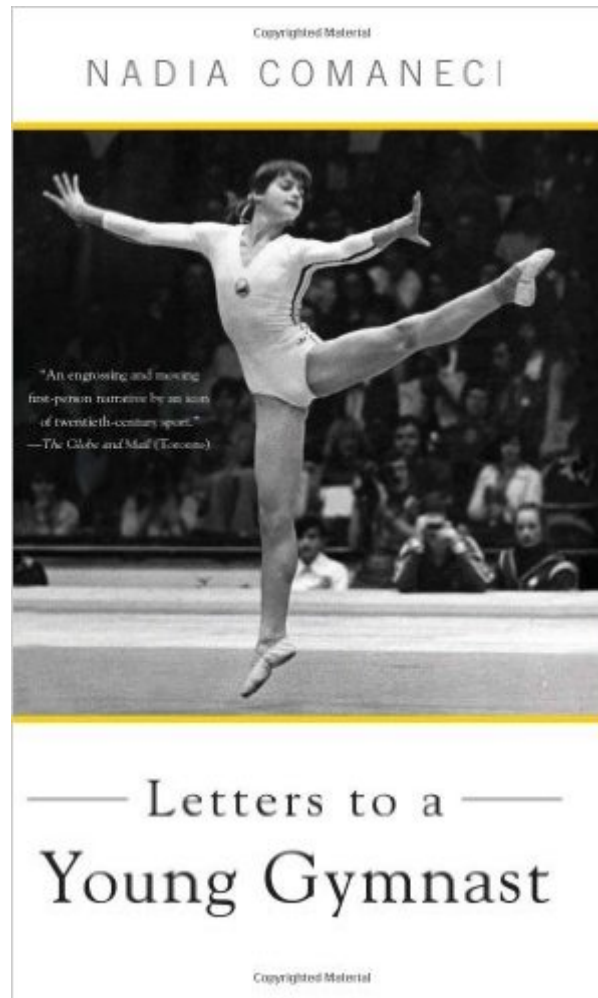


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Letters To A Young Gymnast



Synopsis

In *Letters to a Young Gymnast*, Nadia Comaneci tells how she found the inner strength to become a world-class athlete at such a young age. Now a woman of tremendous poise and self-assurance, she offers unique insights into the mind of a top competitor. From how to live after you've realized your dream to the necessity of "a spirit forged with mettle," Comaneci's thoughts on athleticism and sacrifice are eye-opening.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Since I was a gymnast for many, many years, I have read quite a few gymnastics books, but none had impressed me too much until I read this one. Perhaps it is because Nadia not only talked about her gymnastics, but also about the conditions and struggles of life in Communist Romania. It is not only a biography, but also historical as well. The book was very clear and easy to read, so younger gymnastics fans should have no problem getting through it. It was also very interesting (something I truly did not expect) and a page turner. It answered many questions gymnastics fans have had through the years. Nadia's story is very impressive, and, at times, even heartbreaking. It's hard to believe that, by reading this book, you'll eventually "feel" for probably the most successful gymnast in the history of the sport. Her life wasn't always as glorious as you may think. I'd suggest gymnastics fans read this book because it's simply very good and very well written, and also very, very interesting. Also, if you're simply interested in learning more about how life was like in a communist country, this book may just be the book for you!

Do not have the mistaken belief that this book is a simple collection of gymnastic memories for budding gymnasts. Competitive gymnastics, and life, is far more detailed. And Nadia addresses a thousand questions posed to her by generations of fans. Some fans watched Nadia in competition during the 1976 Olympics. Many know of her from stories told them by others. And some only know of her from a 1984 TV movie. Queries to Nadia have always been more than just, "How do I improve my handstand?" They want to know her experiences, feelings, and thoughts. Or, as Nadia begins her book, "Dear Nadia, Tell me everything..." The book follows her life chronologically, but each stage brings a different theme. Chapter titles such as "Necessity," "The Disciplined Life," and "Courage?" are not only lessons for little girls, but for everyone, even if the lessons are really just reminders. Nadia is very detailed in each of the memories she relates. Those looking to find out how she felt then, or feels now won't be disappointed. And she has the passage of time to put everything in perspective. Her answers to the many questions are surprising. You'll discover that most events in Nadia's life, which we all learned from the various media, are far different than we thought in details and perceptions. I won't give away some of these details, but many are eye openers, some down-to-earth. And a few are reminders that Nadia's a person, and her actions and reactions are human, not superhuman. With all that you'll learn about her life, you'll find she is still Nadia: The athlete and Olympic champion devoted to her sport; a teen with normal growing up issues that set her back, but rose to be champion again. A young woman held virtually captive by her government. A desperate soul escaping to freedom; creating a new life in a far away land. And finding love, complete with fairy tale wedding.

I sat down this afternoon and read Nadia's book in one sitting! True, it's a relatively small book, but with having two young boys to look after, rarely do I take the time to read so intensely. The style and language of the book made it seem like Nadia was sharing her story with ME, and I loved the personal stories and insights. After all the stories and media rumors, it is fascinating to hear her side of the events that shaped her life, such as her early childhood memories, the 1979 World Championships, her defection to the USA, and her and Bart's courtship and wedding. These were topics that I had heard talked about many times, but even in interviews, Nadia has never gone into the detail that she did in this book. This book reminded me about all of the reasons why I have admired Nadia for so long and why she remains very dear to my heart, and in the hearts of so many others around the world. I want to thank her for taking the time to write such an honest book, and for sharing her thoughts with her fans. Her gymnastics career has had a big impact on my life, and has always inspired me to do my best in school, in my work and in my relationships. One last thing: when

I first purchased the book, I was disappointed that there were no photos included. Upon reading the book, however, I realize that the book is directed not necessarily at a young audience, but for her fans, many of us who are in our adult years now. While photos would always be welcome, I wouldn't have wanted photos if it meant taking out any parts of the book. Her incredible and inspiring story speaks for itself.

Nadia's book exceeded my expectations with her insightful words of philosophy and colorfully poetic descriptions. Her autobiographical account, packaged with thought-provoking questions and comments aimed towards her readers, struck several deep chords in my life-pondering mind. There is plenty of food for thought which would particularly hit home for readers who find themselves at a crossroads in their lives. Nadia's experiences, hardships, successes are truly inspiring pieces of her world that many readers could relate to and possibly find light in their own circumstances. In a way, it was a good thing that there were no pictures included because I could focus more on the intellectual aspect of the story than the visual. At the same time, it would have been a great idea to include a few early photos along with some recent ones of herself, since she does mention that she hopes people will be interested in who she is now and not so much on the little girl she used to be. As far as gymnastics tips, Nadia gives them in the form of using one's psychology for greater benefit. She also includes a list for success in life towards the end of the book. Naturally, even I was curious enough to expect, and miss, a bit of flexibility or skill-specific boosting advice from her perspective. This story is indeed a fantastic motivational tool for others. Those who say otherwise have simply not taken the time or effort to read into what Nadia's story offers or pinpoint the wonderful wisdom she provides.

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