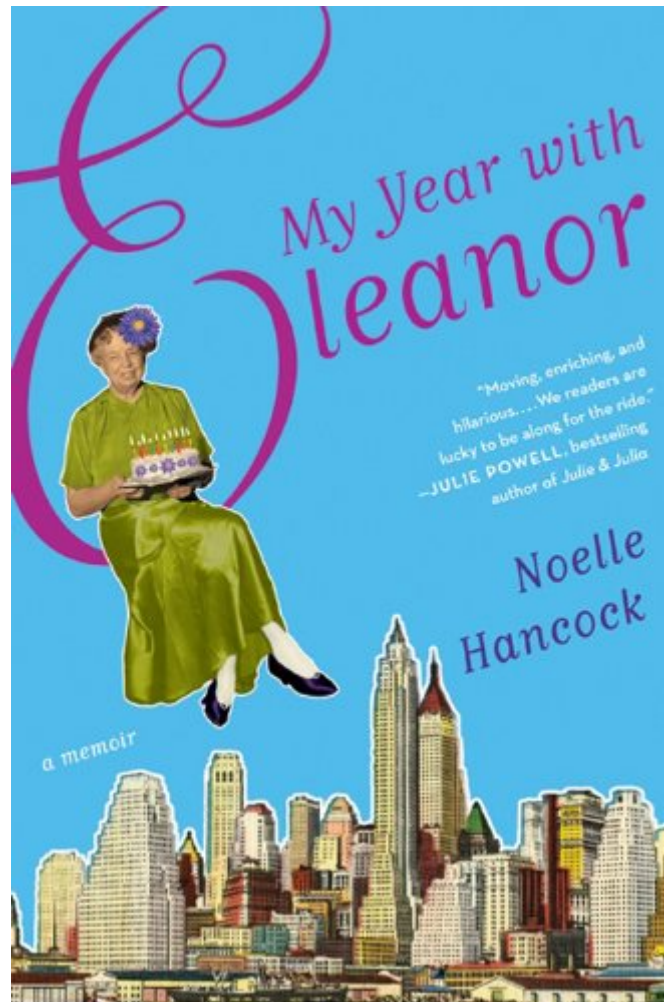


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My Year With Eleanor: A Memoir



Synopsis

“I honestly loved this book.” —Jim Norton, New York Times bestselling author of *I Hate Your Guts*

Eleanor taught Noelle that, first and foremost, *Courage Takes Practice*. Her yearlong quest to face her terrors, great and small, is moving, enriching, and hilarious—we readers are lucky to be along for the ride.” —Julie Powell, bestselling author of *Julie & Julia*

In the tradition of *My Year of Living Biblically* and *Eat Pray Love* comes *My Year with Eleanor*, Noelle Hancock’s hilarious tale of her decision to heed the advice of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and do one thing a day that scares her in the year before her 30th birthday. Fans of Sloane Crosley and Chelsea Handler will absolutely adore Hancock’s charming and outrageous chronicle of her courageous endeavor and delight in her poignant and inspiring personal growth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am in a book club of women between 55 and 90, and none of us cared for this book, other than the parts about Eleanor Roosevelt. From all the positive reviews, I can only guess that it appeals more to younger women. My personal view, which may sound a little harsh, is that the author, whose one over-riding fear seems to be not winning at everything she does, wanted to write a book but needed

material, so she created this concept of doing things she was afraid of. This seems to be a trend in publishing, perhaps started by "Eat, Pray, Love" and the book about the girl cooking Julia Child recipes (also see "Animal, Vegetable, Miracle" by Barbara Kingsolver) -- authors pitch an idea to publishers that involves setting up some kind of challenge for themselves for a year and then they write about it. It's the equivalent of a reality TV show. Most of us found her challenges superficial and somewhat forced. One person commented "She went from writing about celebrities to trying to become one herself by writing a book about herself." Way too much narcissism here. She has good writing skills, but needs a subject that has some substance.

Normally I'm somewhat wary of "I tried ___ for a year" memoirs, but this one is delightful, inspiring and offers some history lessons. When Noelle Hancock learns that her entertainment blogging job has ended, she's at a loss as to what to do. In therapy, she's trying to overcome her fears, and she decides to look to Eleanor Roosevelt for advice, latching on to the First Lady's prompt to do one thing each that scares you. Hancock doesn't detail 365 feats, but the ones she does are at turns dramatic (shark diving, trapeze work, climbing Mount Kilimanjaro), unnerving (working at a mortuary to conquer her fear of death), amusing (doing standup comedy is the thing she fears most) and more everyday (weaning herself off sleeping pills). Along the way she writes about her fears about whether her boyfriend's reporter job will always overshadow her and the future of their relationship. What I appreciated most is that Hancock is not trying to tell everyone to apply Eleanor's advice, and she grapples constantly with being "ready" to face her fears, taking her last sleeping pill when she is forced to by the mountain climb. She isn't overly self-deprecating, but does bare her fears in a way that makes it almost impossible not to like her as a narrator--or look inward at one's own fears. She also shines a bit of light on some of the major accomplishments of Eleanor Roosevelt, and while the two are from very different times, the effect Eleanor has on the author is clear in her references and devotion to living according to her spirit. This memoir never feels predetermined, and Hancock's insights into her accomplishments are as worthy of attention as her feats themselves, especially relating to Kilimanjaro. She shows an empathy and compassion that extends to her friends and those she meets (including the dead) as well as to herself.

When I sat down to read this book, I was prepared to laugh. Having been a fan of Noelle's blog, I knew she was a hilarious writer. I was not, however, prepared to be completely and totally inspired. I began reading with the intention of reading a chapter before bed, and before I knew it I was done with the book in three hours. I couldn't put it down. Noelle had me laughing and tearing up, riding

the emotional rollercoaster along with her and loving every minute of it. The novel is so relatable, it's a testament to growing up and dealing with all of the insecurities you acquire along the way. From facing up to ex-boyfriends to realizing how to handle serious relationships to jumping out of a plane to climbing a mountain, Noelle was incredibly inspirational throughout her journey. I'm not a huge fan of cheesy how-to-live-your-life books and this couldn't be more different, yet it really did give me the strength to think about what I'm most afraid of, and think of how I can change that. Plus, it made me really wish for a Dr. Bob in my life. A truly touching read.... with a large dose of a badass lead character.

I was so excited for Noelle's book release that I literally stayed up late on a *school* night and waited until it was available to download onto my Kindle. Noelle's writing is so honest and personal that there is universal voice there; you are included and immediately feel like you, too, are along for the ride: *The Year Of Fear*. So many parts were so meaningful to me, that they warranted being highlighted along the way, or I had to stop and call my sister to read her certain quotes - from Noelle, not Eleanor. These phone calls and debriefing sessions were the only thing standing in the way of a straight-through read. Upon finishing the book, I felt an odd loneliness... like a friendship was coming to an end. However, I had learned to fret not, so I did two things: 1) started re-reading my favorite chapters and 2) picked up a new hobby inspired from the book that had previously been something I feared. This book was a godsend...

I loved the premise overall and loved all the references to Eleanor R. However, I felt after a while that the heroine or our story was simply using E.R.'s life story as an "excuse" to go off and indulge in some self narcissism. E.R. was raised in a privileged family but was imbued with a strong sense of giving back and "paying it forward". Her life was very involved on the lives of others less privileged than her. This was twisted into a young lady "going out to find herself" (much as we did in the 60's but with more money and technology today). Money seemed to be a trifling problem that she met with some work, Daddy's money and friends. By the end of the book I was tired of her self indulging escapades and the constant "approval" of her escapades by the incredibly fictional Dr. Bob. She seemed to think as soon as she explained what she wanted to do and wrapped it in E.R.'s quotes, he thought it a grand idea. Given Dr. Bob's approval, off she went to spend some more money indulging herself in more fun things all for herself. I found very little that she did for others, though there were a few examples. Largely, though it was all about her having fun. There's nothing wrong with having fun, but enveloping it around the example of E.R.'s life is a bit disingenuous. Thus it gets

3 stars from this reader.

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