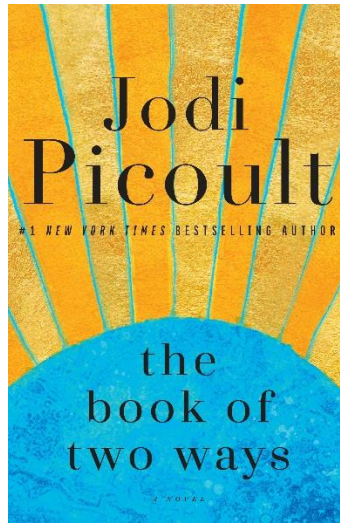


Review of The Book of Two Ways by Jodi Picoult



Jodi Picoult has written many fiction books dealing with weighty issues. These include abortion, racism, and gun violence, just to name a few. On first impression, [The Book of Two Ways](#) seems more mundane. First impressions aside, this book tackles an age old issue – which path to take when life offers you two alternatives, both of which will result in love and personal fulfillment and both of which will hurt important people in your life. The route Picoult (pronounced Pee’co) follows in addressing this issue is different than anyone might have imagined.

In the first pages of the book, Dawn is on a plane. The flight attendants announce that the plane has encountered a problem and that everyone should brace for a crash. In this moment, Dawn’s first thought is not of her family and whether she will ever see them again, but instead of Wyatt, her old boyfriend from graduate school, a man she left in Egypt when the two of them were doing groundbreaking work at an ancient dig site. Back then, Dawn had to leave quickly and unexpectedly when her mother became seriously ill in the United States. Once her mother died, she had to stay to take care of a younger brother. One thing lead to another, and soon 15 years have gone by and Dawn now has a husband (Brian), a teen-aged daughter, and a solid marriage. She has by necessity abandoned her emerging career as an Egyptologist and instead now practices as a “death doula,” a companion of sorts to the dying who tries to meet their every spiritual need until their time is up.

The reader doesn’t know why Dawn was on that plane, but finds that Dawn survives the crash and now has to decide where to have the airline take her – back home to her family or back to Egypt to try to recapture her former life.

Picoult chooses to have her main character do both. In alternating chapters, she pursues both lives. Wyatt, who is still on the same dig, is surprised when she shows up after 15 years, and her physicist husband Brian embraces her when she returns from the airport. As the story progresses along both story lines, the reader sees that she is happy in both lives.

This is one of those books where every single character is likeable and you want them all to end up happy. They are also exceptionally interesting, from the main character with her knowledge of Egypt and her desire to assist the dying in having graceful departures, to her daughter whose self-loathing of her own body presents many challenges to her family. Picoult's character development occurs naturally through the storyline rather than being ponderously descriptive.

The explanations of the tombs and burial traditions could be a bit overwhelming to readers. However, you will learn things you didn't know about Egypt and its history. Likewise, when Dawn's husband explains to her about Schrodinger's cat during a flashback of their first date, it could be a bit more than one was bargaining for in a novel you are reading for entertainment. On the other hand, it is a very clear, understandable explanation of a complicated concept. Picoult has obviously done her homework.

Her husband Brian believes in alternate universes and has conversations with Dawn about this regularly. Picoult ultimately resolves the novel's tension by cleverly using this theory and the innate goodness of the characters. This novel brings a welcome new perspective to the age-old story of the love triangle.

You can place a hold on this book through our catalog. It is available as a [book](#), [audiobook](#), [ebook](#), and [large print](#).