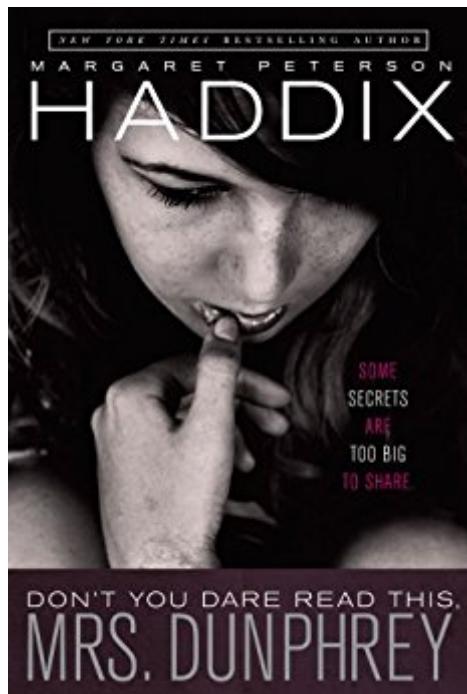


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# Don't You Dare Read This, Mrs. Dunphrey



## **Synopsis**

Things are so bad, I feel like I'm going to explode if I don't do something... Everyone has to keep a journal in Mrs. Dunphrey's English class, but the teacher has promised she won't read any entry marked "Do not read this." It's the kind of assignment Tish Bonner, one of the girls with big hair who sit in the back row, usually wouldn't take very seriously. But right now, Tish desperately needs someone to talk to, even if it's only a notebook she doesn't dare let anyone read. As Tish's life spins out of control, the entries in her journal become more and more private...and dangerous. Is she risking everything that matters to her by putting the truth on paper? And is she risking more by keeping silent?

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

As a teacher, I often think about the lives of my students outside the classroom. Are they okay? Are they getting enough to eat? Is someone there when they need help? How would I know if they had problems at home? Tish Bonner is the kind of student it's easy to overlook: quiet, seemingly bored in

school. Yet her life at home is troubled. Her depressed mother spends most of her time at home, yearning for her estranged husband, who abandoned the family. Tish must take on the responsibility of supporting the family, including her young brother. Tish hides her problems from the world, confiding only in the journal that began as an assignment for English class, but expanded beyond mindless homework to become an outlet for her emotions of sadness and desperation.

Unfortunately, Tish marks every entry "do not read," preventing her teacher from understanding her situation and providing help. Tish's diary entries are increasingly panicked and worrisome, as the condition of her situation at home deteriorates. Haddix does a great job of taking the reader into Tish's thoughts, and creating suspense as we wait for her to reach out to someone. A recommended book for middle school aged readers and their teachers.

I am a former elementary teacher and school librarian. I read the book nonstop cover-to-cover about a 15 year old who inadvertently becomes the Mom and Dad who cares for herself and younger brother, Matt. Tish's Dad is physically absent from the family except for a short time, and the Mom is mentally absent all of the time! Tish records in her journal, assigned by her English teacher, Mrs. Dunphrey, what is happening during her struggles to care for her brother and herself. Then when her Mom runs off to California, she must figure out a way to pay the bills. As things get worse and worse, Tish writes more and more but eventually seeks help. The climax of the book is very satisfying and complete. This is not a YA problem novel which leaves kids and adults frustrated with the events and outcome. I am passing it on to a favorite teen with the suggestion that her single Mom read it too. I recommend this very well-written book to teachers, librarians, parents, and kids nine and up. There is no sex or violence in it. K.J. McWilliams, author of *The Diary of a Slave Girl*, *Ruby Jo (SOUTH CAROLINA)*, *The Journal of Darien Dexter Duff, an Emancipated Slave (LOUISIANA)*, and *The Journal of Leroy Jeremiah Jones, a Fugitive Slave (ALABAMA)*.

Haddix tells a story that immediately captures the reader's interest. Many of Tish's concerns are "typically" adolescent-- school, job, sexual harassment--as well as one that is not at all typical. Tish's mother has abandoned her and her younger brother Matt. Tish is trying desperately to do the child-rearing that her mother should be doing. When her English teacher assigns a journal, Tish is sure she won't write at all, but once she starts, she finds writing cathartic, especially since Mrs. Dunphrey keeps her word and doesn't actually read anything that the girl tells her not to read. A totally happy ending would be unrealistic, but there is hope that Tish and Matt will have a better life. A great read that will open your eyes to the hardships of a not so ordinary teenager.

My two daughters suggested I read this book -- they are 12 and 14! I couldn't believe they finally agreed on something. The book is wonderful. It's charming! It's true to life and very, VERY good for teens and parents to read!!!! I will be checking out more books by this author! This is the best book I've read in a very long time!

This is a story of how a seventeen year old girl deals with the neglect of her parents. Her dad is in and out of her life and her mother stays very depressed and eventually abandons the family. Tish takes full responsibility of caring for her little brother, Matt. Her life becomes extremely hard to handle, and she finds an emotional outlet through journal writing, a daily assignment required by her English teacher, Mrs. Dunphrey. Mrs. Dunphrey has told the students that she will not read any journal entry marked "Do not read." Tish keeps her journal faithfully, but rarely allows Mrs. Dunphrey to read it. Tish's life becomes filled with growing anxieties and she finally allows Mrs. Dunphrey to read her journal. This story reflects many problems that teenagers with abusive parents may face. It also lets readers know there are people to turn to when dealing with a situation of this nature. We recommend this book for seventh or eighth graders. Teachers could use this book in their classroom to teach or study issues such as: neglect, abuse, depression, occupations, and family structures. These issues could be integrated when teaching Language Arts, Social Studies, Writing, Health, and Math. This is a good book for teenagers to read. It relays the importance of talking to someone when your problems become too overwhelming.

An English teacher, teaching high-school sophomores, requires her students to keep a weekly journal and write in it at least four times over the course of the week. She has said that if students write "do not read this" on any entry, she will not read it; she will simply make sure they have written something and give them credit. This book is the journal of Tish, a student in this class. Tish is living with a mother who is mentally ill and a brother who is eight years younger than she is. Her abusive father left a couple of years ago. Tish is initially reluctant to write anything meaningful or personal in this journal, but after she tests her teacher and makes sure that she really isn't reading the entries marked "do not read," Tish begins to let her feelings show in her writing. Through these journal entries, we get the full story of Tish's life and her struggle to be the adult in her family, to take care of her mom and brother. When Tish's father shows up after being gone for two years, Tish's journal entries get scarier and scarier, and it is increasingly disturbing to see that she is not sharing these stories of her life with anyone who could help her. I liked the journal format of this story, and I felt like

we got a good idea of what the other characters were like just by reading Tish's point of view. I felt sad for Tish and her brother, and I was disturbed that nobody realized what was going on in their lives.

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