

ARRT Book Club Study
August 24, 2022
Virtual Meeting
Somebody's Daughter by Ashley C. Ford
Led by Kelly Griffin
Notes taken by Elizabeth Hopkins
13 participants

Kelly explained there was a program, a shorter version of a genre study at CPL, and they used *Somebody's Daughter*. Very book club friendly in terms of the length. Ashley C. Ford came onto her radar before she published because she has a large presence on Twitter. Kelly also referenced [this essay](#). Ford writes about race, sexuality, and body image. Kelly asked the group to introduce themselves and say a little bit about the book and if they connected with it.

- Extremely heavy material. It wasn't my type of book but I enjoyed reading it. On memoirs- [Liz Phair's memoir](#) is my favorite.
- I don't read memoir. I find it very disturbing. It's too personal and I don't want to know this stuff. I'd be perfectly OK if this was fiction, but the fact that these horrific things actually happened. Clearly, she's a gifted writer. It's not the book, it's me.
- Also not a fan of memoirs. I dislike memoirs with book groups because you can't really argue with them. If that's what happened- that's what happened.
- I hate rating them on Goodreads because I feel like I'm judging someone's life experiences.
- I have no problem rating memoirs because I'll rate it on how much I enjoyed reading it. I do read a lot of memoirs and I enjoyed this one. Reminded me of [The Ugly Cry by Danielle Henderson](#).
- It's book club friendly- short and allows for a very rich discussion.
- I enjoy memoirs and I liked this one. It reminded me a bit of [Crying in H Mart](#).
- I facilitate a NF book club and we'll be discussing this book. A lot of similarities to [Roxane Gay's Hunger](#).
- I think this would be a great book club book. A good tie-in to [An American Marriage](#).
- Enjoyed reading it, it was well-written. It's a very tragic and heart wrenching story, but I'm not thinking about it too much after I finished it. I felt like I needed more at points-more closure at the end.
- A struggle to get through because of some of the topics included. I do like funny memoirs.
- It's hard to say you enjoy a book like this because the subject matter is so difficult.

-Memoir is really all windows and mirrors. People read something like this because they've had a similar experience or they're looking for a different perspective. CPL patrons LOVE memoir. This title has become more and more popular.

-I found the title to be a bit misleading. I expected it to be more about her relationship with her father. I was looking for some closure at the end regarding her relationship with her dad. It felt unfinished.

-I absolutely agree with you. I expected it to be about her dad.

-But I think his absence was so strongly felt and it played a big part in the whole book.

-I agree that's the foundation for why she's telling that story. But we never found out what her relationship actually was. How did she reconcile this horrible crime in her head? I felt left hanging.

-There was a part where she mentions it's not her place to forgive him. But there could have been an epilogue.

-She's a very young writer...there could be a second book!

-A memoir is a slice of life, a narrow look at something that happened.

-I liked it a lot, but the reviews did it a disservice. The actual story being told here is the relationship with her mother. It sets you up to not enjoy the story as much.

What did you think of the scene where she visited her father for the first time?

-I thought it was beautiful. When she ran to him. A very touching scene.

-I think she made her relationship with her dad more positive because the relationship was so strained with her mother.

-I like how she portrayed the reality of relationships. Her parents are both very flawed but she still loves them.

-The ending didn't bother me so much because the story hadn't ended yet. It was a good frame to tell the story of her life. But it wasn't marketed well.

-I wonder if this book was spurred by the idea that therapy has become more normalized. People are freely speaking about it. The idea that you can be happy for now but it's a work in progress.

What's the appeal of memoir for readers?

-Windows and mirrors. People read these to identify with someone or open their mind to something they know nothing about.

-In terms of publishing, these types of books really exploded in the mid 90s. And now it's acceptable to talk about addiction, abuse, etc.

-I remember when [A Child Called It](#) was super popular among kids and teenagers and I think that was a windows/mirrors situation. They were looking for those connections. This feels like the grown-up versions of that.

-I think the marketing byline regarding her dad is much more attractive. It's a bigger hook. You almost need something huge to pull you in otherwise it just feels like "another memoir."

-I agree completely. Speaking of marketing- the serpent on the cover?

-The metaphor of not giving up on your people even when burning alive.

-The art is very similar to [*The Vanishing Half*](#)

Does the popularity of the memoir genre coincide with the rise in reality TV?

-Some people tie it to Oprah or talk-show TV. Mary Karr published [a book](#) on how to write a memoir which was huge.

-[Prozac Nation](#) in the 90's was also one of the first big memoirs.

-Our society has also changed the way we look at privacy over the last 20 years. A cultural shift in what's acceptable to write in a book.