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Summer #3

# We'll Always Have Summer

by Jenny Han | 2011 | 291 pages

3.78  500k+ ratings

Romance

Young Adult

Contemporary

 Listen

## Plot Summary

## Childhood Dreams and Love

Belly's childhood dreams and love



Belly Conklin reflects on her childhood, filled with dreams of romance inspired by musicals she watched with her mother. Her heart was first captured by Conrad Fisher, a boy she loved with the intensity of a first love. However, as she grew, Jeremiah Fisher, Conrad's brother, became her present and future, knowing and loving her for who she truly was. Belly always imagined herself as Belly Fisher, but the path to that name was unexpected.

## **College Life Unraveled**

Belly's college life and friendships

At Finch University, Belly juggles finals with her friends Anika and Taylor. Her relationship with Jeremiah, which began in high school, continues to grow. Despite the pressures of college life, Belly finds comfort in her friendships and the familiarity of her relationship with Jeremiah. However, the looming summer and the return to the beach house in Cousins bring a mix of excitement and uncertainty.

## **Secrets and Betrayals**

Jeremiah's betrayal and Belly's turmoil

During a fraternity party, Belly overhears a conversation revealing Jeremiah's infidelity during spring break. The revelation shatters her trust, leading to a confrontation with Jeremiah. Despite his apologies and declarations of love, Belly is left questioning their relationship. The betrayal forces her to confront her feelings for both Jeremiah and Conrad, leading to a period of introspection and doubt.

# Wedding Plans and Doubts

## Wedding plans amidst uncertainty

Despite the turmoil, Belly and Jeremiah decide to get married, believing their love can overcome the betrayal. As they plan their wedding, tensions rise with their families, particularly Belly's mother, who disapproves of the marriage. The pressure of planning a wedding and the unresolved feelings for Conrad weigh heavily on Belly, leading to moments of doubt and reflection on what she truly wants.

# Confrontations and Confessions

## Conrad's confession and Belly's choice

On the eve of the wedding, Conrad confesses his enduring love for Belly, reigniting old feelings and doubts. Belly is torn between the familiarity and safety of Jeremiah and the unresolved passion with Conrad. The confrontation forces Belly to confront her true feelings and the reality of her relationships with both brothers, leading to a pivotal moment of decision.

# Choices and Consequences

## Belly's decision and its impact

Belly's choice to call off the wedding with Jeremiah is a moment of clarity and self-realization. She acknowledges her lingering feelings for Conrad but also recognizes the importance of making a choice for herself. The decision

not only affects her relationship with Jeremiah but also the dynamics within their intertwined families. It is a moment of growth and acceptance of her own desires and needs.

## **A New Beginning**

Belly's new beginning with Conrad

Years later, Belly reflects on her journey and the choices that led her to Conrad. Their relationship, once fraught with uncertainty, has matured into a deep and abiding love. Belly's decision to follow her heart has led to a new beginning, one filled with hope and the promise of a future with Conrad. Their love, once a childhood dream, has become a reality, marking the start of their life together.

## **Characters**

### **Belly Conklin**

Dreamer caught between loves

Belly is a young woman torn between her first love, Conrad, and her steady relationship with Jeremiah. Her journey is one of self-discovery, as she navigates the complexities of love, betrayal, and family expectations. Belly's character is defined by her deep emotional connections and her struggle to reconcile her past with her present.

# Conrad Fisher

## Brooding first love

Conrad is Belly's first love, a complex character who struggles with his feelings and responsibilities. His love for Belly is deep but often overshadowed by his inability to express it. Conrad's journey is one of growth, as he learns to confront his emotions and ultimately fight for the love he once let go.

# Jeremiah Fisher

## Loyal but flawed lover

Jeremiah is Belly's boyfriend and Conrad's younger brother. He is charming and devoted but makes a critical mistake that jeopardizes his relationship with Belly. Jeremiah's character is defined by his struggle to prove his love and worthiness, as well as his rivalry with Conrad.

# Laurel Conklin

## Protective and pragmatic mother

Laurel is Belly's mother, who disapproves of her daughter's rushed marriage. She is a strong, independent woman who wants the best for Belly and struggles with letting her make her own choices. Laurel's character represents the voice of reason and the challenges of motherhood.

# **Susannah Fisher**

Beloved maternal figure

Susannah, though deceased, remains a guiding presence in the lives of Belly, Conrad, and Jeremiah. Her love and wisdom continue to influence their decisions and relationships. Susannah's character embodies warmth, love, and the enduring impact of a mother figure.

# **Taylor Jewel**

Loyal and outspoken friend

Taylor is Belly's best friend, known for her bold personality and unwavering support. She provides comic relief and a sounding board for Belly's dilemmas. Taylor's character highlights the importance of friendship and loyalty.

# **Anika Johnson**

New friend and confidante

Anika is Belly's college friend, offering a fresh perspective and support. She is laid-back and open-minded, providing Belly with the space to explore her identity. Anika's character represents the new friendships and experiences that shape Belly's college life.

# **Adam Fisher**

Distant but caring father

Adam is Conrad and Jeremiah's father, who struggles to connect with his sons after Susannah's death. He represents the challenges of fatherhood and the impact of loss on family dynamics.

# **Steven Conklin**

Protective older brother

Steven is Belly's brother, who offers support and guidance throughout her journey. He is pragmatic and often acts as a mediator between Belly and their mother. Steven's character highlights the importance of sibling relationships.

# **Ernie**

Wise old mentor

Ernie is a former employer and mentor to Conrad, offering wisdom and perspective. His character provides comic relief and serves as a reminder of the importance of family and loyalty.

## **Plot Devices**

# Love Triangle

Complex love triangle dynamics

The love triangle between Belly, Conrad, and Jeremiah is central to the narrative, driving the plot and character development. It explores themes of first love, loyalty, and the complexities of choosing between two people who hold significant places in one's heart.

# Letters from Susannah

Guiding letters from beyond

Susannah's letters serve as a plot device that provides guidance and insight to the characters. They symbolize her enduring influence and the wisdom she imparted to those she loved. The letters help the characters navigate their emotions and decisions.

# Wedding Planning

Wedding planning as a catalyst

The wedding planning process serves as a catalyst for the characters to confront their feelings and relationships. It brings underlying tensions to the surface and forces Belly to make critical decisions about her future.



# Setting: Cousins Beach

Nostalgic and transformative setting

Cousins Beach is a significant setting that represents nostalgia, childhood memories, and the transformative power of summer. It is where the characters' relationships are tested and where they ultimately find clarity and resolution.

## Analysis

Exploration of love and choice

"We'll Always Have Summer" delves into the complexities of love, choice, and the impact of past relationships on the present. The narrative explores the idea that first loves leave an indelible mark, but true love requires conscious choice and commitment. The book highlights the importance of self-discovery and the courage to follow one's heart, even when it means letting go of the past. Through Belly's journey, readers are reminded that love is not just about passion and nostalgia but also about trust, loyalty, and the willingness to grow together. The story ultimately conveys that while the past shapes us, it is the choices we make in the present that define our future.

*Last updated: February 3, 2025*

## FAQ

### Synopsis & Basic Details

## What is We'll Always Have Summer about?

- **Childhood Love Triangle:** The story centers on Belly Conklin and her complex relationships with the Fisher brothers, Conrad and Jeremiah, whom she's known since childhood.
- **Summer House Crossroads:** Set against the backdrop of their shared summer house in Cousins, the narrative explores themes of first love, betrayal, and the difficult choices that come with growing up.
- **Unexpected Engagement:** Belly finds herself engaged to Jeremiah, but the engagement is threatened by secrets, unresolved feelings, and the reappearance of Conrad, forcing her to confront her true desires.

## Why should I read We'll Always Have Summer?

- **Emotional Depth:** The novel delves into the raw emotions of first love, heartbreak, and the struggle to define oneself amidst complex relationships.
- **Character-Driven Narrative:** Readers will be invested in the characters' journeys, particularly Belly's, as she navigates her feelings for both brothers and makes life-altering decisions.
- **Nostalgic Setting:** The summer house in Cousins provides a nostalgic backdrop, evoking a sense of familiarity and the bittersweet nature of growing up.

## What is the background of We'll Always Have Summer?

- **Contemporary Setting:** The story is set in a contemporary time, focusing on the lives of college-aged characters and their families.
- **Emotional Landscape:** The background is primarily emotional, exploring the characters' internal struggles and the dynamics of their relationships.
- **Cultural Context:** The story touches on themes of family, tradition, and the expectations placed on young adults as they navigate love and life choices.

# What are the most memorable quotes in *We'll Always Have Summer*?

- **"I think I always knew I would be Belly Fisher one day. I just didn't know it was going to happen like this."**: This quote encapsulates Belly's long-held dream and the unexpected path she takes to achieve it.
- **"When I looked at Jeremiah, I saw past, present, and future. He didn't just know the girl I used to be. He knew the right-now me, and he loved me anyway."**: This quote highlights the depth of Belly's connection with Jeremiah and the comfort she finds in his acceptance.
- **"You and I were never anything."**: This quote, spoken by Belly to Conrad, marks a pivotal moment of rejection and the finality of their past relationship.

# What writing style, narrative choices, and literary techniques does Jenny Han use?

- **First-Person Perspective**: The story is told from Belly's point of view, allowing readers to intimately experience her thoughts, feelings, and internal conflicts.

- **Emotional Language:** Han employs vivid and emotional language to convey the intensity of Belly's experiences, particularly her romantic relationships.
- **Foreshadowing and Flashbacks:** The narrative uses subtle foreshadowing and flashbacks to reveal the characters' pasts and hint at future events, creating a sense of depth and complexity.

## Hidden Details & Subtle Connections

### What are some minor details that add significant meaning?

- **Musical References:** Belly's love for musicals, particularly "Bye Bye Birdie," foreshadows her desire for a romantic, idealized love, which she initially projects onto Conrad.
- **The Shell Bracelet:** The puka shell bracelet Jeremiah gives Belly after their spring break breakup is a symbol of his guilt and her naivety, highlighting the imbalance in their relationship.
- **The Color White:** The white dress Belly wears to the garden dedication and the white dress she chooses for her wedding symbolize purity and new beginnings, but also highlight the complexities of her choices.

# What are some subtle foreshadowing and callbacks?

- **The "You are the milk to my shake" note:** Jeremiah's love note to Belly foreshadows the depth of his feelings and his desire for a lasting connection, but also highlights the immaturity of their relationship.
- **The Christmas Story:** Belly's solo trip to Cousins during Christmas mirrors Kevin's experience in "Home Alone," foreshadowing her need for independence and her unexpected encounter with Conrad.
- **The Casablanca Debate:** Belly and Conrad's debate about "Casablanca" foreshadows their own complex relationship, where they are both drawn to each other but ultimately choose different paths.

# What are some unexpected character connections?

- **Laurel and Conrad:** The close relationship between Belly's mother, Laurel, and Conrad, especially after Susannah's death, reveals a shared grief and a deeper understanding between them.
- **Anika and Belly:** Anika's frank and open nature provides Belly with a different perspective on relationships and challenges her to be more honest with herself.

- **Taylor and Jeremiah:** Despite their initial animosity, Taylor and Jeremiah share a common goal of protecting Belly, highlighting their underlying care for her.

## **Who are the most significant supporting characters?**

- **Taylor Jewel:** As Belly's oldest friend, Taylor provides unwavering support, comic relief, and a grounding force, often offering a more pragmatic perspective on Belly's romantic entanglements.
- **Anika Johnson:** Anika's laid-back and insightful nature offers Belly a fresh perspective on her relationships and challenges her to be more honest with herself.
- **Laurel Conklin:** Belly's mother, Laurel, serves as a voice of reason and a reminder of the complexities of love and marriage, often challenging Belly's choices.

## **Psychological, Emotional, & Relational Analysis**

## **What are some unspoken motivations of the characters?**

- **Conrad's Self-Sabotage:** Conrad's actions often stem from a fear of commitment and a belief that he is not worthy of love, leading him to push Belly away despite his feelings.
- **Jeremiah's Need for Validation:** Jeremiah's desire to marry Belly is partly driven by a need to prove his worth and to be chosen over Conrad, highlighting his insecurities.
- **Belly's Fear of Choice:** Belly's indecision between the brothers stems from a fear of making the wrong choice and a desire to hold onto the past, rather than fully embracing the present.

## What psychological complexities do the characters exhibit?

- **Conrad's Brooding Nature:** Conrad's internal struggles and inability to express his emotions stem from his grief over his mother's death and his fear of vulnerability.
- **Jeremiah's Insecurity:** Jeremiah's need for validation and his tendency to seek approval from others reveal his underlying insecurities and his struggle to define himself outside of his relationship with Belly.
- **Belly's Idealization of Love:** Belly's romantic ideals, shaped by musicals and childhood fantasies, often clash with the realities of her relationships, leading to internal conflict and disappointment.



# What are the major emotional turning points?

- **The Party Revelation:** Belly's discovery of Jeremiah's infidelity at the fraternity party shatters her trust and forces her to confront the flaws in their relationship.
- **Conrad's Confession:** Conrad's confession of love on the eve of the wedding reignites Belly's feelings and forces her to question her commitment to Jeremiah.
- **The Wedding Day Confrontation:** Belly's final conversation with Jeremiah on their wedding day forces her to confront her true feelings and make a life-altering decision.

# How do relationship dynamics evolve?

- **Belly and Jeremiah:** Their relationship evolves from a comfortable friendship to a passionate romance, but is ultimately undermined by secrets, insecurities, and a lack of true understanding.
- **Belly and Conrad:** Their relationship is characterized by intense passion, unspoken feelings, and a constant push and pull, ultimately leading to a mature and enduring love.

- **The Fisher Brothers:** The relationship between Conrad and Jeremiah is marked by rivalry and unspoken tensions, which are exacerbated by their shared love for Belly.

## **Interpretation & Debate**

### **Which parts of the story remain ambiguous or open-ended?**

- **The Nature of First Love:** The novel leaves open the question of whether first love is always the most powerful or if it is possible to find a deeper, more mature love later in life.
- **The "Right" Choice:** The ending, while providing a resolution for Belly, leaves open the question of whether she made the "right" choice, or if there is even such a thing when it comes to love.
- **The Future of the Characters:** The novel does not fully explore the long-term consequences of Belly's choices, leaving the reader to imagine the future of her relationships with Jeremiah and her family.

### **What are some debatable, controversial scenes or moments in We'll Always Have Summer?**

- **Jeremiah's Infidelity:** The debate over whether Jeremiah's actions during the spring break breakup are forgivable, and whether his subsequent actions are genuine or manipulative.
- **Belly's Choice:** The debate over whether Belly's choice to ultimately be with Conrad is a betrayal of Jeremiah or a necessary step in her own self-discovery.
- **Conrad's Actions:** The debate over whether Conrad's actions are driven by genuine love or a selfish desire to possess Belly, and whether he is truly capable of a healthy relationship.

## **We'll Always Have Summer Ending Explained: How It Ends & What It Means**

- **Belly's Choice:** The ending sees Belly choosing Conrad, not out of a sense of obligation or nostalgia, but from a place of mature love and understanding.
- **Letting Go of the Past:** The ending signifies Belly's ability to let go of her childhood dreams and embrace a future that is both familiar and new, with a love that is both passionate and enduring.
- **The Power of Choice:** The ending emphasizes the importance of making choices that are true to oneself, even when they are difficult or unconventional, and the idea that love is not just about destiny but also about conscious decision.

## Review Summary

★★★★☆ 3.78 out of 5

Average of 500k+ ratings from Goodreads and Amazon.

**We'll Always Have Summer** received mixed reviews. Many readers felt disappointed by character inconsistencies, rushed plot developments, and an unsatisfying ending. Some praised Conrad's character development and the nostalgic summer atmosphere. However, others criticized Belly's immaturity, Jeremiah's personality shift, and the overall lack of believable romance. The book's handling of serious topics like marriage at a young age was controversial. While some fans were satisfied with the trilogy's conclusion, others found it manipulative and poorly crafted.

## About the Author

**Jenny Han** is an American author known for her young adult and children's fiction. She gained popularity with her Summer I Turned Pretty trilogy, which was adapted into a successful Amazon Prime series. Han has also written the To All the Boys I've Loved Before series, which became a hit Netflix film franchise. Born and raised in Richmond, Virginia, she studied at the University of North Carolina and later earned an MFA in creative writing. Han's works often explore themes of first love, family relationships, and coming-of-age experiences. Her writing style is characterized by its relatable characters and ability to capture the essence of teenage emotions.