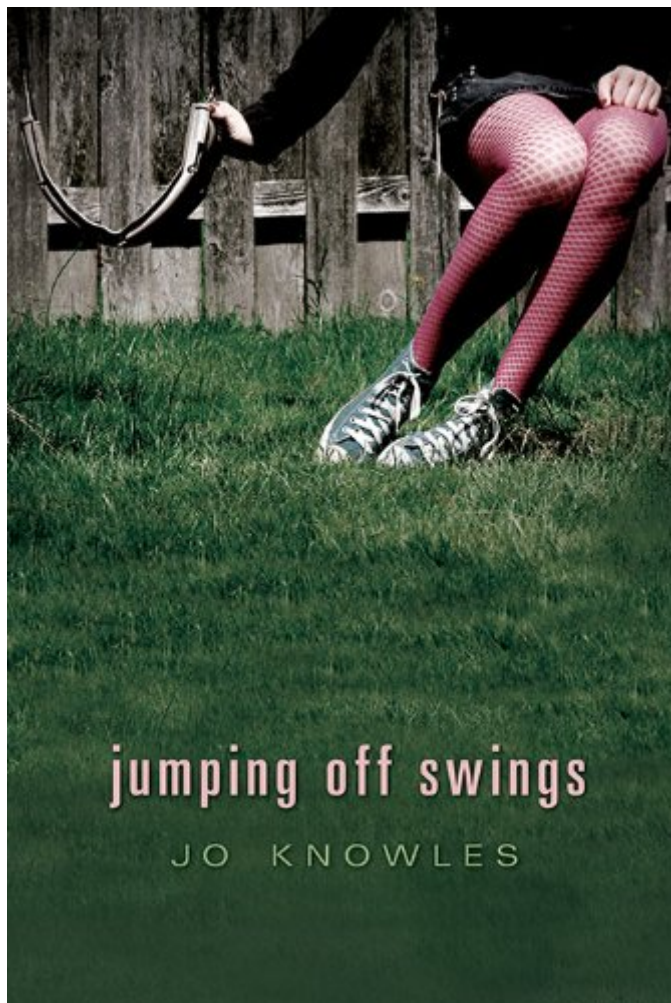


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# Jumping Off Swings



## Synopsis

Ellie remembers how the boys kissed her. Touched her. How they begged for more. And when she gave it to them, she felt loved. For a while anyway. So when Josh, an eager virgin with a troubled home life, leads her from a party to the backseat of his van, Ellie follows. But their one-time thing is far from perfect: Ellie gets pregnant. Josh reacts with shame and heartbreak, while their confidantes, Caleb and Corinne, deal with their own complex swirl of emotions. No matter what Ellie chooses, all four teenagers will be forced to grow up a little faster as a result. Told alternately from each character's point of view, this deeply insightful novel explores the aftershocks of the biggest decision of one fragile girl's life—and the realities of leaving innocence behind.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

-MINOR SPOILERS AHEAD-This book was a little difficult for me to finish for one reason; Ellie's character. The pacing is a bit botched, and the melodrama really comes out of nowhere with her. The story starts fine, but it gets really hard to tolerate through the middle. It's very mean spirited,

and while I want to call it unrealistic, it's really not. High school kids often are extremely cruel for no good reason. The issue here is that the realistic conflict doesn't blend well with Ellie's character, and the scene at the abortion clinic has to be the weakest chapter in this novel. She doesn't grow, she doesn't change, she's still the same weak willed girl who only seems to be able to continue with her life because the people around her force her to. The only real bit of closure involving her was with her mother at the hospital, but after ALL of the things Ellie went through, after reading through how deep her self-esteem issues ran, and reading how tense the relationship she has with her mother was, it just isn't enough. I know real life doesn't always have happy endings but this story just feels sort of incomplete. That said, the ending scene at the hospital was so heart wrenching it brought me to tears, and I was actually able to feel something for Ellie outside of being annoyed. Not an awful book, but not the best. Jo Knowles had written the sad, vulnerable character much better before in *Lessons From a Dead Girl*.

Ellie sleeps around because boys give her the momentary thrill of being adored and feeling beautiful. Josh loses his virginity to her, and callously leaves her and brags to his friends about becoming a man. The major problem is that through that one tryst, Ellie becomes pregnant since the condom slipped off. She has to make a tough decision: keep the baby or get rid of it. The story shifts with four points of view: Ellie, Josh, and their best friends Corinne and Caleb. It was interesting to see the four deal with the pregnancy amid the jeers of classmates and reactions from parents. I thought Ellie would be in the forefront, but the other three characters do share the spotlight with her. I had to get used to the switching viewpoints, because I normally read novels that only have one or two points of view. There were no light, humorous scenes to break up the serious realism of the novel. Nevertheless, I enjoyed it and look forward to reading *Pearl* by Knowles.

Goodreads Description- One pregnancy. Four friends. It all adds up to a profound time of change in this poignant, sensitively written YA novel. Ellie remembers how the boys kissed her. Touched her. How they begged for more. And when she gave it to them, she felt loved. For awhile anyway. So when Josh, an eager virgin with a troubled home life, leads her from a party to the backseat of his van, Ellie follows. But their "one-time thing" is far from perfect: Ellie gets pregnant. Josh reacts with shame and heartbreak, while their confidantes, Caleb and Corinne, deal with their own complex swirl of emotions. No matter what Ellie chooses, all four teenagers will be forced to grow up a little faster as a result. Told alternately from each character's point of view, this deeply insightful novel explores the aftershocks of the biggest decision of one fragile girl's life -- and the realities of leaving

innocence behind. This is one of the most emotional books that I have read in a long time. It is the story of 4 teens, Ellie, Corrine, Josh, and Caleb as they struggle through a teen year with all of the emotional ups and downs. Each chapter is told from one of the four main characters point of view so the reader gets a dynamic view of the story line. Ellie is looking for love and she thinks she can find it in sleeping with boys, but she not only ends up emotionally scarred but pregnant. Corrinne, her best friend, is struggling to help her but is also dealing with her own feelings of whether or not to be intimate with Caleb. Caleb and Josh have been best friends since childhood and they are leaning on each other to get through not only Ellie's pregnancy but their depressing family lives. Each of the character's family lives are terribly depressing and dysfunctional in unique ways. Every character is struggling with loss. The loss of innocence, friendship, family, fathers, mothers, and self esteem. This book moved me in so many ways. The author is able to clearly get her message across of the loss of innocence in teens and the tragic consequences and emotional turmoil. It made me come in and hug my children and hope that I can be a better parent and protect them from the realities of growing up. Even though the story was so depressing, it is a portrait of the reality of teen pregnancy and because it was able to pull at my heart strings so much it definitely deserves a 4 star review. Wonderful read Ms. Knowles.

As a middle school teacher, I have gone through several copies of this book. My students love Jo Knowles and this book is no exception. Although it does discuss sex and teen pregnancy, the larger themes of this book are making the right choices, asking for help and being honest. Part uplifting and part agonizing, my students feel for this narrator and they fly through the pages and on to the companion book.

Let's face it teens have tough lives. They're growing up and dealing with hormone changes and then add to that girl problems and guy problems and you have a huge mess to sort through. This book is one of those that cleverly deals with teen problems. Jo Knowles is quite brilliant at her writing and she doesn't sugar coat anything. Her writing is real and raw and will have you wondering what's going to happen throughout the story. I loved this novel. Some teens make rash decisions that force them to grow up quickly and changes their whole lives taking their innocence away. You'll recognize that in Ellie and you'll understand why she did it. You'll feel for her and for her friends and for her friend's friends. You won't regret this purchase. Buy it, read it, you'll be glad you did.

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