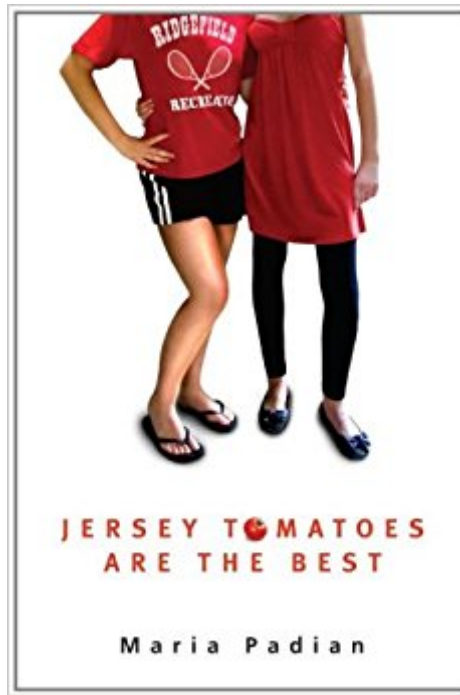


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# Jersey Tomatoes Are The Best



## Synopsis

This is a hilarious and heartbreaking story of two teen girls and the summer when everything changes for them. Both Henry and Eva are New Jersey natives and excellent athletes: Henry's a master on the tennis court and Eva is a graceful ballerina. When opportunity knocks for both of them the summer before their junior year in high school they throw open the door: Henry sees freedom from her overbearing father and a chance to build her talents on the court. Eva sees the chance to be the best as well as even more pressure to be graceful, lighter, more perfect on the dancefloor. Soon, Eva's obsession with physical perfection leads her down the path to anorexia, and her health issues overwhelm everything else. But through it all these two best friends know that Jersey Tomatoes are the Best, and nothing will come between them no matter the distance. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 630 (What's this?)

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Ember; Reprint edition (March 13, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375865632

ISBN-13: 978-0375865633

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (11 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,653,301 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) [#110 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Performing Arts > Dance](#) [#641 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Depression & Mental Illness](#) [#1100 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Self Esteem & Reliance](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Jersey Tomatoes Are the Best, by Maria Padian, is a feel-good novel about two best friends who are going their separate ways for the summer. Eva is going to a ballet summer program in New York City, while Henry (short for Henriette) is off to a prestigious tennis camp in Florida. It's the first time both girls have been apart for an extended period of time. While Jersey Tomatoes is a lighter read, it

does deal with some serious issues. Each girl has an overbearing parent who seems to want nothing more than to live through his or her daughter's talent. While Eva is passionate about dance and Henry lives tennis, both also feel conflicted and even dislike what they're doing at times. They are constantly dealing with issues that are specific to what they do. In the end, the story asks these questions: What are the important things in life? Who are you as a person? How are you going to react if put in a given situation? What is the right decision to make? All in all, this is a very good read, and a healthy read, for girls 14-15 and up. I really enjoyed reading it. There is a lot of tennis lingo, but it does not take away from the story. I don't know anything about tennis and very little about ballet and I was able to follow Henry as she plays her game and Eva as she becomes alive on the dance floor. *Jersey Tomatoes Are the Best* is also a good one for those who liked reading *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* (Book 1) series.

*JERSEY TOMATOES ARE THE BEST* is a deceptively light contemporary story that delves into the darker side of sports without getting preachy. Whether you're an athlete or not, girl or not, you'll find something to enjoy in this moving yet fun novel. Henry and Eva are Jersey girls, best friends, and hardcore athletes. Henry is New Jersey's junior tennis champion, and Eva is on her way to becoming a world-renown ballet dancer. Their friendship has sustained them through disappointments and demanding parents, but when they separate to go off to different summer adventures--Henry to a nationally ranked tennis academy, Eva to the ultra-competitive New York School of Dance--can their friendship last through their different experiences and some shocking changes? Padian's straightforward narration makes it very easy to relate to these Henry and Eva's situations. Few of us may be on Henry and Eva's level in terms of athletics, but it was still eye-opening to read about all the pressure they faced, the difficult choices they had to make. I thought that the girls' relationships with their parents was a pretty shockingly true portrayal of some overinvolved, living-out-their-dreams-through-their-children parents. The parents were realistically overwhelming: I didn't consider them exaggerations of the type, and instead could totally see this happening. I am envious of Henry and Eva's friendship. These two, equal in pretty much everything, such as skill, looks, and wit, still displayed normal feelings of envy or inferiority at times. It was clear that the girls cared for each other very much, and yet their lives were clearly not wrapped up in the other's: they both have separate interests and dreams, after all. Eva's heartbreaking eating disorder will resonate with anyone who has felt insecure in their bodies, often for all the wrong reasons. The voice in her head that yells at her felt a little extreme to me at times, but I am not one to judge for the voice's "accuracy;" I just recognize that this is something that definitely happens to people. Henry's

romance at tennis camp also felt slightly contrived at times. Again, however, it may be that that was the point: their relationship was inseparable from their budding fame as star tennis players. And finally, as a Jersey girl myself, I thought it felt a little weird and unrealistic whenever Henry and Eva "acted Joisey": do people really do that? But hey, maybe they do. These points didn't detract from my engagement with the story as a whole, however. *JERSEY TOMATOES ARE THE BEST* is a solid contemporary read, one that I would highly recommend to people looking for a good book involving female athletes.

There's a reason Maria Padian's first novel Brett McCarthy: *Work in Progress* was chosen by the ALA and YALSA as one of the Best Books for Young Adults in 2009. Because she's an amazing author. Now with her next book, *Jersey Tomatoes are the Best*, Padian takes on the issues of stage parenting, anorexia, and friendship. These may sound like huge issues, and they are, but Padian masterfully maneuvers through them, using each of these issues to spur on the growth of her characters and the story itself. Of course while Padian does a fantastic job bringing up hard hitting issues, what was even more impressive to me were the characters. Henry and Eva are sensational protagonists. Padian has each of them grow and develop in such a way that it feels organic and natural. As if you're just watching your own friends grow up and change. Not only that but the dialog and writing in general were fantastic. In my opinion, on par with some of the best in the business (John Green, Jordan Sonnenblick, Pete Hautman, ect.) All in all the writing was fantastic, the characters well developed, and the story engaging and entertaining. I personally don't think there's much more that you can ask of a book/author. Therefore I would recommend this book to anyone (...well maybe not kids in elementary school). But it will certainly connect with audiences of all ages as readers come to love Henry and Eva just as much as I did.[...]

To be honest, I didn't have high expectations for this book - it was one of the Ebooks available through my library, which have been fairly hit-or-miss (mostly miss) so far - but I was pleasantly surprised by this book by an author I wasn't familiar with. Henry and Eva's friendship rings true; they don't come across like typical YA novel best friends, who are completely wrapped up in each other's lives, but neither did they strike me as total opposites who somehow attract in an unlikely way. The ballet descriptions and tennis descriptions are equally well-written and well-researched, and the fact that Henry didn't realize the extent of Eva's illness was realistically portrayed as well. I was especially touched by the depiction of Eva's eating disorder; many YA books try to tackle the subject and miss the mark, but this one was realistic, especially in Eva's thoughts and the eventual

outcomes, on the level of Laurie Halse Anderson's acclaimed "Wintergirls." This is a book I would definitely recommend to my students or anyone unfortunately familiar with the realities of eating disorders.

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