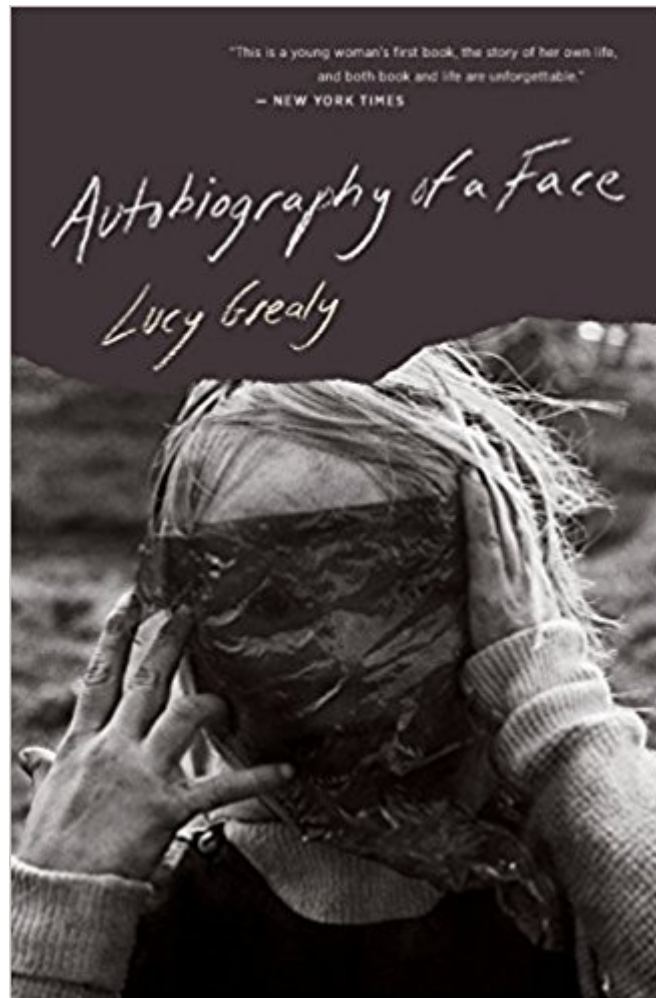




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# Autobiography Of A Face



## Synopsis

A New York Times Notable Book • This is a young woman's first book, the story of her own life, and both book and life are unforgettable. • "New York Times • Engaging and engrossing, a story of grace as well as cruelty, and a demonstration of [Grealy's] own wit and style and class." • Washington Post Book World This powerful memoir is about the premium we put on beauty and on a woman's face in particular. It took Lucy Grealy twenty years of living with a distorted self-image and more than thirty reconstructive procedures before she could come to terms with her appearance after childhood cancer and surgery that left her jaw disfigured. As a young girl, she absorbed the searing pain of peer rejection and the paralyzing fear of never being loved.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

At age nine, Lucy Grealy was diagnosed with a potentially terminal cancer. When she returned to school with a third of her jaw removed, she faced the cruel taunts of classmates. In this strikingly candid memoir, Grealy tells her story of great suffering and remarkable strength without sentimentality and with considerable wit. Vividly portraying the pain of peer rejection and the guilty pleasure of wanting to be special, Grealy captures with unique insight what it is like as a child and young adult to be torn between two warring impulses: to feel that more than anything else we want to be loved for who we are, while wishing desperately and secretly to be perfect --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Diagnosed at age nine with Ewing's sarcoma, a cancer that severely disfigured her face, Grealy lost

half her jaw, recovered after two and half years of chemotherapy and radiation, then underwent plastic surgery over the next 20 years to reconstruct her jaw. This harrowing, lyrical autobiographical memoir, which grew out of an award-winning article published in Harper's in 1993, is a striking meditation on the distorting effects of our culture's preoccupation with physical beauty. Extremely self-conscious and shy, Grealy endured insults and ostracism as a teenager in Spring Valley, N.Y. At Sarah Lawrence College in the mid-1980s, she discovered poetry as a vehicle for her pent-up emotions. During graduate school at the University of Iowa, she had a series of unsatisfying sexual affairs, hoping to prove she was lovable. No longer eligible for medical coverage, she moved to London to take advantage of Britain's socialized medicine, and underwent a 13-hour operation in Scotland. Grealy now lives in New York City. Her discovery that true beauty lies within makes this a wise and healing book. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Lucy Grealy vividly describes her painful childhood and the horrendous journey she traveled due to a childhood cancer that stole her life. At age nine Lucy undergoes several operations to remove a cancerous tumor in her jaw. She is left disfigured and also placed in the position of having to endure 2 years of heavy chemotherapy. The repercussions of this are inconceivable. What makes this true tale readable is Lucy Grealy's ability to write from a child's perspective while her observations are that of an adult. The story is beyond interesting and sucks you into her life. Anyone who has ever been bullied or teased needs to multiply it by life to get a glimpse of what living under her coat is like. Much of the story is Lucy having operation after painful operation to try to regain what most of us take for granted, normalcy. I loved her story because rarely have I read a personal account of one's tribulations that shows all the narcissism, self absorption and self pity that all of us feel at times in our life and for much lesser reasons. Lucy is brilliant and her writing is effortless. Her observations of her doctors, classmates, family and friends are dead on with obtuse insight. This is unlike any other book you will ever read and will stay with you for life.

Lucy Grealy, author of *Autobiography of a Face*, takes her readers step by painful step through her story, memories, and emotions of her life with jaw cancer. Diagnosed at age nine, as a young girl Lucy grows up feeling more comfortable in hospitals than out in the world. The surgical removal of 1/3 of her jaw left her face unbearably disfigured. The sharing of countless chemotherapies and reconstructive surgeries in great, descriptive depth, leave the reader no choice but to experience Lucy's anguish: "An empty balloon was inserted under the skin on the right side of

my face and then slowly blown up daily (215). The discovery of a passion for poetry in college helps Lucy through more facial reconstruction. Having a twin sister gave Lucy an image of the beautiful face she should be, but she saw herself ugly, a girl growing up scared to look in the mirror because [Lucy] found that [she] could stare straight through a mirror, allowing none of the reflection to get back at [her] (221). Though her story relates a terrifying drama that we, as readers, will hopefully never experience, Grealy's writing is relatable to many different kinds of readers. When describing her pain and the countless doctor visits, it is as if we are right in the room with her reaching to hold her hand for the shots and listening intently, "Don't cry," [her mom] was whispering to her, as if it were a secret [they] were sharing (85). We all get shots, though not on a regular basis, and as a reader Lucy creates a palpable sensation of when the needle first pinches her skin. She makes the reader cringe. Grealy comes to the most important realization, "that most truths are inherently unretainable" (222). All most people ever do in this world is try to be like everyone else. Ann Patchett's afterword wraps up the book well; she informs the reader Lucy was "making art, not documenting an event" (231). Overall, Grealy shares her own story of struggling with love and approval—something everyone can relate to.

Very disturbing autobiography by a woman who was robbed of beauty, but more importantly, robbed of a childhood. Although she clearly had loving parents, they failed to help her emotionally with her adjustment to life with constant scrutiny. Her cancer demanded that she be the center of attention for (at least) 18 months of her childhood and during that time, she was made to spend most of her time, day after day, all alone in her home. Alone with her boredom. When her treatments were finally over, she was expected to reenter her school.....getting no help with her adjustment. This tragic event in her life and the way it was handled left her with a very disturbed adulthood. Lucy, as it turned out, was very intelligent, (read *Truth and Beauty* by Ann Patchett, her closest friend), literally demanded constant attention and love. She had no sense of responsibility as it relates to finances and flittered through her short life like a hummingbird.....a very unhappy hummingbird. Her obsession with wanting to integrate a sexual life into her life of fame drove her to taking unnecessary chances until she died. Very sad story of a woman who could have led a full life with well deserved fame and unconditional love from friends, but her expectations of one day being beautiful, encouraged by numerous doctors (38 operations), blinded her to reality. This book required that I read Ann Patchett's book to help fill in all that I felt was missing from Lucy's story.

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