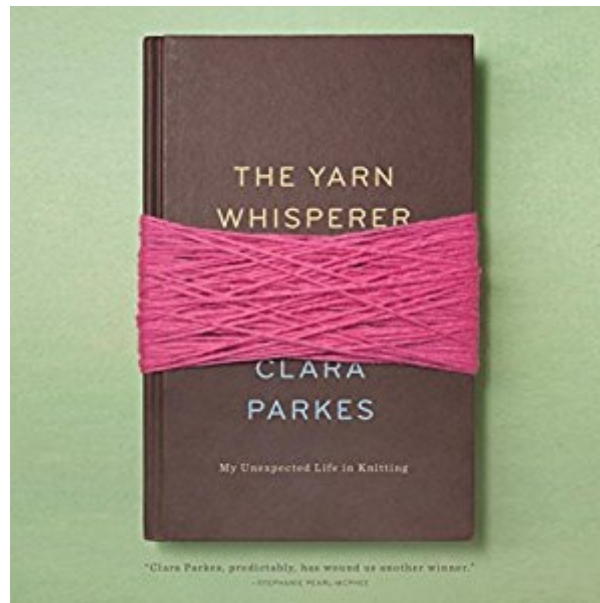


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# The Yarn Whisperer: My Unexpected Life In Knitting



## Synopsis

Stockinette, ribbing, cables, even the humble yarn over can instantly evoke places, times, people, conversations, all those poignant moments that we've tucked away in our memory banks. Over time, those stitches form a map of our lives. (From the preface) In *The Yarn Whisperer: Reflections on a Life in Knitting*, renowned knitter and author Clara Parkes ponders the roles knitting plays in her life via 22 captivating, poignant, and laugh-out-loud funny essays. Recounting tales of childhood and adulthood, family, friends, adventure, privacy, disappointment, love, and celebration, she hits upon the universal truths that drive knitters to create and explores the ways in which knitting can be looked at as a metaphor for so many other things. Put simply, "No matter how perfect any one sweater may be, it's only human to crave another. And another, and another."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have been a fan of Clara Parkes' *Knitters* Review forever and have loved her other three books. This one is no exception. It is written with the yarn lover and knitter in mind. The book contains no patterns, but rather is a collection of reminiscences or essays by Ms. Parkes. She talks about her life as it relates to knitting and yarn. "This book is a collection of my own musings on stitches - why we work them, what they do to fabric, and how they have contributed to the fabric of my own life. For life really is a stitch. It has a beginning, a midpoint, and an end. It serves a purpose, and if we're lucky, it creates something beautiful and enduring." There is one essay that relates to steaks -

sometimes we have to make a cut in something in order to give it a chance to become whole. In the chapter about the choreography of stitches she discusses her move to Tucson and the discovery of the rodeo. She also learns square dancing. She looks at myriad stitches and designers and compares them to different types of choreography. For instance, Kaffe Fassett is a modern choreographer and other designers are more traditional. There is a poignant essay about her parents' divorce and her trip cross-country. The essay on stashes really spoke to me. I have so much yarn that I could open my own yarn shop. Ms. Parkes discusses the need to cull stashes and compares them to gardens. "As hard as it is to say, I should point out that a healthy stash requires frequent and prudent weeding. It can easily get overrun before we notice what's happening". In her essay called Stitch Traffic she gives very sound advice, that "putting blind faith in anything is rarely a good idea, whether it's a GPS or a knitting pattern. It's far better to develop your own instinct, learn for yourself what works and what doesn't - and learn why". The discussions on swatching and slipped stitches are both humorous and poignant, pointing to the importance of connection and standing firm. In *The Great Whodunit*, Ms. Parkes talks about how "a good mystery book can be like a good knitting pattern. It takes you on an adventure, engages your mind, paints a pretty landscape, maybe even surprises you now and then, but always reaches the expected resolution." In *Coming Undone*, the author takes on the negative connotation of unraveling and provides a more positive definition like disentangling or solving a problem. I know that when I undo my knitting it is always to make it look better or to correct an error. I like the idea proposed in *Making Martha's Sandwich*, that any knitter is a real knitter, no matter how advanced they may or may not be. She writes with a serious, poignant and humorous manner, providing some history of knitting in several essays. As the book cover states, she "uses the metaphor of knitting to tell her own story". There are 22 essays that deal with topics such as divorce, leaving the bustle of dot coms for a more leisurely life in Maine where she lives in a town of 920 people with her partner, and the relationship of baking to knitting. I am an avowed knitter but do not read many knitting books. I read Clara Parkes for her wisdom, down-to-earth manner, knowledge and wisdom. I love it when she states that "'happily ever after' is a moving target. No matter how perfect any one sweater may be, it's only human to crave another. And another. And another." I would recommend this book to anyone who knits and loves yarns.

Each chapter in this book can stand alone, and they are not in any sort of order. Therefore, this makes a great book to read at night, just before drifting off. There is no temptation to read just a few more pages to see if the cliff hanger is resolved. I especially enjoyed the chapters referring to events or happenings in the author's life. I was less enthused about the chapters (of which there were

several) that drew parallels between knitting and other unrelated things such as roads, baking, gardening, etc. It was during the chapter on roads that I seriously considered quitting without finishing the rest of the book. The only thing that kept me reading through that chapter was the fact that this was a book club read and low points make for excellent discussion.

I so wanted to love this - it is ok if it's your first read ever about knitters and knitting- but if you have already read *SweaterQuest* or any of the Purl-McPhee books, this is sort of redundant. The book still looks cute in my knitting cabinet. She is a good writer and her books seem like essays from her online blog made into chapters.

This is one of those books that made me feel terribly sad when I reached the last page, because I enjoyed reading it so much. The book is full of lovely insights into both yarn and the lives of those who love it. I can see myself going back to it again and again, when I feel the need to bundle up in the literary equivalent of my favorite comfy sweater.

This is indeed a beautifully written book with yarn as its metaphor (as stated by a previous reviewer). But after about the third chapter I began to hope that the author would let go of the metaphor. By the sixth chapter, no matter how the author spun it, I found the metaphor was becoming a cliché and I was having trouble reading more than a chapter or two at one sitting. The chapters with "less" metaphor, and often fewer life lessons, seem to work better. The chapter about the Kitchener stitch and its origin, for example, comes to mind, with its historical information. Come on Clara--more stories about yourself, about yarn and knitting, or about anything, really, but lay off the metaphor. Still, knitters will want to read this book.

LOVED this book! It was interesting and relaxing all at the same time.

I've been acquainted with Clara Parkes' love of yarn and knitting since she first started her Knitters Review blog. It is the person behind the words (rather than the mere words) that gets the five star rating. She is reflective, introspective without being overly serious. She seems shy, yet doesn't erect a false self to keep us from knowing her. She's just quiet. These essays connect experiences that all of us have with knitting to experiences that most of us have as humans (and vice versa). Left me with warmer feelings than angora.

Not at all what I expected. I very quiet look into the life of Clara Parkes that did not reveal much that I did not know from being an avid follower of her Knitter's Review. I think that she is a very private woman and she wrote a thoughtful book that reveals less than a memoir should? I have always appreciated her dry and wry outlook- I just wanted a little more insight about her if the book is meant to be personal. No knitting tips or patterns here. A personal journey with a happy ending.

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