

Title: *Not My Problem*
Author: Ciara Smyth
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer's Name and Grade: Benjamin W., 10th Grade

Date Reviewed: July 2, 2022

Aideen Cleary can solve everyone's problems except for her own. She's on the verge of failing school, has to take care of her alcoholic mother and keep the social workers at bay, and is getting further and further away from her only friend she's had in the past few years. However, she finds purpose when she realizes that she can help other people, so she starts a business where she helps other people solve their problems in return for a favor she can cash in anytime in the future. It all starts when Meabh, an extreme overachiever with strict parents, asks Aideen to push her down a set of stairs so she can injure herself and make room in her schedule to run for class president. At first, Aideen has no intentions of helping Meabh because she has always found Meabh annoying. But eventually, she caves in and pushes Meabh down the stairs, just in time for a boy named Kavi to witness the entire incident. Aideen jokes about how she is a kind of a troubleshooter and the girls make Kavi promise to keep the incident a secret. However, Kavi doesn't realize that it is a joke and soon brings Aideen a "client." The "client" is a girl from their grade named Orla and she asks Aideen to break her into the principal's office so she can delete some messages from her confiscated phone. Aideen agrees to do it so she calls up Meabh, who is the principal's daughter, to ask for her favor. Together, with Kavi and Orla, they break into the school and get the job done. Soon, Orla brings Aideen another "client," and from then on, her reputation grows and more "clients" go to her to look for help. Meanwhile, her friend Holly also decides to run for class president and starts spending more time with her other friends. Aideen feels the distance between them growing but starts to take a liking to Meabh and Kavi. Then one week, her divorced father shows up and has a short affair with her mother. When he leaves, he leaves Aideen's mother heartbroken again and she begins to drink. Aideen is forced to stay home all week and tail her mom, just to make sure she stays sober. She lets her phone die and ignores all the messages Meabh and Kavi send her. Unknown to her, someone posted an embarrassing video of Meabh which greatly reduced her chance of winning class president. When Aideen goes back to school, Kavi and Meabh are both mad at her. Aideen learns about the video and has a gut feeling that it was Holly who posted it. Aideen tells Holly how they cannot be friends anymore and goes to help Meabh win the election. The night before the election, she enlists all the people she had done favors for and they go canvassing for Meabh. While canvassing, Aideen expresses her true feelings for Meabh and they kiss. In the end, Meabh ends up losing the election. While the three friends are disappointed, they agree that they must sort out their own problems before helping other people again.

Now, I will answer some questions about the book:

Did the plot keep you interested? - This plot definitely kept me interested. There was a lot of suspense and plot twists that kept me wondering what would happen next.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right? - I think the pace of this book was just right. Every so often, someone would approach Aideen for a favor or an unexpected event like Aideen's father showing up would happen to keep the plot moving along.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for? - I think this book is appropriate for kids in grades 7-12. There is some cursing and issues in this book that only older kids will be able to fully understand.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to? - I would recommend this book to teenagers. I feel that this book captures the teen drama perfectly in relationships, family, and school work.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book - It's not very clear in the first chapter but Aideen is a girl.

I would rate this book *5 stars*. The plot was really good and kept me interested the entire time. Everything was clear and easy to understand.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Amanda L., 8th Grade

Date Reviewed: November 21, 2022

Not My Problem is an intriguing realistic fiction book that discusses many problems teenagers face in the real world. The main character Aideen Clearly is a British high schooler. The story begins when she finds her “nemesis” Meabh Kowalska crying on the bathroom floor. Meabh is considered an annoying overachiever by her peers. Her schedule is stuffed with one activity after another and she's on the verge of a breakdown. Aideen helps her... by pushing her down the stairs! After spraining her ankle from her fall, Meabh's schedule is relatively free. But a boy named Kavi has seen the entire exchange and soon he brings Aideen another “client” with a problem to solve. This leads to Aideen solving one person's problem after another. Her only price is a favor she can call in anytime. But while she helps others, her own problems seem to grow bigger by the day.

She is always worried her mom is drinking again, especially after an unexpected visit from her dad, who abandoned them a long time ago. Not only that but she can barely understand any of her classes and her grades are dropping. If she doesn't do better, social workers are bound to come knocking at her door. But as time progresses she also has to worry about her strained relationships with her oldest friend, Holly. Holly and Meabh are both campaigning for student president, and although Aideen wants to be friends with both, it looks like she will have to pick a side. Will she pick her oldest friend, Holly or her crush Meabh? How will she keep the social workers away? Not My Problem is an excellent book about Aideen's journey and how she uses her wits and courage to overcome her challenges.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?

The plot of this book is engaging throughout the novel. From the beginning right up until the very end, I was hooked and couldn't put the book down.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was just right. Even in parts with no action, the author keeps you entertained with her unique way of writing.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

I think 9th-12th graders would enjoy this the most as they can relate the most to what is being discussed in this book. Additionally, it contains some mature themes that younger readers may not be interested in.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this to all teens, as I think this is an exceptionally good book. However, I would especially recommend realistic fiction fans to read this as it portrays daily problems very well.

5 stars: I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!

I thought this book was very well written; even the uneventful parts kept me excited! It was also very interesting to see the character grow and relationships develop. Although this is a realistic fiction book, there was still a lot of action and thrilling bits. Overall, I am very happy I read this book and I think you should too!