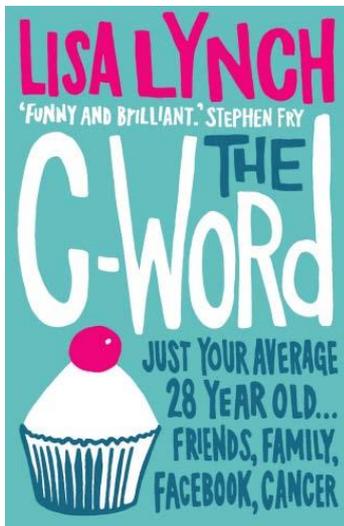


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



The c-word (2010)

Lynch, L.

London: Arrow Books, 2010.

304pp.

ISBN 9780099547549.

£9.99.

Average star rating 4.8 (out of 5)

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This book provides an excellent understanding of what living with breast cancer can be like and the effect it can have on family and friends. It is an all-round read, but due to the author's honesty about some of the treatment, it could alarm some readers.

The story is written in a 'Bridget Jones' style with blog posts followed by text to expand on the post. All technical words are fully explained and the author gives an honest and factual account of how she felt and her perception of how her family and friends felt too. There is some swearing in the book and some audiences may not like this, but it is written by a 28-year-old women as if she is talking to her friends.

As a cervical cancer patient I was surprised at how similar my feelings and experience were to those of the author. The book deals with a serious subject factually and honestly, but with humour. You relate to the author and care what happens to her and what the outcome will be. After reading the book, I was compelled to google the author to see if her original blog is still being updated.

It made me look back at my experience and review the way I felt and the way other people around me felt. As a caution, others may find they also do this and if they have not done this before they may find that it brings back a lot of emotions. Whilst this is not a bad thing it could take some people by surprise.

I will recommend this book to others and already have to other patients and to my clinical nurse specialist. Even if you do not have cancer or are not involved with anyone who has cancer you could get a lot from this excellent book.

Cervical cancer survivor (36-45) (February 2012)

I wish I had read this book before I started on my journey. I found the emotions incredibly accurate – all the strange feelings that I went through are in fact normal! There are times when you do feel like giving up and constantly question the reason why it is you; the book confirms that these are all normal feelings.

It is very easy to read; it captures your interest from the beginning and holds it to the end. It takes you on the whole journey, from diagnosis until the end of treatment. Some may find the few swear words offensive, I didn't. The style of writing reminds me of 'Bridget Jones' and makes the book appealing and easy to read. I would be interested to find out how the next five years pan out.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (November 2011)

This is a very well written book, which really does tell it like it is. From the devastating diagnosis, to the shock and fear that follows, Lisa really doesn't pull her punches (and nor should she). She tells her story with humour, but she is not afraid to admit to those times when you think there is no end to feeling ill and when you allow yourself to think that there will not be a good outcome. She perfectly describes how some people's reactions are just what you hoped for, whereas others are not. I think anyone who has experienced cancer will be able to identify with Lisa's experience.

Lisa seems to have a wonderful family and I hope she goes from strength to strength with their help and the help of the fantastic oncologists and nursing staff without whom she would not be able to pick up her lovely life, pre-cancer. My oncologist told me when I had my post-chemo scan, which was (thankfully) clear, "You have spent the last eight months in a parallel universe; now is the time to step back into your real life". I think that's the best advice I was given and is exactly what Lisa is doing.

Ovarian cancer patient (46-55) (October 2011)

This is an excellent, informative, down-to-earth book and I highly recommend it to anyone affected by breast cancer. I thoroughly enjoyed it even though it made me very emotional in places. I passed it on to my sister, who has recently been diagnosed with breast cancer, and to my father who has had a difficult time coming to terms with our diagnoses.

Breast cancer survivor (36-45) (August 2010)

It is true to life and I could relate it to my own experience; I almost felt the author was describing my own journey through breast cancer. I love the humour, which I think you need to have to a certain degree. It will help anyone facing breast cancer.

Breast cancer survivor (36-45) (August 2010)

This is very well written. It tells the truth and it brought home to me the reality of chemotherapy. It might be too much for a newly diagnosed patient so I think it will be most useful during treatment.

Living with breast cancer (46-55) (July 2010)

This is a very factual and frank account of diagnosis and treatment, a very personal experience that a lot of younger women could relate to. Some of the content might not be relevant for women over 50. Some people might not like the rude language. I did not mind it as I feel it is relevant to her experience.

It made me laugh and cry. It is a very emotive subject but it is very easy book to read. It will help family and friends understand how we feel.

Breast cancer patient (36-45) (July 2010)

This book is easy to understand, written in a simple, modern, 'chic-lit' style. This will appeal to women of all ages, but especially younger women in their 20s and 30s. There are a few technical words but these are explained as they occur. It has a modern, young and fun cover and the blurb on the back is witty and interesting and sets the tone for the whole book. It is not an 'I survived cancer' heart breaker, but more a humorous diary of a young woman coping with a cancer diagnosis. Although the focus is on breast cancer, it provides an insight into the emotional side of cancer diagnosis and treatment that is useful for anyone, not just patients and their families.

Despite the serious subject matter, the tone is light and humorous, making it a very fun read. The author deals with the darker side of cancer treatment, the side-effects, the strain on all your relationships, yet still manages to laugh when something bad happens, to see the ironic side. It does not try to tell you everything will be ok, but it does encourage you to accept certain things as necessary evils. It is especially good at providing a fair representation of all the emotions a cancer diagnosis can trigger. It is nice to know you are not alone in feeling scared/angry/lost. It also gives an idea of what all cancer patients may go through, from the numbing shock of diagnosis to the overwhelming treatment options available and coping with their side-effects.

An excellent read! It is well written, witty and emotionally informative. A real 'Bridget Jones' of breast cancer that should appeal to everyone, affected by cancer or not.

Friend of breast cancer patient (26-35) (July 2010)

This is an interesting story of one person's experience and how she coped. Lisa graphically describes many issues that anyone who is ill goes through at one time or another, but she does so in an amusing way. It's not just useful for those who have had breast cancer. It is very easy to understand what she went through and she explains it brilliantly without the technical jargon that health professionals use.

I have been through a similar experience, but had I read it before treatment began; I would have been more scared than I was. However, everyone is different; some people like to be prepared, and some, like me, think ignorance is bliss.

The eight-week wait for needle biopsy results that the author describes is not now the case. Thankfully, it is now two weeks from referral.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (June 2010)

This book is spot on in every way. I could not put it down. It arrived at lunchtime Saturday and I had finished it by 10.00 am Sunday morning!! It was as if I had put pen to paper myself; our stories are so similar and I have got great comfort from it.

It would be best read after surgery but before chemo, as it gives an accurate description of how you can feel during that time - although I have to say I was very lucky and never suffered the awful sickness that Lisa did, which goes to prove that no two cancers are the same. It's probably not best to read it when you are first diagnosed as you are saturated with facts and your brain just won't process it all.

It is great to read that others have a similar experience, at the time you think you are the only person in the world feeling that way. It will be the first thing I lend to anyone else I know that is sadly touched by this awful disease. It covers the whole range of feelings, from the patient, to the family closest to her and even her circle of friends. The only thing I noticed was that the health care professionals treating Lisa seemed to always be helpful and contactable. I have not been so lucky on that score.

I would like to thank Lisa Lynch for having the balls to put pen to paper at such a traumatic time. I initially planned to do something similar when I got my diagnosis but after the first chemo, I just gave up. I put notes in my diary that I look back on now and think 'Wow, how did I get through it all', but I did and I'm still fighting!

I have no hesitation recommending this book to anyone else.

Breast cancer patient (36-45) (June 2010)

I could do with more books like this to help put a smile on my face and make me realise that I am not alone being a young woman with breast cancer! I love it; it is funny and approachable and I read it in almost one session. It is targeted at young women like me and I could relate to so much of what the author goes through. It could be read at all stages of treatment but a few months down the line might be best as by then one can relate more to the author's story. It will also be useful for family and friends. When I read it, the first thing I wanted to do was pass it on to my friends so they could really understand what I was going through.

Occasionally our experiences didn't match. My wig was free on the NHS so I wasn't sure why she paid £60 towards hers, but perhaps this was the case in 2008; a note to remind readers that costs can change would be good. She found chemotherapy horrendous but that doesn't mean everyone will. Mine is not exactly pleasant at times, but I can work and carry on mostly as normal but then my drug regime is different. It would be useful to remind people that everyone is different and that drug regimes differ as well. I would like to hear more about life after treatment and how you pick yourself up, but maybe that's for the sequel.

Breast cancer patient (26-35) (June 2010)

This is a very useful and enjoyable book. It is easy to understand, accessible and articulate. I like the honesty and the humour and I love the language, though it might be too much for anyone who doesn't like swearing!

A lot of the author's experiences resonate: "what is it about these [chemo] drugs and their fascination with your nether regions?"; "there I sat, blushing beneath my twat-hat". Halfway through the book there is a great "cancer is shit" rant, including the fine statement that "cancer changes your life because it threatens it" (in response to the philosophy of those who say their life has been changed to rainbows and roses). There are a couple of inaccuracies: at one stage "grade" is confused with "stage"; the use of radioactive dye to determine which is the sentinel node is described as part of a process to determine spread; and she describes spread of cancer into skin as skin cancer, which isn't my understanding. But I am being very picky here!

Lisa is a very articulate woman, not scared to tell it how it is, which I find refreshing and reassuring – that sense of it's not just me, other people feel like this too. Describing why it doesn't feel appropriate to have a party to celebrate the end of chemotherapy she says "...like throwing a party after being released from months of captivity – you're ecstatic to be out but nonetheless completely traumatised by what you've been through... and besides it's not over yet is it?" (radiotherapy still to come). She acknowledges it's as much a mental battle as physical, "the medical world may know how to kill off a tumour but doesn't know how to re-build your self-esteem that the treatment ruined in the process... an absurdly difficult task". She articulates well the confused feelings that people have at the end of treatment: "there is no all-clear"; and the depression that is entirely normal (reactive depression rather than the clinical sort) for which anti-depressants are offered – not a useful response – to which Lisa blogs: "I.AM.NOT.DEPRESSED". Way to go Lisa! Meeting someone who's just been diagnosed she says "she looked like she'd just been hit by a train".

This is brilliant, accomplished writing. My life and hers are completely different – age, occupation, location and more – but the book shows that though each cancer is different and each person's response to it and the treatment is unique, there is a rich landscape of connection when we can be honest about our feelings and talk about the bullshit of a cancer experience in a no-bullshit way. Very impressive.

Living with a diagnosis of breast cancer (56-65) (June 2010)

This is a frank, but funny and emotional, account of one person's cancer journey. It is a very honest and accurate portrayal of the effects of breast cancer on your life and emotions. It is very easy to read and understand and is a good account of treatment, although everyone has slightly different experiences; some of the sickness she experienced did not happen to me. It made me feel more normal; the way she describes her emotions of being up one minute then totally down the next is so true. I never wore a wig but the way she describes the effect of hair loss (even when her hair was growing back) is excellent.

I recommend it, but after the first treatment; it might scare someone just diagnosed.

Living with breast cancer (36-45) (May 2010)

Excellent. I read it from cover to cover in about three days; I couldn't put it down.

I went on a very similar journey to Lisa and I could relate to her nearly every step of the way. I went through so many different emotions during my illness and still do after treatment. The book answered a lot of my questions and made me think about things differently; it put lots of things into perspective. The last thing a cancer patient wants is pity and the author stresses this.

It is a very appealing book. I like the cover and the layout is very good from start to finish. The chapters are not too long and it is very easy to read. The language is totally appropriate for the intended audience. I liked the wittiness of it. The only things I could not relate to were the author's age (I was 49 when I was diagnosed) and not having children (I have two daughters).

When I was first diagnosed, I read a book by Gloria Hunniford about her daughter Caron Keating that inspired me and gave me a different perspective on my illness. Everyone reacts differently to a cancer diagnosis and this book would benefit someone at any stage in their illness. Most people would find it very useful, especially someone affected by breast cancer. It provides a better insight into what is happening to them; however they have been affected by the cancer.

Breast cancer patient in remission (46-55) (May 2010)

This is an amazing book for young women (and men) diagnosed with cancer, not just breast cancer. It may also be a good book for young people who have someone in their life affected by cancer. It describes a young person's experience and, as such, is written in the youthful language used by the Facebook-, ipod-using generation, whether in their 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's or 60's. I enjoyed reading it, as I think would my children and my sister, though I'm not sure about my 85-year-old mother.

I like the honesty of the writing. I would have found it helpful when I was first diagnosed because it is explicit and truthful. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it even though I am now post treatment. I found it funny, touching and emotionally uplifting. It also made me realise that cancer affects patients in similar ways, whatever their age. She is perhaps a little harsh about the people she meets on her journey, but she says it how it is and that is refreshing.

I followed the author's blog while I was going through treatment myself. It took me out of my own 'self-pity' and made me laugh to know I had shared similar experiences. This is a great book for those at any stage of cancer, but especially younger women. It would have prepared me for some of the stages of treatment, especially chemotherapy, that are not always talked about.

I would probably recommend it, depending on the person's age and general outlook. I currently live in rural Wales, and I think there are some sections of the community that wouldn't understand the forthright writing of the book!

Breast cancer patient, post treatment by 12 months (46-55) (May 2010)



This is an unusual cancer biography in that it's so well written that it can appeal to a wide audience of not only those with cancer (or family and friends) but also anyone untouched by cancer who has seen the television adaptation. Not all breast cancer patients will need chemotherapy and radiotherapy but for those that do, it offers a painfully honest account of the physical and emotional traumas of treatment. For those fortunate enough to escape without these therapies, it also offers insight into how a person might feel about the loss of their breast. I would have liked to see more about the BRCA gene defect that the author had; it's mentioned only once, maybe twice, and it's probably related to her later outcome and her prognosis.

The book is in depth but without going into too much detail that might go out of date quite quickly as treatment regimes change. She doesn't labour the point with too much medical information but mostly addresses the emotional impact of treatment. The inter-cutting of blog posts and retrospective posts gives it a diversity that others often miss. We see both the 'in the moment' posts of the blog and the passages written about those times when the treatment is completed. Many reviews I've read say that it's 'too much', that the pain and anguish are too raw and emotional or too upsetting. Let's face it, cancer IS upsetting and to pretend it isn't would be disingenuous. The perspective of a younger woman with cancer is particularly valuable and I'm very happy that the book – unlike the TV adaptation – ends on a high note. Many readers seem to be put off by assuming a different ending.

I would strongly recommend this book to women who need chemotherapy and radiotherapy IF they are the type of person who can take reading something that's very honest about a harsh period in their lives. For the more 'sensitive' or 'anxious' patient, it must be recommended with caution. Not everyone wants to know how bad things might be. I would suggest that it's particularly valuable to younger women who may struggle to find others in their age group whose experience can help them. I can handle the bad language and crudity but it will upset more conservative readers. If you can't handle a bit of coarseness, please don't buy this book.

Ex thyroid cancer patient (46-55) (May 2016)

I enjoyed this book; it is very funny and I remember so many of these feelings. For one so young, she has done a great job of writing her journal so that she can help others on their journey to understand what diagnosis and treatment might mean.

The language might upset some people, but it is typical of the way a 28-year-old would think and do things, with the "bull shit" interrupting her life. The straightforward talking and matter of factness are endearing, the anger, everything. The sections about her hair loss, and how it affects how we think people see us, are particularly poignant. Yes, I remember being cooked by radiotherapy – so many 'yes I remembers'. So much was so familiar: the holiday, mine was Spain, hers was Rome; the support, she had online support. I had my clients who, although not cancer patients, learnt from me how to give me support when I felt low; and the Prozac, which I still take to this day.

It is a very honestly written book. When it ends, it mentions all the help and love she has had from fellow human beings; it makes us appreciate that cancer is bad, but the world is not. I would definitely recommend it; it is honest and true but very funny, which takes the harshness, and some of the fear, away.

Breast cancer patient (56-65) September 2010)

This is a truthful, refreshing and amusing account of breast cancer. How Lisa copes with diagnosis and treatment is fun to read and helps to take away the fear of cancer. It could be read by anyone at any stage. Even a newly diagnosed patient will find it a good read. I can relate to it, particularly as I was diagnosed at a young age. It is easy to understand and the humorous approach is great! My only concern is the language. It's written by a 28-year-old with breast cancer who tells it as it is. An older reader might find some of the language offensive. The font is small and that might deter some people from buying the book.

I really enjoyed reading this book because it covers breast cancer well. The emotions of diagnosis, coping with treatment, the specialists, nurses, family and friends are all portrayed wonderfully. It's an inspiring book and will give support to those undergoing the turmoil of a breast cancer diagnosis and the treatments that follow.

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (September 2010)

This is a light-hearted read about a deadly serious subject. Each stage struck a chord with my own experience. It will be useful for dealing with the initial diagnosis and going through treatment, plus the let-down after it's all done with. It is easy to understand and there are no technical words. There is quite a bit of strong language, but I forgave her mostly. It will be a good insight for someone who has not had any experience of cancer to gain an understanding of what it can be like.

Breast cancer patient (36-45) (July 2010)

This is a good book for anyone to read, not just those with breast cancer, although it will strike more chords if you have been on the same journey. It certainly makes you aware that others are going through the same as you. It's not a book you would read for information about cancer. It is most suitable for those who have finished treatment and can relate to shared experiences. Those about to start treatment might be worried about the side-effects that Lisa experienced; they are not the same for all.

It is an easy read and it reflects well on the treatment path that we follow. The language is appropriate to the age of the writer, so there are a few swear words, but I must admit that my language has become much coarser since diagnosis. What I did like was that I could understand the author's views and recognise them as my own, even though I am old enough to be her mother. I really like the irreverent title; cancer really is a C-word. I also like the fact that the cover isn't pink as are so many breast cancer things and the cover illustration is brill, although perhaps that's just my warped sense of humour!

I enjoyed this book, warts and all. I could relate to so much, even if my chemotherapy experience was not like Lisa's. It's a jolly good read, not for information but to realise that other people do and think the same as you.

Living with breast cancer (56-65) (June 2010)

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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