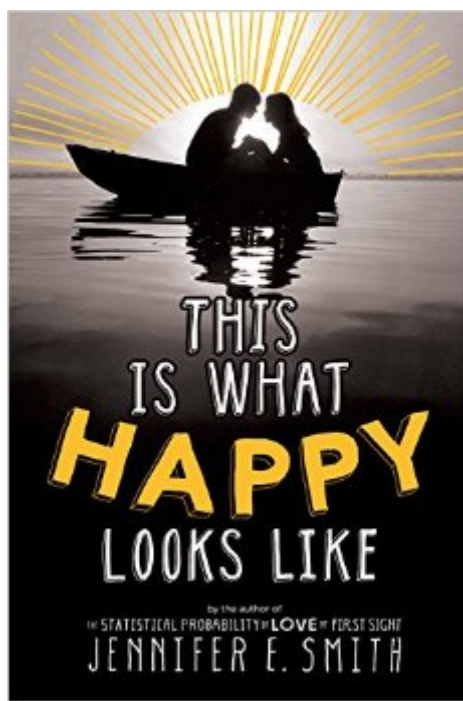


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This Is What Happy Looks Like



Synopsis

If fate sent you an email, would you answer? When teenage movie star Graham Larkin accidentally sends small town girl Ellie O'Neill an email about his pet pig, the two seventeen-year-olds strike up a witty and unforgettable correspondence, discussing everything under the sun, except for their names or backgrounds. Then Graham finds out that Ellie's Maine hometown is the perfect location for his latest film, and he decides to take their relationship from online to in-person. But can a star as famous as Graham really start a relationship with an ordinary girl like Ellie? And why does Ellie want to avoid the media's spotlight at all costs?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is What Happy Looks Like was surprising, to me. I read a review yesterday by Jen YA Romantics, that described it as a mix of You've Got Mail, Notting Hill, and What a Girl Wants. That's about as accurate of a description as I could ever hope to come up with. What was surprising for me about This is What Happy Looks Like is that it was, hmm... underwhelming. Don't get me wrong, it was sweet, and charming. I liked the characters, but there was not a lot to keep me hooked. In fact, I put this down for three days because I got swept away in another series that was full of fun and passion and angst, highs and lows. And in comparison, this was just nice. Smith is obviously an extremely talented author. I absolutely adored The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight. I raved about it to all my friends for months, and credit it with making me love a boy named Oliver. Maybe that has caused me to judge this book a little too much. And though I liked Ellie and Graham,

their portrayals were just sort of flat. I understood where they were coming from with their feelings and questions about their lives, but they didn't feel fully developed. I almost felt a true attachment to them and their story at certain points, the epic was just within reach, but then the story would move along and the feeling went away. Also, I would have liked at least a smidge more resolution in the ending. *This Is What Happy Looks Like* was a good, if underwhelming, story. I did like it, but will also say that I never fell in love with it. And I wouldn't discourage anyone from reading it, but I would also say to maybe be prepared to not be swept away.

So to start off, I just want to put it out there that I am NOT a big fan of contemporaries. I mean there are a few authors in that category that I will read, but normally I'll stick to the more Sci-Fi and Fantasy aspects. Well Jennifer E. Smith is one of those authors I can't get enough of. A few months ago when I read *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight*, I fell in love with her writing style. So when I heard that she had a new book coming out with an amazing premise, I just had to pre-order it. And then I had to stay up until four in the morning to read it. (yeah, I'm the kind of person who does that, BUT only if I don't have school.) My point is *This is What Happy Looks Like* does not disappoint. **THE PROS**1.) The E-mails. The e-mails were funny and it was a great concept, although it might have made a bit more sense if they were texts. (More people text than use e-mail.)2.) Dual POV. In *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight*, there was only Hadley's perspective, but in this book, both Ellie and Graham get their say.3.) Ellie and Graham. I just loved both of them. They come off as really shy around each other and it's really cute. I love Ellie's back story and why she has a reason for not wanting to be with Graham. So many times you read a book and the main characters are kept apart for stupid reasons, but here, it made sense.4.) Graham's pig Wilbur.... You never actually get to meet him. :(But I did think Graham's relationship with his pig was insanely sweet!5.) The cover! I just LOVE the cover. It's just so pretty.6.) Jennifer E. Smith's writing style. I've already said this, but I just love how she writes the story, she actually makes you feel connected.7.) I loved the beginning. It was so funny how Graham was so let down about "Ellie" because the whole time I sat there laughing and thinking, "I know something you don't!!"8.) I loved Graham and Ellie's jokes, like the whoopie pie one and also their funny stories. **THE CONS**1.) I would have liked to see more of the E-mails between Graham and Ellie before the author actually introduced them into the book.**OVERALL**In all, I really enjoyed this book. Jennifer E. Smith somehow manages to make her novels feel so real, like what is happening in them is totally possible. I thought this book was a fantastic read.**WOULD I READ THIS BOOK: YES!!!!!!WOULD I BUY THIS BOOK: NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!!!!WOULD I RECOMMEND THIS BOOK: To lovers of**

contemporaries or for people looking for a light funny read. WILL I READ MORE BY THIS AUTHOR:
YES!!!

Jennifer E. Smith gets the cutest covers in the world, doesn't she? I picked up *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight* almost entirely on the merits of its adorable cover alone. And when I saw the cover for *THIS IS WHAT HAPPY LOOKS LIKE*, I immediately began daydreaming about how happy they would look next to each other on my shelves--an activity I engage in all too often when it comes to books of a feather. And given how much I loved *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight*, I felt that my feelings for her next novel were sort of a foregone conclusion. Especially when you take into account the much-billed *You've Got Mail* meets *Notting Hill* premise. I ask you--who can resist the wild potential of that setup? No one. That is who. But one of the things I loved the most about *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight* was how it packed so much more of a punch than its name or cover suggested. It was deeper and wider than its slim-ish page count and 24-hour time period foretold. I don't think I realized going into this one how much I was counting on the same thing being true of it. Ellie O'Neill and Graham Larkin don't know each other at all. Ellie is the daughter of an ex-waitress turned shop owner in the backwoods town of Henley, Maine. Graham is an all American kid turned movie star from California. The two have nothing at all in common (except perhaps a love for *Charlotte's Web*) until Graham mistypes a single email address, hits send, and it winds up in Ellie's inbox way on the other side of the country. His misplaced missive ignites what evolves into a lively correspondence in which the two teenagers exchange jokes, detail their day-to-day goings on, their hopes, their dreams, and ruminate on what "happy" looks like. Neither of them quite realize how much the burgeoning virtual friendship means to them until the location for Graham's upcoming rom-com falls through, and he finds himself suggesting Henley as a possible alternative. And with that one act, he somewhat wittingly, somewhat unwittingly sets the two of them on a collision course. The results are both enlightening and unexpectedly fraught as Graham finds a kind of home in the most unlikely of places and Ellie grapples with a secret she promised never to tell. Soon Graham's time in Henley will be up. And where will they go from there? *THIS IS WHAT HAPPY LOOKS LIKE* has a great deal of charm going for it. Graham and Ellie are eminently likable. The lovable happenstance of their "meeting" is difficult to resist. And the small-town Maine setting is one I've enjoyed in the past and that is once again used to great effect here. Smith's writing is capable and occasionally lovely, if not as consistently so as it was in *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight*. One of the lovelier observations here: "No matter how long it's been or how far you've drifted, no matter how

unknowable you might be, there were at least two people in the world whose job it was to see you, to find you, to recognize you and reel you back in. No matter what."I feel that one of Jennifer E. Smith's real strengths is the upfront, sensitive way in which she depicts families. Her characters' romantic entanglements are not resolved in place of their familial relationships, but as a result of their dealing with them first. Sometimes the one unfolds along with the other, and often they help one another work through their baggage. What I'm saying is their priorities are generally in order, and I dig that about Smith's characters (and her books). Like Hadley, Ellie struggles with father issues. These issues are, in fact, meant to be pivotal to the story. But where Hadley's felt incredibly real and meaningful to me, Ellie's rarely cross the border from the tepid into the profound. So when the plot takes a turn to explore that vein, I felt ambivalent when I should have been riveted. As for Ellie and Graham, I liked them all right. But I never truly fell for them in a way that made me unable to look away. They are both good people. They're good and they're well-intentioned and they're dedicated to achieving their goals for the future. I was happy that they found one another. I wanted them to find a way to be together. I just didn't feel compelled to stick around and watch it happen. They "looked" like happy to me, if you will, but they failed to inspire the real emotion behind the exterior. In the end, THIS IS WHAT HAPPY LOOKS LIKE has all the key elements of a competent, if somewhat bland romantic comedy, but it lacks that certain spark that makes it a keeper.

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