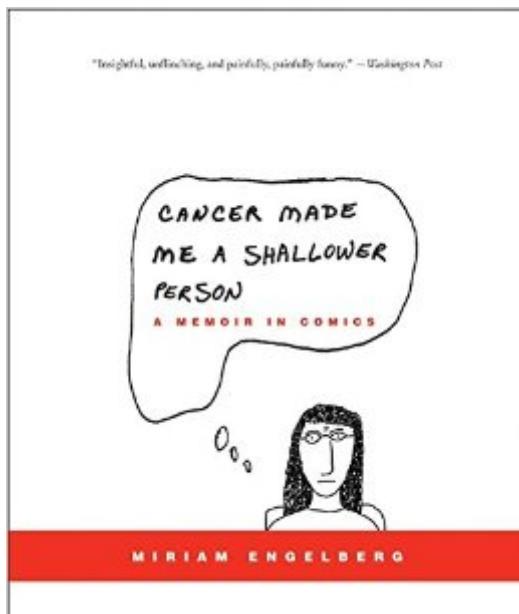


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Cancer Made Me A Shallower Person: A Memoir In Comics



Synopsis

a cartoonist examines her experience with breast cancer in an irreverent and humorous graphic memoir.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Cancer Made me a Shallower Person, by Miriam Engelberg, is a memoir in comics. If you are used to thinking of comics as being time-wasters for teenage boys, then this book might be a good introduction to the power that comics can have when they are written for adults. Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi would be another good one to check out (it is about her life growing up in Iran), as well as the Dykes to Watch Out For series by Alison Bechdel (hilarious series, meant for liberal women, and is very funny and touching). Engelberg talks about the changes that came into her life when she was diagnosed with cancer, and recalls with humor and gentle intelligence the experiences and feelings involved in getting diagnosed with cancer, going through the treatment, and living through the experience. She manages to turn most of her experiences, even the incredibly scary and painful ones, into bittersweet, touching humor, which makes this a valuable resource for those who have cancer. This book is like hanging out with a witty and smart girlfriend, and I think a woman with cancer would really enjoy feeling like she wasn't alone in the experience. It was a bit hard for me to read in places, because I don't have cancer and so haven't really had to face some of the difficult realities that she discusses. But I wanted to read it to understand a bit of what my friend's Mom is going through in her struggle with cancer, so even though it was painful in

places, I thought it was a really valuable read. 11/06 - Just wanted to edit my review to say "rest in peace" to our dear author friend. After reading her book I felt like she became sort of a friend to me, and when I heard that she passed away last month I felt deeply saddened. She has touched so many of us with her writing and, I hear, her appearances, in which she showed a grace and down to earth friendliness which seemed to bring everyone attending into her circle of friends. I am grateful to have "known" her through her writing, and I wish her family peace.

One might no longer feel as though on an island of despair after reading this comic-format book. Many of the issues and concerns and the self-blame for why one has gotten cancer - as well as how various people react to cancer within themselves, or among their friends, relatives, co-workers and strangers - are addressed in a thought-provoking manner that at times makes you laugh, but most of all, makes you realize that you are not alone. This is not a book covering all the latest treatment options, how to deal with the therapies and so forth. It is a charming and witty and yet soberingly realistic look at life with cancer. And it also a wonderful comic-relief from some of the (often times quite frightening) issues and concerns of having cancer. It also helps one to realize that many others in the same boat are having the same feelings. I thought that some of the pertinent things covered in the book are:- blaming yourself for having eaten the wrong things or having lived the wrong lifestyle - eating all that cheese, or greasy junk food full of preservatives, or drinking all that diet soda, or talking too much on the cell phone.- how people with different forms of cancer sometimes have trouble relating to each other and how people with the same forms of cancer tend to form cliques for this reason.- the notion of being a cancer survivor: when does it begin (upon diagnosis?) and when does it end (are you still a survivor in your deathbed, drawing your last few gasps of air?) If you have recently been diagnosed with cancer, or are fighting it, or know someone near and dear who is going through it - READ THIS BOOK. Add it to the list of how-to's and serious medical books. It will help you understand how the human psyche responds to this form of crisis just a little better.

Engelberg's Memoir in Comics is an excellent, hilarious, irreverent, punch-packing, truthful, gripping, somewhat nihilistic portrayal of the typical experience of a cancer patient. Family members and friends should read this, if they can bear it, to understand more intimately what their cancer-battling beloved might be going through. But this is pretty morbid humor. Handle with caution. I loved some of the visual jokes; and the less punch-you-in-the-gut satire really cracked me up. But I read it in the middle of chemo, myself, and the more pungently morose satire threw me into a doom and gloom

that didn't help my situation. After I'm done with my treatments, and hopefully I'll really been done at that point (I fall into Engelberg's "no, I'm okay, really" non-metastatic part of the cancer world), I will then be able to laugh at the more painfully funny parts of the book. Engelberg, herself part of the "gone metastatic - damn!" part of the cancer world, takes on the sometimes pollyannaish culture of denial. I find a little denial goes a long way, so I will cling to my "damn cheerfulness" until I can't hold on any longer. Truthfully, I find there are some very beautiful side effects of this ghastly disease - namely, the incredible outpourings of love and support from friends and family, and the piercing appreciation of life when I feel good. In short, Engelberg's comic memoir is bitingly funny but borders on the bitter - it is a pill that is best swallowed when you are out of the woods, yourself.

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