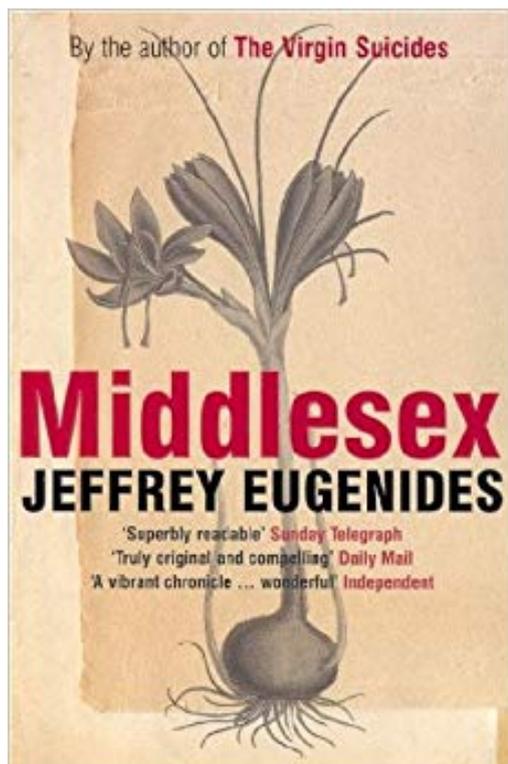


## Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides



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**Author:** Jeffrey Eugenides

**Book title:** Middlesex

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## Reviews of the Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides

Tiainar

I absolutely love gothic and mildly depressing stories which are poetic but go nearly nowhere. Coming of age tales where the ending could be anything? Love it. Tragedy on a Shakespearean level where barely anyone is left breathing at the end of the tale? Adore it.

I read this book at least once a year and I haven't gotten tired of it. It's beautifully written, but it's a short novel, and a simple tale.

I became obsessed with The Virgin Suicides when I saw the commercial for the movie on television at age 10 or 11. I begged my parents to let me see it. They forbid it. I wasn't able to watch it until I was fully grown and married, I read the book afterward. I'm now thankful for that because I think if I'd seen the seen the movie and read the book as a tween/teen, it would have definitely negatively

influenced my adolescence. I did have severe depression and my parents kept watch over me much like the parents in the story. I was definitely the Lux type as a teenager and luckily I grew out of it.

Since I see the parallels in my past reflected in the story, when I read it I feel like the sister who lived. Eugenides writes the girls so realistically that I can't help but feel so connected to them, like they are my family. I grieve for them at the end of the book after each reading. Especially since I see so many teen girls damaging themselves the same way the sisters did, over bullying in school or other problems. This book definitely shows how suicide can rip families apart. I read somewhere that suicide affects a family for 10 generations. That's a long time, and I do believe its true.

I don't feel this is a YA book, though I've seen it classified as one. It's far too dark, and while condemning suicide, Eugenides simultaneously glorifies it. Yes, the survivor's hearts were broken. But more is made of the fact that the sisters will be young and beautiful in their memories forever. How irresistible for a young girl is that? Yes, I'll be dead, but I'll have impacted an entire town for years to come with my death. Yes, my boyfriend will move on and marry, but he'll discuss me and my death with his friends at high school reunions.... He'll never get over me. To be immortalized is every teen girl's wildest dream. If one has to kill herself to do it, she will. For an already depressed and impressionable teen girl, this book is a loaded gun.

I have a beautiful blonde daughter of my own now. I'm hiding this book from her until she's at least 25.

FreandlyMan

I absolutely loved this book. It was recommended to me by a Greek friend who grew up in the Detroit area. Once I got through the first few chapters I could not put it down and now I see why they say its one of the books you must read before you die. The writing is amazing and just flows and Calliope's story kept me captivated. When I was finished I was disappointed in the ending because I wanted more and felt the author couldn't leave it there as I wanted to know so much more at the protagonist. But I realized that's the true sign of a good book, you don't want to let the characters go because you come so invested in them and their story. I would recommend this book to anyone and have already lent it out to a few folks.

Mr\_Mole

I wasn't sure the topic of hermaphroditism would be of interest to me, but this was a beautifully written piece about generations of family and their legacy of struggle. The sections on hermaphroditism were well done and gave one a sympathetic and more thorough understand of the spectrum of gender and the delicate dance of hormones needed to create it.

Cobyno

With engaging erudition rendered in a unique voice, Jeffrey Eugenides displays his, at the time, evolving talent as a novelist in this monumental undertaking. Describing the emergence of an early 20th Century Greek family which subsequently expands into a generational saga, and with our protagonist being the narrator, this work combines an abounding array of anecdotal conditions with stunning human drama to form an enlightening and expository historical novel.

Eugenides, taking on the guise of Callie Stephanides an American born hermaphrodite, tells a story of the American ideal...Europeans coming to the New World with limited expectations but grand hopes. Desdemona and Lefty Stephanides, biologically brother and sister, survive the 1922 Great Smyrna Fire, which destroyed the now eastern Turkish city of Izmir, and fraudulently gain access to passage which exports them to America. There, from New York harbor and the Statue of Liberty, they make their way to Detroit and begin to procreate a lineage of Greek-strong migrants. Callie is a third generational offspring who becomes Cal, a man and United States Ambassador. Cal's childhood though is rendered as "Callie," a hermaphrodite, who is Eugenides engine for this story. Acting as a girl for her entire youth, Eugenides describes the inherent difficulties that she faces as an

hermaphroditic offspring...both biological and psychological.

Couched in turbulent 1960s Detroit, we follow Callie as she struggles mightily with her identity. Espousing virtually all there is to know about this condition, Eugenides combines exacting, almost excruciating, research with the emotional drama of a child unexpectedly realizing that her sex is ambiguous. In episode after episode, we watch as Callie slowly realizes her dilemma and her subsequent efforts to rationalize it. Discarding parental and family emotions, she becomes a "he" while experiencing the expected hardships associated with such a life changing move. Deep and sometimes flawed personal insights abound as this transformation slowly grows. We're, at the end, left with Cal, the man and principal combatant who becomes the literal hero of the work.

Although sometimes overwhelming and unnecessarily provocative, this work is nonetheless a tour de force. Combining exquisite history with an understated but informative voice, "Middlesex," although of a quality below that of a Pulitzer Prize winner (which this work actually won in 2003) in my opinion, is nevertheless an engaging and exhortative read...full of illuminating and nuanced refinement. When undertaking this though, be committed to a long but not totally unrewarded experience.

Mmsa

A gem of a novel spanning several generations of family members plagued by unique relationships and genetic combinations leading to hermaphroditic outcomes. Well written and researched, I believe, we are voyeurs to the unusual circumstances resulting in seemingly authentic disclosure. The vocabulary is extensive and explains very well what the author is experiencing. A very intriguing slice of life, covering the 60's in Detroit, all the way back to the Greek Exodus of Turkey at the turn of the century.

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