



## No Ordinary Day

*Deborah Ellis*

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Even though Valli spends her days picking coal and fighting with her cousins, life in the coal town of Jharia, India, is the only life she knows. The only sight that fills her with terror is the monsters who live on the other side of the train tracks — the lepers. When Valli discovers that that her “aunt” is a stranger who was paid money to take Valli off her own family’s hands, she leaves Jharia and begins a series of adventures that takes her to Kolkata, the city of the gods. Valli finds that she really doesn’t need much to live and is very resourceful. But a chance encounter with a doctor reveals that she has leprosy. Unable to bear the thought that she is one of the monsters she has always feared, Valli rejects help and begins an uncertain life on the street.

## No Ordinary Day Details

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Author : Deborah Ellis

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## From Reader Review No Ordinary Day for online ebook

### Edward Sullivan says

No ordinary novel! A heartbreaking but ultimately hopeful story thanks to compassionate strangers, and an insightful look at the most impoverished life imaginable from the POV of a young girl.

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### Tania says

"If you were not scared, you would be having just an ordinary day." That got through to me. I knew what an ordinary day was like. I did not want to go back to that.

A beautifully written story about the life of a poor girl in India. Even though the book was short, I felt like I knew Valli. Highly recommended with young readers, I will definitely be saving this one for when my kids are a bit older. It has been listed for or won the following awards:

Winner of the Booklist Editors' Choice: Books for Youth 2012

Short-listed for the Governor General's Award: Children's Text 2011

Selected for the ALA Notable Children's Books List 2012

Selected for the CCBC Choices Best of Year 2012

Short-listed for the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Young Adult/Middle Reader Book Award 2012

Selected for the South Asia Book Award Honor Book 2012

Long-listed for the OLA Tree Awards 2013

Long-listed for the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award 2012

Short-listed for the SYRCA Diamond Willow Award 2013

The story: Valli is living with a family when she finds out they are not her family, but just a family that took her in. She is an orphan and sees no reason to stay with a family who cares little for her and abuses her. She hops on a truck carrying coal and out of the city. She lives well and happily on the street in Kolkata until a chance encounter with a benevolent doctor reveals that she has leprosy. She just begins to get treatment when she is scared away by her own fear of the other lepers who are disfigured. Valli makes her way back to street life, uncertain if she can ever go back to the hospital.

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### Sonja Arlow says

3 ½ stars

The children in this book reminded me of the homeless kids in the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*.

This story touches on prostitution, poverty, prejudice and leprosy all within only 155 pages.

Little Valli finds joy in the strangest of places. A free cup of tea, a "borrowed" blanket from a hotel, the luxury of sleeping in peace for a whole night, even if this sleep can only be found in a graveyard.

But one thing really scares her. The monsters on the other side of the train tracks, who have ears, fingers,

noses and feet missing..... She doesn't know what leprosy is but she does know that her feet are magic, she can run hop and jump without feeling any pain.

The content of this book could so easily have been VERY bleak and depressing however through the eyes of Valli there was a definite feeling of hope throughout.

A quick read that will also be suitable for kids around 13 and up.

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## **Ethan says**

No Ordinary Day - A Story About Curiosity and Hope

The story is based on a little girl named Valli, she had a family til she discovered her family was her 'family'. She runs away from home and lives on the streets of Kolhata. She learns to `borrow` things from people but when shes done she`ll give it to someone who needs it more. One day she was showering in a river and met a doctor that offered her a check-up. The doctor told her that she has leprosy, a disease that blocks the feeling in the nerves. The doctor can only stop the disease from spreading rather than curing it. Leprosy happens more commonly among those living in poverty.

Valli has been living in poverty all her life. Coal mine labour, living with 7 other people; sleeping on the floor to living on the streets of Kolhata.

Kolhata is a very peaceful, marketing and poor city. They do not have much resources when it comes to health. They have a hospital that runs on doctors and nurses that work full time. Valli often slept on the cornerstones of streets and even in the cemetery there. Throughout the story she learns that the little things in life make you happy, like a cup of tea, a small blanket or even shampoo. The details in this book are just enough for the imagination while being a little adventurous and having some sort of mystery to it. `` if you were not scared, you would be having just an ordinary day.`` This quote is honestly very inspiring, she had learned that living on the streets were normal and if she were not scared it would just be an ordinary day.

This book was absolutely a good one and I highly recommend it to young readers because young people do not appreciate what they have. This book teaches you to be grateful and that poverty is a serious problem in little countries like Kolhata, India that need more help.

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## **Annie Oosterwyk says**

This book took about an hour to read. It bounced lightly over such topics as poverty, homelessness, leprosy, prostitution and sex slavery and thievery. The main character thinks she has magic feet because she can stand in the hot coals of a burning ghat and not feel a thing. Lucky for her because her feet are in fact rotting beneath her. I found the presentation of such serious and tragic issues too superficial and brief. I guess middle school would be the audience, but who would want to explain what is really happening and have that discussion at that level?

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## **Nithila says**

I think that this was a great book. It really spoke out to the conditions of the poor in India, and informed everyone who read the book about Leprosy and how it can be treated. The author explained the false view people have about it, and why they should think differently. I recommend this book to everyone so they can learn about this important issue!

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### **Betti Napiwocki says**

This week I read two Deborah Ellis titles in preparation for the Global Fair. I began with "No Ordinary Day" and quite honestly had a hard time getting through the first chapter because I couldn't quite find the rhythm of the story, and because the imagery was so disturbing to me. This feeling of unease soon passed as I continued on and finished this book in one sitting. I was so moved by the strength, courage, and ingenuity of the main character, Valli, as she made her way through life in India, and I realized that the disturbing imagery was only an aide for me to appreciate the story.

"No Ordinary Day" is about a 10 year old girl named Valli who discovers she has no family, and that the family she has been living with was paid to take her in after her mother died. The family is very poor and treats her badly. The people in her village work in the coal mines - adults and children alike - and she spends her days walking barefoot through the village collecting coal. She believes she has magic feet because she feels no pain in them, when in reality she has leprosy. Valli flees her village and ends up in Kolkata, living on the streets. Valli uses her guile and courage to survive each day. She meets an old man and his goat one day and is given wisdom which she follows each day: find someone who needs what you have more than you, and give them what you have. This simple kindness is a lesson for the reader and Valli throughout the book. One day, Valli meets a doctor who offers to heal her feet if she will stay in the hospital with her, and after a time, Valli accepts the offer and is healed.

Ellis brought leprosy to my attention through this book. As I was reading, I kept thinking "the setting must be years ago, not current", and it wasn't until Valli was in the hospital and another patient was on her cellphone that I realized the setting was now. Knowing that made this book all the more powerful. Ellis also broke the stigma of "who" gets leprosy, as Valli comes to learn the background of her fellow patients in the hospital. This book speaks to global awareness through its discussion of where the money for the hospital in Kolkata comes from - from people worlds away wanting to fight this curable disease.

Leprosy was definitely a strong point of awareness in this book, but also the poverty and street life that seems so abundant in this part of India. Valli was alone in the world without family, however, she was not alone on the streets. The streets were full of people without homes, food, or money.

I think that many of us in forget that conditions such as illness and poverty aren't going away in many parts of the world. This book reminds us that the life outside our windows is not that of people around the globe. Reading a book such as this brings awareness to the forefront and hopefully promotes action among its readers.

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### **John Bonilla says**

Hermoso, hermoso, hermoso.

Simplemente, este libro es genial de inicio a fin. No hay un solo párrafo, ni una sola línea que no valga la pena ser leída.

Expresando muy amablemente la inocencia de una niña hindú, el reflejo de ese país, de sus zonas pobres, bajas, de la explotación laboral a la que están sometidas muchas personas e infantes. Nunca he ido a la India, pero se que en ese país es otro rollo, es otro mundo, tanto así que tienen Bollywood.

Entrar a la India, al menos en estas páginas, es toda una experiencia, saber lo que en muchas noticias o reportajes no dicen, ver la realidad o días normales en los ojos y pensamientos de una niña y ver todo como si no fuera maligno a primera impresión, pero yendo perdiendo esa confianza que se tiene a la sociedad.

Más allá de tratar del tema del lepra, representa como se vive en tierras Hindúes cuando se es de una economía baja o nula, como son, como viven, como le hacen para comer, descansar y sobrevivir.

Al inicio es tierno ya que a Valli, lo que hace por sobrevivir no lo considera un crimen o malo, simplemente es algo que, si a ella le beneficia sin perjudicar a nadie, esta bien. Al igual que su ideología de que nada de es de nadie, todo es prestado. Es un pensamiento muy bonito y que debería crear conciencia. Y como dicen, a veces, los que menos tienen son lo que más comparten.

Muy buen libro, recomendable al 100%. Se ha convertido en uno de mis favoritos.

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### **Mary says**

I thought this books was great showing the hidden children in India. Those who live in poverty or worse than poverty. I found Valli a strange character but amazing too. For most of the book she did not see her "place" in life as something horrible. She accepted her lot in life with humility. I give her major kudos for hoping a random truck to wherever she could get to away from the family she thought were her relatives but weren't. It is interesting how she behaved when she realized more about her "place" in life. The book does have somewhat of a happy ending. I say "somewhat" because things were just turning around for her in such a great positive way. It is up to the reader to imagine the full happy ending for this young amazing girl. So much potential!!!!

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### **Chloe says**

I think 'No Ordinary Day' was a book with absolutely beautiful vocabulary and symbols that made me understand the novel with a much deeper meaning than I usually do with other books. This novel is about a young girl named Valli who is diagnosed with leprosy. She is not accepted into society for the disease she has, however, through her journey in the city, she meets someone called Doctor Indra that can help change her life forever.

The novel has many symbols that make the book so much more interesting and deep. For example, the author used simple things like color to represent how much power a character had throughout the book. I would definitely recommend this book to readers who enjoy finding the deeper meaning behind the text and also to readers who like learning about new social issues.

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### **Barbara says**

This author always manages to remind me that the world is filled with "haves" and "have nots," and makes

me grateful for own much-easier life. When Valli finds out that the family she has been living with her entire life is not even related to her, she decides to leave the coal town of Jharia, India. After a series of unfortunate events, she ends up on the streets of Kolkata where she barely survives by stealing, borrowing, and begging. A chance encounter with a kindly doctor changes her life, and she ends up being treated for the leprosy that was hinted at throughout the book. As she always does, Ellis tugs at readers' heartstrings, reminding us that some of the diseases most of us thought had been eradicated still exist, causing endless pain and suffering in others. There are quite a few coincidences in the book, and Valli's impulsive decision to leave her home for the unknown doesn't quite ring true for me although other scenes of sleeping on the street or in pipes certainly do. The author nails the growing penchant toward cruelty that grows in Valli as she watches any hope of a better or a different life evaporate. One of the best parts of the book centers around the doctor's dispelling of Valli's own stereotypes toward others who have contracted leprosy, a disease that has a strong stigma attached to it. An Author's Note provides more information about the disease, and proceeds from the book's sale go to The Leprosy Mission.

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### **Mrs Mac McKenzie says**

Deborah Ellis is so good at telling the truth about people's lives in a way that is not patronising but with feeling and compassion without you realising it. She does her research and really expresses life of the children she writes about in a way that informs without being preachy.

Along with her other novels *No ordinary Day* tells the story of a young person dealing with a situation that is out of their control and which they are making decisions based on the best information that have. Leprosy and its sufferers is discussed with respect with in a human way.

A great quick read for those wishing to understand life in a different circumstance.

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### **Brenda says**

Learning that her "family" is not really her family is freeing for Valli. With this new information she runs away from the coal town in which she was living to the city of Kolkata. Valli quickly adapts to city life and learns to survive on the streets. What she does not realize is that like the people in her home town that she made fun of, Valli also has leprosy. While swimming to find coins, Valli meets a doctor who takes her to the hospital where she works. Valli is grateful for the care she receives until she realizes she is with lepers. Valli runs away from the hospital, but finally recognizes the benefits and returns. She learns to accept her condition and see past leprosy's marks in others to discover the real person.

This book has much to teach about family, friendship, acceptance and survival. I think it is important for children in American classrooms today to learn about how people around the world live. Valli's story presents the poverty and illness that is common in so much of the world.

I found myself cheering for Valli as she survived another day and made use of what she found. Early on she learned the lesson of using what she needed and then passing it on to others. I like that she did this with both tangible (a blanket) as well as intangible items (a hug). Having students think of things they could pass on to others would be a natural extension to this story.

While some of the cultural terms made the story a little difficult to understand, a glossary for those terms was provided at the end of the book. I think this is a book worth reading aloud or independently.

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### **Melissa Wine says**

Diversity Novel:

I'd recommend this book for middle school readers. I love the underlying theme of pay it forward! There are also strong themes of friendship, self-acceptance, and survival. Valli lives with a terrible aunt and uncle in Jharia, and spends her days picking up coal. Often, her cousins and her throw stones at the "monsters" across the railroad tracks. We eventually learn that these "monsters" suffer from leprosy. I think it is important for children in American classrooms today to learn about how some people around the world live. Valli is a bright, feisty girl, and I love that about her! When she finds out her aunt and uncle were given money by her family to take her in, she runs away. When she does, she ends up almost entering a life of prostitution. But the woman in charge finds out that Valli has leprosy. After spending time on the streets, she meets Dr. Indra who cleans her up and begins to treat her leprosy. However, Valli has to learn to overcome her anger and her fears. A theme in the book is that fear is strong, but love is stronger. She tries to run away again, but eventually comes back to the hospital. The relationship between Dr. Indra and Valli is special and very powerful. At first Valli resists the love, protection, and help that Dr. Indra tries to give her, but she eventually accepts it and is grateful. What a great lesson for young readers! I always want my students to know that they are safe, loved, and important, no matter what they've gone through or will go through. In the end, Valli wants to grow up to be like Dr. Indra.

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### **Eshaan says**

I love how this book tackles leprosy. I like how they make whoever had Leprosy were monsters and the way they are treated. It is not right to treat them like that because it is not their fault and this book does a good job telling how you can deal with it. This book has some themes about family and survival. When she learns her family has been paying her uncle and aunt to keep her with them she runs away. This really connects with me because if I found out that my parents are paying some horrible people to keep me away from them, I would be sad. The main theme is survival because throughout the whole book she had to avoid so many things like prostitution and Leprosy.

This book was a great read!

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