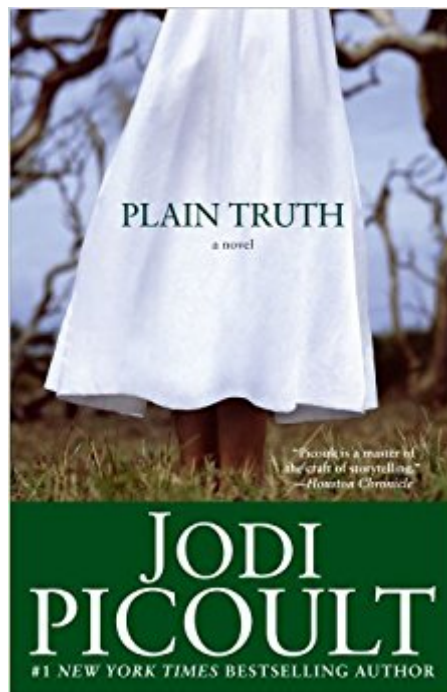


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Plain Truth



Synopsis

From the bestselling author of *My Sister's Keeper* comes the riveting story of a murder that shatters the picturesque calm of Amish country -- and tests the heart and soul of the lawyer defending the woman at the center of the storm. The discovery of a dead infant in an Amish barn shakes Lancaster County to its core. But the police investigation leads to a more shocking disclosure: circumstantial evidence suggests that eighteen-year-old Katie Fisher, an unmarried Amish woman believed to be the newborn's mother, took the child's life. When Ellie Hathaway, a disillusioned big-city attorney, comes to Paradise, Pennsylvania, to defend Katie, two cultures collide -- and for the first time in her high-profile career, Ellie faces a system of justice very different from her own. Delving deep inside the world of those who live "plain," Ellie must find a way to reach Katie on her terms. And as she unravels a tangled murder case, Ellie also looks deep within -- to confront her own fears and desires when a man from her past reenters her life.

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Customer Reviews

Though it begins as the quietly electrifying story of an unmarried Amish teenager who gives birth to a baby she is accused of then smothering, Picoult's latest (after *Keeping Faith*) settles into an ordinary trial epic, albeit one centered intriguingly on an Amish dairy farm near Lancaster, Pa. Katie Fisher, 18, denies not only having committed the murder but even having borne the baby, whose body is found in the Fishers' calving pen, and she sticks to her story, even when she is quizzed by Ellie Hathaway, the high-powered Philadelphia attorney who undertakes Katie's defense as a favor

to Leda, an aunt she and the young woman share. Ellie, who has retreated to Leda's farm in Paradise to reconsider her life--she successfully defends guilty clients--embarks on the case reluctantly: at 39, she wants nothing more than to have a child. However, to meet bail stipulations, she volunteers as Katie's guardian (since Kate's strict parents reject her) and moves in with the Fishers. Living with the Amish necessitates some adjustments for both parties, but Katie and Ellie become fast friends in spite of their differences. Very little action occurs beyond the initial setup, though the questions remain: Who was the father of Katie's child? And did she smother the newborn? Told from both third-person omniscient and first-person (Ellie's) vantages, the story rolls leisurely through the trial preparations, the results of which are repeated, tediously, in the courtroom. Perhaps the story's quietude is appropriate, given its magnificently painted backdrop and distinctive characters, but one can't help wishing that the spark igniting the book's opening pages had built into a full-fledged blaze. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

YA-Philadelphia defense lawyer Ellie Hathaway retreats to her great Aunt Leda's home in Paradise, PA, to get a break from her high-pressure job. Almost at the same time that she arrives, a dead baby is discovered in the barn of an Amish farmer. A police investigation reveals that the mother is an 18-year-old unmarried Amish girl, Katie Fisher, and that the infant apparently did not die of natural causes. Even in the face of medical proof that she recently gave birth, Katie denies the murder charge. Ellie reluctantly agrees to defend her, even though she does not want to be defended. To better understand her client, Ellie moves into the farmhouse with the Fisher family where she begins to see firsthand the pressures and sacrifices of those who live "plain." As she searches for evidence in this case, she calls upon a friend from her past, Dr. John Cooper, a psychiatrist. As Coop and Ellie work together to unravel fact and fiction, they also work to resolve issues in their relationship. Readers will experience a psychological drama as well as a suspenseful courtroom trial. The contrast between the Amish culture and the "English" provides an interesting tension. This study of opposites details much information about a way of life based on faith, humility, duty, and honesty. Carol Clark, formerly at Fairfax County Public Schools, VA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I like Jodi Picoult as a general rule, but sometimes the conflicts in her books are a bit contrived. This book about a dead newborn found on an Amish farm was a novel idea, combining the social issues perspective that Picoult specializes in, with the fictionalized accounts of Amish lives that are popular

now. It was a great read most of the way through and I enjoyed it very much, until the end. The author seems to have started this tale with no end in mind and was grabbing at straws to conclude the story. This was especially annoying as I was propelled through the book by my interest in finding out if the baby was murdered or died of natural causes, and who murdered the baby if it was murder. The end simply did not ring true to the story. The ending put forth did not agree with many of the details that came before, and did not really make sense. This was sad, as it was a great story up until this point, and it deserved an ending that fit.

The premise of this novel intrigued me. As one who enjoyed the 1985 movie, *Witness*, with its powerful tale of murder in an Amish community and a detective's immersion into that community to both solve the crime and protect a child, I was drawn to the similar set-up of this novel. In this go-around, the protagonist, Ellie, is a feisty female defense attorney with some distant familial connections to Katie, the young woman accused of killing her out-of-wedlock baby. When a bond arrangement demands that Katie be kept under Ellie's constant care, Ellie is obligated to move into the family farmhouse, where the plot then intertwines the elements of her "English" life with that of the arcane and sometimes inexplicable existence of the Amish with whom she's now embedded. The details and textural descriptions of that life are some of the best parts of the book; so tactile and richly drawn that the story becomes a poetic primer on the Amish lifestyle. Certainly one gains a greater understanding of what is often misunderstood about their system of justice and their insular life away from the world. Unfortunately, the flip side of that is the comings and goings of the courtroom, the lawyers involved, even the quirks and eccentricities of Ellie. These came across as a tad routine and relatively uninteresting by comparison. Perhaps it's that in the 14 years since this book was written, female characters in similar roles have been drawn with far bolder lines in a slew of books, films and TV shows! But where the book struggled most for me was in its POV and its ending: The story starts in third-person, largely featuring Katie, our young Amish suspect, and those who are part of her life at the farm. We also quickly meet Lizzie, a homicide detective, George, the prosecuting attorney, and a few other pivotal characters who'll play roles in the story. Then, oddly, the narrative switches to the first-person POV of Ellie, our defense attorney, who now runs with the story. The author must have thought this would be an interesting choice, but it becomes a tad arbitrary, even distracting, when Ellie's story is, in one chapter, told from her POV, then switches back to the general third-person narrative. This bouncing POV did not seem to improve upon the pacing of the narrative, nor did it necessarily propel the plot forward. If anything, it felt like an author's device and, for me, it was off-putting. As for the ending, I will not give it away here but odds

are any astute reader will easily sort it out as clumsy clues are dropped along the plot trail, often in ways that were so obvious one wonders if the author was aware of how obvious those clues were! When the denouement finally comes, it's not remotely shocking and, given how it's left, with no true resolution, it's seems almost a narrative toss-off, which makes it pointless and out-of-character with the integrity of both the story and the characters we've come to know. But still...A solid, enjoyable read. Not particularly memorable, but decent. And certainly, if nothing else, it will give readers another view, perhaps a more sympathetic view, of a mysterious religion and lifestyle that are nothing if not profoundly intriguing to most in the outside world.

This book is so FRUSTRATING! Also very intriguing. Getting through the first half was a struggle for me which is unusual for my love of Jodi Picoult. I genuinely enjoy reading her books and meeting her cast of characters and getting to know them that usually when the book is finished I miss them terribly and am not ready for it to end there! After Plain Truth, however, I felt immediate closure. I was happy to see Jordan and Selena again but it was easier this time to let go than after Salem Falls. This was a very good book and I would recommend it to anyone, religious or not. I figured out the ending from the very beginning but that did not make it any less heartbreaking. I could not at all relate to these folks sense of "community", I cannot imagine a life where I must consider every other person I know before myself. I mean I can be very selfless and do consider myself to be a good and kind and giving person and that my personality is so full and fun and I love sharing my life and making people happy and laughing! So this book really made me think long and hard about whether this kind of lifestyle is really worth smothering yourself and growth and force yourself to accept that you will never know any more that this world has to offer. No spoilers this time around but you will understand after reading. Just look at Sarah afterwards. It nearly brought me to tears thinking about what I felt her life was reduced to. I do not mean to offend anyone with the same beliefs but I still cannot wrap my mind around it but that is one of the greatest things in this story. After you finish you come back to it, or I do anyway and I actually like questioning myself now and then. All in all I would, of course, recommend this book. It is definitely a good read and made me, personally, appreciate my life so much more.

For some reason I view reading Jodi Picoult's books as a "guilty pleasure". I mean, I don't have to work that hard to read them - they are written simply and are easy to understand - so perhaps that is why I tend to underrate them. But this is a really good book. The story of a young unmarried Amish woman who gets pregnant and then is accused of murdering the infant so that she is not shunned

from the Amish community and the attorney who is representing her; a 39 year old unmarried woman who wants nothing more than to have a baby. Although somewhat predictable, the story is well told and the details of life among the Amish people was really fascinating. This is the fourth or fifth book by Jodi Picoult that I have read and I think was my favorite (although I thought *Nineteen Minutes* was really good as well). This was a fast and easy read and I would recommend it to readers who are not looking for that Pulitzer Prize winning experience.

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