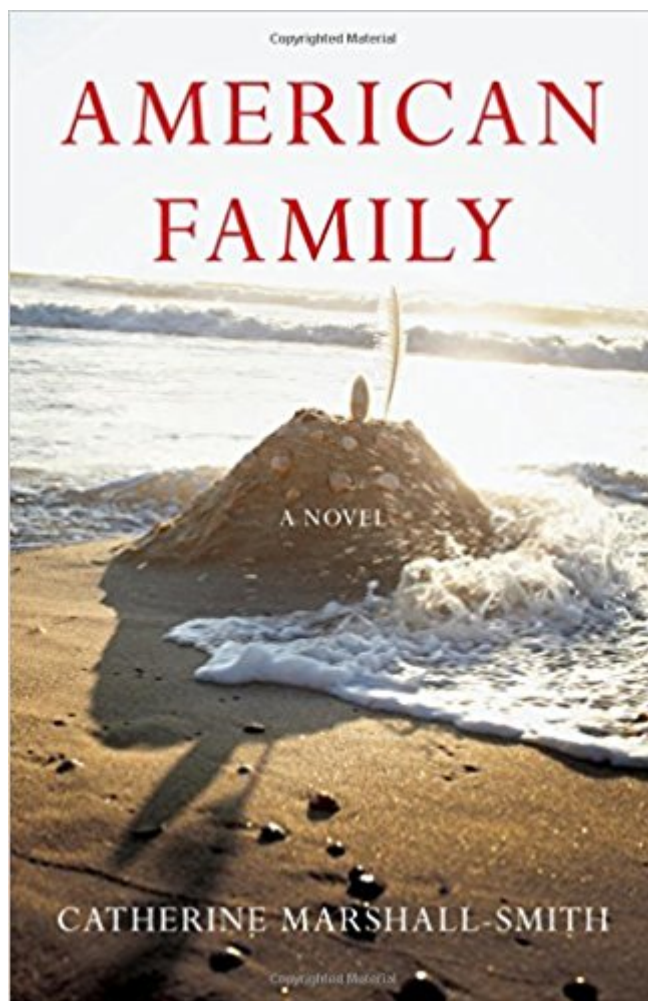


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American Family: A Novel



Synopsis

Richard and Michael, both three years sober, have just decided to celebrate their love by moving in together when Richard is driven by the desire to do the right thing for his ten-year-old daughter, Brady, whom he has never met impulsively calls his former father-in-law to connect with her. With that phone call, he jeopardizes the one good thing he has his relationship with Michael and also threatens the world of the fundamentalist Christian grandparents who love Brady and see her as payback from God for the alcohol-related death of her mother. Unable to reach an agreement, the two parties hire lawyers who have agendas far beyond the interests of the families and Brady is initially trusted into Richard and Michael's care. But when the judge learns that the young girl was present when a questionable act took place while in their custody, she returns Brady to her grandparents. Ultimately, it's not until further tragedy strikes that both families are finally motivated to actually act in the best interests of the child.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A nuanced portrait of what it means to be a family, with a bit of melodrama but plenty of heart." —Kirkus Reviews
"A poignant literary pageant of custody battles, alcoholism, religious restraint and family turmoil, this tremendously moving read will leave you in bouts of feels all summer long." —Redbook
"An emotionally gripping read that explores the deepest of cracks in a dysfunctional family, this poignant book belongs in the hands of every parent this summer." —Working Mother
"This emotionally gripping tale about a gay man who must battle his way to sobriety and convince his ex father-in-law he is worthy of a relationship with his 10-year-old

daughter will leave every dad moved. If you want your gift to finally induce your dad to weep in your presence, this might be your chance." •Popsugar "When Richard confronts his daughter's fundamentalist Christian grandparents for a second chance at fatherhood, the most emotionally harrowing and heavy family drama of 2017 unfolds. Be sure you pack tissues in the glove compartment." •Brit+Co "A heartbreaking and emotionally riveting reading experience that reminds readers that most every American family has its dysfunctional ghosts. This explosive novel will add drama to your summer from Page 1." •SheKnows

Catherine Marshall-Smith teaches writing and history to 6th graders, runs long distance, is married to the love of her life, mother to three adult children, has two grand dogs and one dachshund with a very straight nose. In the process of writing *American Family*, she observed in Family Court, interviewed lawyers and a judge and read the Supreme Court ruling on grandparents' rights with a lawyer. She has her bachelor's degree in English from University of California at Berkeley and earned a Creative Writing Certificate from the Writing Program at UCLA where she was short listed for the James Kirkwood Award for Fiction 2012.

In this absorbing novel, Catherine Marshall-Smith creates a captivating story of a modern American family in crisis. With lively dialogue and fast-moving scenes, she brings to life a set of richly-drawn, multi-dimensional characters that you will come to love: ten-year-old Brady, her long-lost dad, and his gay partner. As her loving grandparents fight to get her back, Brady faces some increasingly edgy scenes that ratchet up the tension until the dramatic climax. What I love about this book is the way it surprises you. Just as you think it will fall into clichés or stereotypes, you are zipping through a scene you didn't expect. The characters remain unique individuals, with their own quirks, and they act in ways that seem right to them. Without scorn for anyone's religion, the author deftly deals with profound differences that are tearing this family in two and brings us masterfully to a surprise ending.

The characters in Catherine Marshall-Smith's *AMERICAN FAMILY* intrigue and engage the reader from the first page, and don't let go until the satisfying ending. None are perfect, none tragically flawed, all portrayed as lovable, quirky, real people, and I found myself pulling for all of them!

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher via NetGalley and I'm freely giving my honest review. Richard and Michael are two men who is recovering alcoholics. They are now in a stable

relationship with each other. When they try to get in contact with Richard's daughter who he haven't seen ever, the events and challenges is lining up. This was a great book, and I loved that even if it was very realistic it had a fairytale ending. Richard and Michael was portrayed very realistic with flaws and insecurities like every person has more or less of. The character I liked the least in the beginning was Michael because I thought he seemed a little arrogant, and had some challenges in understanding where Richard's need to see his daughter came from. But after a while I could see that Richard was impulsive and a little selfish at times. However I thought they both made progress to work out their differences and find a middle way. In some ways I find this book to also describe how your life changes when a child enters the picture. And that's something every parent can recognise. I felt really sorry for Brady because she was in the middle of everything and obviously had some problems fitting in at school already before her father entered the picture. I liked the writing style because it was straight forward and easy to read. The characters was very well written. The book had a warmth to it that I liked. I thought the storyline was good and after half of the book was read I could not put it down. A very well written book about the challenges and prejudice people are met with when they don't "fit the right form"

Richard and Michael are in a relationship and have just moved in together. All should be good, but something heavy is on Richard's heart. His daughter, Brady from a one time relationship. Brady lives with her deceased mothers' parents who are older. Richard makes one phone call that sets this storyline in motion. We get to journey with the main characters when Richard wants company. It is an absorbing look at child custody case with 2 gay males wanting custody. This book is realistic but sweet at the same time. I started this book and could not put it down. I will recommend this book to quite a few readers that I know. Thanks to NetGalley, the author and the publisher for the ARC of this book in return for my honest review of this book.

American Family is a touching, true-to-life story of a modern-day family divided by conflict. The characters on all sides of the court conflict "a gay dad fighting for custody of the daughter he abandoned before she was born and the traditional, Christian grandparents who stepped in to take care of her" are portrayed with both criticism and compassion. While not avoiding the topics of sexuality and religion, the author deftly avoids handing out white hats and black hats in this story. All of the characters make mistakes. They all have blind spots. They all love the child that they're fighting for. Everyone's hat is a shade of gray. Marshall-Smith shows all of the characters as flawed, both sides as caring, and both sides coming from a place of love and protection for a child. No

monsters, just humans struggling with the circumstances they're facing. The characters and the story are written with such empathy and even-handedness that most any reader can feel the complexity of the problem that they face and can only wonder how they would rule should they be the judge in this particular court. Those who enjoy Jody Picoult's style of portraying modern-day conflicts in a readable, accessible, and compelling story will love *American Family*. A perfect beach read or book club selection.

As others have written, the characters in *American Family*™ by Catherine Marshall-Smith have shortcomings that we recognize and can relate to even while we applaud their growth and openness as the story progresses. Everyone gets challenged in this book, and they do not always behave as they should. The story brings up many discussion worthy topics: Should society give second chances to a parent who abandoned his child? What is more important in a family, a stable, traditional upbringing, or emotional connection and engagement? Does our society have different standards for gay and straight families? How much is it reasonable to expect of a school administration when it comes to identifying and rectifying bullying? And then there are the issues of parenting a 10 year-old without the benefit of developing your own style, not to mention syncing it with your partner's over the proceeding decade! Catherine Marshall-Smith guides us through a warm story that touches on so many conflicts, both large and small, in a way that is true, and seamless. This book is a lively and accessible read.

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