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Gayle Forman

“Part of me knows one more day won't do anything except postpone the heartbreak. But another part of me believes differently. We are born in one day. We die in one day. We can change in one day. And we can fall in love in one day. Anything can happen in just one day” (Forman, Gayle). This quote from *Just One Day* is so true to life, and some may find that Gayle Forman knows how to perfectly craft a book that is exceptionally true to life. Gayle Forman has a way with words like no other, and understands the struggles and trials that plague a human’s soul. She has the uncanny ability to relate to the young adult audience because she allows for her readers to take from her books what they need, she draws from her personal experiences, and writes about hard choices and teenage struggles.

The inspiring young adult author, Gayle Forman, understands that everyone interprets a book differently, so she has no hidden meanings, except for what each individual reader takes from the books. By way of example, Gayle even has said, when asked if she purposely puts any themes in her books, “I don’t plant messages in my books...The books are yours. You get from them what you need” (Forman, Gayle). When reading *If I Stay,* a theme one may find is to never take your blessings for granted, but someone else may think that no matter what life throws your way love will always prevail. These themes are both very powerful and true to the book, but very different to one another. When presented with the question of what she believed the theme of *Sisters In Sanity* was, she stated, “*Sisters in sanity...* and *If I Stay* both share a common theme… we all have different hidden strengths… that come out when confronted with different challenges.” Now one could not argue that this theme is untrue, but there are other themes that come through in Forman’s *Sisters In Sanity* and *If I Stay*. For example, the theme in *Sisters In Sanit*y could also be that no matter how hard and tough a situation may be, there will always be a silver lining or a light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak. Additionally, Forman’s *I Was Here* touches on many different themes and emotional subjects (i.e. suicide, growing up without a father, depression, never feeling good enough, etc.), but depending on where one is their life journey and what life experiences they have had, this book could speak to them on many different levels. In summation, it is apparent that Gayle Forman’s books can have multiple meanings and messages, but the only one intended is the one each reader personally gains from her books.

Furthermore, this exceptional author is able to use her life experiences in her books. Forman has traveled to and experienced 64 countries, was an extra in a Bollywood movie, and has lived in most places she writes about. She is able to use these life experiences to craft a more accurate lifelike book. Unfortunately her inspiration for the tragic story of *If I Stay* was based on a real family she knew. She wrote the book because one family member in real life lived longer than the rest of the family, as Mia in *If I Stay* did, and she had always wondered whether or not he had the choice to stay or leave, as Mia faces in Forman’s masterpiece. Also Mia’s name was specifically picked to be the same as the lead singer in a band called the Gits who was a strong woman, but sadly died. On a lighter note, Forman’s inspiration for the *Just One Day* trilogy appeared to her in a dream. Furthermore, some of her characters are based on people in her life she is close with. For example, Adam in *If I Say* and *Where She Wen*t is based on her husband Nick, and Willem in the *Just One Day* trilogy is based on a Dutch man she met while traveling. She tends to write about performers, she says, because she is “drawn” to them. Forman has written - in spite of being a woman - excellent stories from the male point of view; when asked about this, she says she finds the male point of view “liberating.” For Forman her characters become voices in her head that become virtually real for her. This skill helps her to create spectacular characters. As well as having the voices in her head, she feels as though she is not a 44-year-old woman, but that she has the mind and heart of a 16-year-old. Additionally, Forman tends to write about strong female characters because she is a strong woman. Forman classifies herself as: “feminist, girly, and emotional.” Before becoming a young adult novelist, Forman worked as a reporter for 12 years, including at *Seventeen magazine.* The reason she became a young adult author was because “it’s cheaper than therapy, poverty, boredom, and escapism.” Interestingly, Gayle Forman had horrible S.A.T.s, wanted to be the sun when she grew up, and was obsessed with Molly Ringwald. Gayle Forman writes young adult because she believes that young people are more passionate about books in a way adults are not. In summation, Forman’s personal experiences and creativity play a crucial role in the shaping of her exceptional masterpieces that are able to relate to the young adult audience entirely and on all levels.

Above all, Forman writes about appealing topics for the young adult audience. She writes of hard decisions, love, and the struggles of life. In the wonderfully written *If I Stay,* the whole basis of the book is whether or not Mia should stay in a world where her family is all dead but has a loving support network of friends and grandparents, or whether to join her parents and brother in the afterlife. Gayle Forman has the exceptional ability to be able to include a love story into a book, but not make it the main focus of a book. The *Just One Day* trilogy is more than just Allyson and Willem’s journey as a couple, but of their own separate journeys of finding themselves. As Willem says, “Accidents. It’s all about the accidents.” One may find that the “accident” of Willem and Allyson falling in love greatly benefitted both of them, in that they were able to learn things about themselves they never would have if it were not for each other. In the books Allyson learns how to be her own advocate; she finds her true self underneath what everyone else has shaped her into. With the *If I Stay* books, she writes Adam into having to make very hard choices for himself and going from his whole world being complete and perfect to broken and sad. Throughout *Where She Went* Adam goes on a life journey that shows him who he truly is. In *If I Stay* Forman puts Adam through the wringer. “If you stay, I'll do whatever you want… maybe coming back to your old life would be too painful, that maybe it'd be easier for you to erase us. And that would suck, but I'd do it. I can lose you like that if I don't lose you today. I'll let you go. If you stay” (Forman, Gayle). This quote shows how hard of a choice Adam had to make in telling Mia that he will be able to let her go, but for Adam this crushes him. Through these example and reasons, it is apparent that Forman has the uncanny ability to write about the struggles of the young adult world. Writing on these topics makes her an exceptional writer.

In summary, what makes Gayle Forman an exceptional writer is her ability to relate to her readers. Gayle Forman understands that not everyone deciphers a book in the same way, so she allows for a book to be multi-meaningful. Additionally, Forman uses her personal experiences to her benefit, by including similar experiences in her books to make them more realistic. Finally, Gayle Forman writes of the struggles and hard choices of life. These abilities all make for an exceptional author, and an exceptional author means the novels they write will be beautifully crafted and well written. “Love, it never dies. It never goes away, it never fades, so long as you hang on to it. Love can make you immortal” (Forman, Gayle).

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| H is for hard choices. In this book Mia is faced with extremely hard choices, including life or death - do I stay or do I leave. | D is for Doctors. Mia is miraculously saved by doctors after a devastating car accidents. |