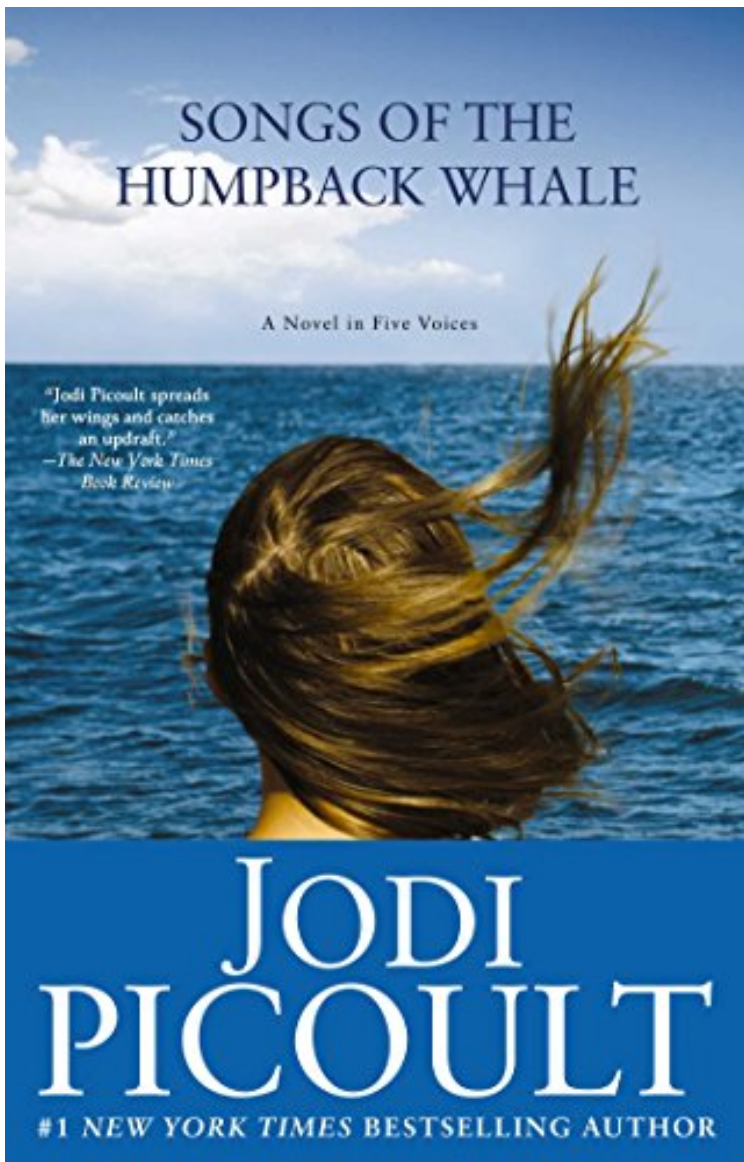


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Songs of the Humpback Whale: A Novel in Five Voices (Wsp Readers Club) (English Edition)



Par Jodi Picoult
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Par Jodi Picoult : Songs of the Humpback Whale: A Novel in Five Voices (Wsp Readers Club) (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Songs of the Humpback Whale: A Novel in Five Voices (Wsp Readers Club) (English Edition):

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Sometimes finding your own voice is a matter of listening to the heart.... Jodi Picoult's powerful novel portrays an emotionally charged marriage that changes course in one explosive moment....For years, Jane Jones has lived in the shadow of her husband, renowned San Diego oceanographer Oliver Jones. But during an escalating argument, Jane turns on him with an alarming volatility. In anger and

fear, Jane leaves with their teenage daughter, Rebecca, for a cross-country odyssey charted by letters from her brother Joley, guiding them to his Massachusetts apple farm, where surprising self-discoveries await.

Now Oliver, an expert at tracking humpback whales across vast oceans, will search for his wife across a continent -- and find a new way to see the world, his family, and himself: through her eyes.

Chapter One: Jane
The night before I got married I woke up, screaming, from my sleep. My parents came into the room and put their arms around me; they patted my head and smoothed my hair, fine, and I still couldn't stop screaming. Even with my mouth closed, I continued -- the high, shrill note of a nocturnal animal. My parents were beside themselves. We lived in a button-down suburb of Boston, and we were waking up the neighbors one by one. I watched the lights come on in different houses -- blue and yellow, blinking like Christmas --

and wondered what was happening to me. This wasn't a common occurrence. I was barely nineteen, a straight-A student fresh out of Wellesley College and in 1976 that was still an accomplishment. I was marrying the man of my dreams in a prototypical white clapboard New England church, and the reception -- a lavish one with white-gloved waiters and Beluga caviar -- was going to be held in my parents' backyard. I

had a job waiting for me when I returned from my honeymoon. There was no foreseeable problem that I could articulate. To this day, I don't know why that happened to me. As mysteriously as it all started, the screaming went away and the next morning I married Oliver Jones -- the Oliver Jones -- and we just about lived happily ever after. I am the only speech pathologist in this town, which means I get shuttled back and forth to different elementary schools in the San Diego suburbs. It's not such a big deal now that Rebecca is old enough to take care of herself, and since Oliver is away so much of the time, I have less to do at home. I

enjoy my work but certainly not the way Oliver enjoys his work. Oliver would be content to live in a sailcloth tent on the coast of Argentina, watching his whales sound in warm water. My job is to help children find their voices -- kinds that come to school mute, or with lisps or cleft palates. At first, they come into my

little makeshift classroom one at a time and they shuffle their Keds on the floor and shyly glance at the formidable recording equipment and they are absolutely silent. Sometimes I stay silent too, until the student breaks the ice and asks what he or she is supposed to do. Some students cover their mouths with their hands

at this point; I have even seen one little girl cry: they cannot stand to hear their own voices, pieces of themselves that they have been told are ugly. My role is to show them there's someone who is ready to listen to what they have to say and the way they have to say it. When I was seven, I tell these kids, I used to whistle every time I said the letter S. In school I got teased and because of this I did not have many friends and I did

not talk very much. One day my teacher told the class we'd be putting on a play and that everyone had to participate. I was so nervous about reading aloud in front of everyone else that I pretended I was sick. I faked a fever by holding the thermometer up to a light bulb when my mother left the room. I was allowed to stay home for three days, until my teacher called, and my mother figured out what I was doing. When I went back to school, my teacher called me aside. All of the parts had been taken in the play, she said, but she had saved a special role for me, offstage. I was going to be the Manager of Sound Effects, just like in the movies.

I practiced with my teacher every day after school for three weeks. In time I discovered I could become a fire engine, a bird, a mouse, a bee, and many other things because of my lisp. When the night of the play came, I was given a black robe and a microphone. The other students got to be just one part, but I became

the voice of several animals and machines. And my father was so proud of me; it was the only time I remember him telling me so. That's the story I give at those Coastal Studies cocktail parties Oliver and I go to. We rub shoulders with people who'll give grant money. We introduce ourselves as Dr. and Dr. Jones, although I'm still ABD. We sneak out when everyone is going to sit down to the main course, and we run to

the car and make fun of people's sequined dresses and dinner jackets. Inside, I curl up against Oliver as he drives, and I listen to him tell me stories I have heard a million times before -- about an era when you could spot whales in every ocean. In spite of it all, there's just something about Oliver. You know what I'm talking about -- he was the first man who truly took my breath away, and sometimes he still can. He's the one person

I feel comfortable enough with to share a home, a life, a child. He can take me back fifteen years with a smile. In spite of differences, Oliver and I have Oliver and I. In this one school where I spend Tuesdays, my office is a janitorial closet. Sometime after noon the secretary of the school knocks on the door and tells me

Dr. Jones is on the phone. Now this is truly a surprise. Oliver is at home this week, putting together some research, but he usually has neither the time nor the inclination to call me. He never asks what school I head to on a given day. "Tell him I'm with a student," I say, and I push the play button on my tape recorder.

Vowel sounds fill the room: AAAAA EEEEEIIIII. I know Oliver too well to play his games. OOOOO UUUUU. Oh, you. Oh, you. Oliver is Very Famous. He wasn't when we met, but today he is one of the

leading researchers of whales and whale behavior. He has made discoveries that have rocked the scientific world. He is so well known that people take pictures of our mailbox, as if to say, "I've been to the place where Dr. Jones lives." Oliver's most important research has been on whale songs. It appears that whole groupings of whales sing the same ones -- Oliver has recorded this -- and pass the songs down over generations. I don't understand much about his work, but that is just as much my fault as Oliver's. He never tells me about the ideas burning in his mind anymore, and I sometimes forget to ask. Naturally Oliver's career has come first. He moved us to California to take a job with the San Diego Center for Coastal Studies, only to find out East Coast humpbacks were his true passion. The minute I got to San Diego I wanted to leave, but I didn't tell Oliver that. For better or for worse, I had said. Oliver got to fly back to Boston and I stayed here with an infant, in a climate that is always summer, that never smells like snow. I'm not taking his phone call. I'm not taking this again, period. It is one thing for me to play second fiddle; it is another thing to see it happen to Rebecca. At fourteen she has the ability to take a survey of her life from a higher vantage point -- an ability I haven't mastered at thirty-five -- and I do not believe she likes what she is seeing. When Oliver is home, which is rare, he spends more time in his study than with us. He doesn't take an interest in anything that isn't tied to the seas. The way he treats me is one matter: we have a history; I hold myself accountable for falling in love in the first place. But Rebecca will not take him on faith, just because he is her father. Rebecca expects. I've heard about teenagers who run away, or get pregnant or drop out of school, and I have heard these things linked to problems at home. So I offered Oliver an ultimatum. Rebecca's fifteenth birthday next week coincides with Oliver's planned visit to a humpback breeding ground off the coast of South America. Oliver intends to go. I told him to be here. What I wanted to say is: This is your daughter. Even if we have grown so far apart that we don't recognize each other when we pass, we have this life, this block of time, and what do you think about that? One reason I keep my mouth shut is Rebecca's accident. It was the result of a fight with Oliver, and I've been doing my best to keep something like that from happening again. I don't remember what that argument was about, but I gave him a piece of my mind and he hit me. I picked up my baby (Rebecca was three and a half at the time) and flew to my parents. I told my mother I was going to divorce Oliver; he was a lunatic and on top of this he'd hit me. Oliver called and said he didn't care what I did but I had no right to keep his daughter. He threatened legal action. So I took Rebecca to the airport and told her, "I'm sorry, honey, but I can't stand that man." I bribed a stewardess with a hundred dollars to take her on the plane, and it crashed in Des Moines. The next thing I knew I was standing in a farmer's cornfield, watching the wreckage smoke. It still seemed to be moving. The wind sang through the plane's limbs, voices I couldn't place. And behind me was Rebecca, singed but intact, one of five survivors, curled in her father's arms. She has Oliver's yellow hair and freckles. Like him, she's beautiful. Oliver and I looked at each other and I knew right then why fate had made me fall in love with a man like Oliver Jones: some combination of him and of me had created a child who could charm even unyielding earth. Copyright 1992 by Jodi Picoult From Publishers Weekly As Picoult uses five voices to tell a complex tale of love, friendship and a Faulknerian family history, her mastery of language strongly individuates her characters. The primary voice in this accomplished first novel belongs to Jane Jones, a speech pathologist living in San Diego, Calif. Other narrators are her daughter Rebecca; her husband, Oliver, a marine biologist renowned for his research on the songs of humpback whales; her brother Joley; and her lover, Sam. When an argument between Jane and Oliver culminates in her striking him, Jane is shattered. A childhood victim of physical and sexual abuse, Jane has tried to submerge her memories, but this outbreak of violence causes her to reexamine her life. On a cross-country automobile trip, Jane and Rebecca travel to Stow, Mass., where Joley is living and where each woman meets the man she believes is her destiny. Jane relates the events that occur from San Diego to Stow, while Rebecca tells the story in reverse, flashing back from the climax. Their stories intersect in an Iowa cornfield that still bears the wreckage of the airliner on which then-three-year-old Rebecca was being sent back to her father during her parents' earlier separation; she was one of five survivors. This powerful and affecting novel demonstrates that there are as many truths to a story as there are people to tell it. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.