



Readers' Favorite[®]

Book Reviews and Award Contest

Book Review Mini-Critique



Below you will find ratings (scale of 1-5) with descriptions for the major parts of your book followed by your Readers' Favorite review. Although these are general ratings we hope they will give you an insight into how others may view the different components of your book.

These are the opinions of your reviewer, and although your reviewer is not an expert literary critic or professional editor, they are at the very least, an avid reader of books just like yours.

Title: After Anderson
Subtitle: Aftermath of a Tragedy
Author: Jamila Mikhail
Genre: Fiction - Social Issues

Appearance: The appearance of a book can make a significant impact on the experience of a reader, whose enjoyment is often enhanced by an enticing cover, an intriguing table of contents, interesting chapter headings, and when possible, eye-catching illustrations.

4

Plot: The characters of a book should be well defined with strengths and flaws, and while they do not have to be likable, the reader does have to be able to form a connection with them. The tone should be consistent, the theme should be clear, and the plot should be original or told from a unique perspective. For informative books -- those without plot and characters--this rating refers primarily to your concept and how well you presented it.

5

- Development:** Development refers to how effectively you told your story or discussed your topic. The dialogue should be realistic, the descriptions should be vivid, and the material should be concise and coherent. Organization is also a key factor, especially for informative books -- those without plot and characters. The order in which you tell your story or explain your topic and how smoothly it flows can have a huge impact on the reader's understanding and enjoyment of the material.
- 4**
- Formatting:** Formatting is the single most overlooked area by authors. The way in which you describe scenes, display dialogue, and shift point of view can make or break your story. In addition, excessive grammatical errors and typos can give your book an amateurish feel and even put off readers completely.
- 4**
- Marketability:** Marketability refers to how effectively you wrote your book for your target audience. Authors may include content that is above or below the understanding of their target reader, or include concepts, opinions or language that can accidentally confuse or alienate some readers. Although by its nature this rating is very subjective, a very low rating here and poor reviews may indicate an issue with your book in this area.
- 5**
- Overall Opinion:** The overall starred rating takes into account all these elements and describes the overall reading experience of your reviewer. This is the official Readers' Favorite review rating for your book.
- 4**

Review:

Reviewed by Cheryl E. Rodriguez for Readers' Favorite

Jamila Mikhail pens a story of tragedy in *After Anderson*. Two years have passed since Aly Feldman's best friend, Anderson Massey, entered their high school and began shooting. "Twenty people paid with their lives for everyone's collective failure." Aly remains tormented by the massacre. She feels great remorse for all those who lost their lives, especially Anderson. Although she survived, Aly lost her life that day as well. Two years of therapy hadn't really helped and, consumed with memories, her recovery is unrealized. The pain comes and goes, but never leaves; it has become part of her. Yet, it is time to somehow move forward, time to return to Belden High School, the place where her life changed forever. On her return to school, Aly discovers friendship and moral support from the Petrov twins. Her new found friends become instrumental in bridging the gap between Aly's old life and a new one. Is it really possible to have a life "After Anderson?"

"After you survive Anderson Massey your life doesn't just pick up where it left off." *After Anderson* by Jamila Mikhail wrenches your heart, challenges your soul, tests your personal morality and beliefs. I totally agree with the author's statement in her commentary, if it "doesn't bother you there's something wrong." We all need to learn to listen to the spoken and unspoken, and really pay attention to those around us. There were many aspects I admired, even more that I appreciated, and a few I could have done without. The story is multi-cultural, a bit political (honestly, my patriotism was battered a bit), yet very insightful. There is no denying, "The universe, with all of its flaws and disasters, was so beautifully and intricately crafted." This line continues to echo in my mind. In saying that, how does one enjoy a book about a mass shooting? You don't, but you do hope to gain an understanding of the cause of such a tragedy. Jamila Mikhail reveals the trauma that lingers long after such a violent act. *After Anderson* is the story of a survivor.

Written in the first person, the heroine's thoughts and emotions are explicitly described, thus felt. Page by page, her character grows and evolves beyond the tragedy. She befriends an unlikely duo, the twins who open her eyes, change her perspective and encourage her to move forward. One of the key elements within the narrative are the letters between Aly and Anderson; they create raw realness and depth of soul. The words exchanged in those passages are my favorite part of the story. As the story concludes, the denouement reveals that life truly goes on. There is life "After Anderson."