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Family & Relationships

She Looks Just Like You: A Memoir of (Nonbiological Lesbian) Motherhood
Amie Klempnauer Miller
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She Looks Just Like You, Amie Klempnauer Miller's memoir detailing the birth and early years of her daughter, Hannah, contains many expected travails from a new mother's world. Miller writes of a complicated birth, hours of birthing classes, deciding to be a stay-at-home mother, and managing a cranky infant—yet, unlike many new mothers, Miller is Hannah's nonbiological mother. Miller's partner, Jane, is the birth mother. As lesbian parents, Miller and Jane confront legal and biological decisions that heterosexual parents rarely, if ever, encounter, like second-parent adoption and sperm donation. The memoir chronicles Miller's experiences through these and other new-mother milestones with a smart, intimate take on the lessons learned along the way.

While scanning the Internet for sperm, Miller cleverly notes some of her rules for selection: "Don't take anyone who says he likes to laugh at his own jokes. Avoid donors described by the sperm bank's intake worker as 'unique.'" In moments like these, where Miller takes her reader through the numerous baby-preparation rituals common to lesbian couples, she writes with a candid and wry eye. She describes the many baby books purchased during and after Jane's pregnancy, explaining, "I find myself drawn to books for new fathers…many of the questions faced by stay-at-home dads are also mine." Miller devotes much of the memoir to deciphering her role as a new mother—is she Mama to Jane's Mom? She has a foot in several roles: she's a stay-at-home mother who reads books for dads and is often told in public how much she resembles her nonbiological child. In the process of reading about these issues, readers learn of the particular struggles of same-sex parenthood, an education that helps to personalize the myriad legal and civil rights issues faced by many couples like Miller and Jane.

Perhaps aware of this personalization, Miller includes a resource guide at the book's end for readers who want more information about the legal nuances of or support groups for gay parenthood. This inclusion illustrates one of this memoir's most fundamental purposes—to

function as written activism, to advocate for other gay families as they undertake the complicated and rewarding task of parenting. “I am Hannah’s Mama,” Miller states, “and that is something different from the other categories, something that is distinct from mother and father, something that is new in the world.” Situated in this newness, *She Looks Just Like You* tells a story that parents from all sorts of “categories” need to hear.

Rachel Mennies