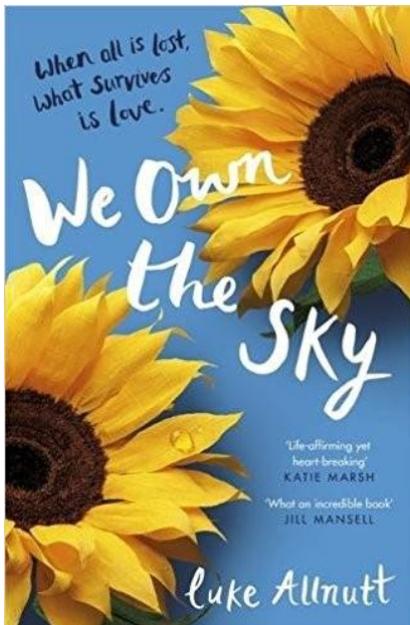


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



We own the sky (2018)

Allnut L.

London: Trapeze, 2018.

368pp.

ISBN 9781409172260.

£14.99.

Average star rating 3.3 (out of 5)

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This is a love story. A beautiful love story, albeit a very sad one. To lose a child is appalling for any parent to contemplate and this book is vivid in detail about Jack's journey and ultimate death. It is a book with only one outcome, but invaluable to any reader to acquire an honest and gritty insight into how this dreadful experience can affect what was once a rock-solid relationship and family.

The story is in a logical order and the story flows well. There is no real technical jargon, and explanations throughout the book will help the lay person. The book has a nice cover and is good quality all round.

I love this book. Although it is extremely sad, I would not hesitate to recommend it. The author captures the harrowing realisation that the little boy (Jack) will not survive his cancer and exposes implicitly how a once-solid family relationship and dynamic can be shattered in an instant. Over the longer term during Jack's various treatments, the resulting vulnerability and helplessness is almost tangible; at times I felt I was standing in the same room with the characters as the story unfolded.

Whilst it may not provide emotional support, this book could be beneficial to those whose life may be touched by cancer and enable understanding regarding the effect of cancer on a family, particularly parents and how they manage or cope during. Most useful for those who have received a recent diagnosis, or anyone affected by a recent diagnosis in this regard.

Health care professional and former carer of breast cancer patient (now deceased) (56-65) (January 2019)



This is the story of Rob, Anna and their son Jack. It tells how Rob and Anna get together and the arrival of Jack. Life carries on until one day Jack is diagnosed with a brain tumour. The book then describes the struggles the family face to cope and adapt with Jack's diagnosis but also their selfless pursuit of the best treatment. It is a very real book and you will feel sorry for the characters as you feel yourself drawn into Rob's desperate attempt to find treatment for his son.

The bright cover draws you in and the book is easy to understand but it rambles at the start, setting the scene, and going to the end before going back to the beginning. If you can get past the first couple of chapters you will find it a great read. It is well written and emotive, but I don't think it is useful for anyone affected by cancer. I am wary of suggesting it to someone who has a child going through cancer treatment.

Womb cancer survivor (56-65) (September 2018)

This novel would be a useful read for anyone. It highlights the painful emotions of parents, families and friends when they have, or know, a child affected by an aggressive, untreatable cancer. It depicts the plight of a father and other families who are looking for alternative treatments in the hope of a cure for their child.

It is a beautiful and heart-breaking story that makes you feel it is the author's true story. It is easy to understand with no technical jargon. Every medical term is explained as it goes along. There is no glossary. There is a guide for reading groups at the end with great questions for discussion, plus a Q&A with the author. The cover and the title are appealing. I like the quote on the front, "When all is lost What survives is love. It's a hardback and the typeface is fine. There are no illustrations.

I love this book. It is written in a beautiful and sensitive way and made me cry at times. The characters are really brought to life by the author. The story depicts the highs, the lows, the emotional roller coaster of a couple whose beautiful son has a brain tumour. It reads like a biography (although it's not). Like all novels, there is a storyline running through the book that delivers a twist at the end. I recommend it for anyone. It will be useful for health professionals. It highlights the measures that some parents/patients may go through when they are desperate to find alternative treatment for cancer when a patient is palliative.

Breast cancer 2011 (66- 75) (July 2018)

This book will resonate with anyone who has experienced cancer, either themselves or through a loved one. It is most relevant to parents of children with terminal brain tumours, but it is likely to trigger some strong emotions in these individuals, so I feel it should come with a warning. It is most useful for emotional support. Although it is a work of fiction, people affected by cancer will be able to identify with many of the thoughts, feelings and behaviours experienced by the characters in the book.

The story flows well and makes perfect sense. The author skilfully moves between the past and the present, filling in the blanks and revealing the truth behind what happens to Jack. It is easy to follow and understand. The author uses some technical terms to describe Jack's brain tumour and treatment but keeps them to a minimum. There is a list of topics for discussion and an interview with the author at the end of the book. It is an appealing book with a vibrant cover and a readable typeface. There are no photos inside the book, but none are necessary as it is fiction. The story is written in an emotive first-person narrative. The book feels quite thick and heavy to hold, but that is a minor point!

I enjoyed the tender, unflinchingly honest narrative and the tactful way in which the author eases readers into the story. The author draws upon his experience of bowel cancer and his father's death from a brain tumour to create a story that is relatable to people affected by cancer. The characters are engaging and believable, and their differing responses to Jack's illness help to create a compelling story that ultimately feels uplifting.

A relative of someone with breast and lung cancer (26-35) (May 2018)



I admire how this book tackles such a sensitive subject as the death of a child. The quack doctor story thread is particularly interesting. However, I did not take to it for several reasons. Primarily, I found the main characters cold, unlikable and unsympathetic. Their relationship feels very muted and a bit forced, which renders the rest of the story quite uninvolved. I don't really like the tone, which veers from snarky and crass to overly (almost manipulatively) emotional. I also found the technology angle irritating (online maps and drones as the distant 'tech of the future').

For the most part, the story flows well. The narrative is well-structured and develops organically. As it is fiction, everything is suitable for a layman. Medical terms are discussed in an accessible way. There is some brief profanity and sexual content. The cover design is simple – the sunflower imagery relates to something that becomes pertinent to the story – and the typeface is clear. There is quite heavy use of email and discussion board messages as part of the narrative.

I would recommend this book only to the parents of a child with a terminal illness or who have lost a child to cancer. Due to the development of the plot (the child is diagnosed, undergoes successful treatment, only for the cancer to return more aggressively and become untreatable), it is not suitable for parents whose child's condition is less grave, as it could be quite an upsetting read. As a piece of fiction, it may well be of wider interest to people who enjoy this type of 'domestic' plot, even though the subject matter is quite heavy.

My rating is simply because I did not enjoy the book. I understand that, as someone who is child-free (by choice), I am not the target readership for this book, so my view probably does not carry much weight. It may well offer some comfort to parents who are dealing with the issues that the story addresses, including the death of a child and the subsequent domestic fallout. However, I feel that some of the plot choices and character development take away from what could have been an affecting story.

In recovery from breast cancer (36-45) (November 2018)



The cover is lovely, and the layout and good quality matt paper make it easy to read but I am not quite sure what to say about this book. I don't think that it makes good fiction. Yes, the author had cancer, so he knew what the procedures were and how his family felt, but he did not have this cancer, nor was he a child. It tries to do too much, and the diametrically opposed protagonists are stereotypes, for whom I could feel no sympathy.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (July 2018)

Further information

Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Being told ‘you have cancer’ can affect so much more than your health – it can also affect your family, your job, even your ability to pay the bills. But you’re still you. We get that. And, after over 100 years of helping people through cancer, we get what’s most important: that you’re treated as a person, not just a patient.

It’s why we’ll take the time to understand you and all that matters to you, so we can help you get the support you need to take care of your health, protect your personal relationships and deal with money and work worries.

We’re here to help you find your best way through from the moment of diagnosis, so you’re able to live life as fully as you can. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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