 pages long. The chapters tell the story primarily in exposition and with some dialogue. The narrator injects her own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing her opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel. The narrator switches back and forth between the past and the present.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is that of human relationships—family and friendships. One subplot is the coming of age of the characters, primarily Ev Linney. Another subplot is family.



Quotes

"Kids, I'm getting married. We're moving to Boston" (Chapter 1, p. 1).

"It's my birthday, Birdie. Could we not talk about this today? Please? For my birthday" (Chapter 2, p. 9).

"This is a great adventure. Full of exciting new experiences" (Chapter 3, p. 14).

"I'm still the same old Birdie" (Chapter 4, p. 19).

"It's not so bad" (Chapter 5, p. 29).

"Think positive. Everything will work out fine. You'll see" (Chapter 6, p. 36).

"Al, I'd really love you to be clean-shaven for the wedding" (Chapter 7, p. 41).

"You're Ajax Gartos's sister, aren't you" (Chapter 8, p. 50).

"No, I mean, are you okay? You seem bummed" (Chapter 9, p. 58).

"So, did you find out who Ajax likes yet" (Chapter 10, p. 63).

"Eleni Linney. Could there to be a stupider name" (Chapter 11, p. 70).

"People change, Evyn" (Chapter 12, p. 79).

"That lying little wench" (Chapter 13, p. 90).

"Oh my God. How was the social" (Chapter 14, p. 94).

"Stomach bug! Nothing to worry about! Probably a twenty-four hour thing" (Chapter 15, p. 100).

"This isn't about the food, is it" (Chapter 16, p. 109).

"The whole best friend thing...it's, like, juvenile, you know" (Chapter 17, p. 113).

"We're pregnant" (Chapter 18, p. 119).

"That's what family's for" (Chapter 19, p. 132).

"Anyway, what makes you think they're doing this for Clam" (Chapter 20, p. 140).

"We keep looking for you at lunch" (Chapter 21, p. 150).

"You don't sound like you" (Chapter 22, p. 161).



"He still loves my mom. He told me" (Chapter 23, p. 173).

"You do realize you just called them your family" (Chapter 24, p. 183).



Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Evyn Linney? Why do you think she thinks she knows everything? Do you think Ev is right about the reason Birdie marries Eleni? What do you think happens to Ev after the baby is born?

Discuss the relationship between Ev and her father. Why do you think Ev has always been able to talk to her father about anything and everything? Why do you think Ev continues to tell her father that she is not happy with their new situation? How does Ev feel about Birdie? How does Birdie feel about Ev? How do Ev's feelings change after she learns Birdie still loves her mother?

Discuss the relationship between Ev and Mackey. Are they just brother and sister, or do you think they are friends too? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Ev feel about Mackey? How does Mackey feel about Ev? How do Ev's feelings change? What does she do about it? What happens to Mackey?

Discuss the relationship between Ev and Eleni. Are they enemies, friends, surrogate family members, or something else? Is there true competition in their relationship? Why do you think Eleni continues to try to form a relationship with Ev even though Ev pushes Eleni away? When and how do Ev's feelings change about Eleni?

Who is the true Birdie? Why do you think he changes his looks after he marries Eleni? Do you think Birdie is the same as he has always been? Do you think Birdie really loves Eleni or that he married her for other reasons? Why?

Who is Eleni? Is she a nice person that really cares about Ev or something else? Why do you think she is so patient and understanding with Ev? Do you think Eleni sees herself in Ev? What role does Eleni play in helping Ev change her life?

Discuss Ev having conversations with Stella. What impact does it have on Ev? How does it motivate her and how does it derail her life?