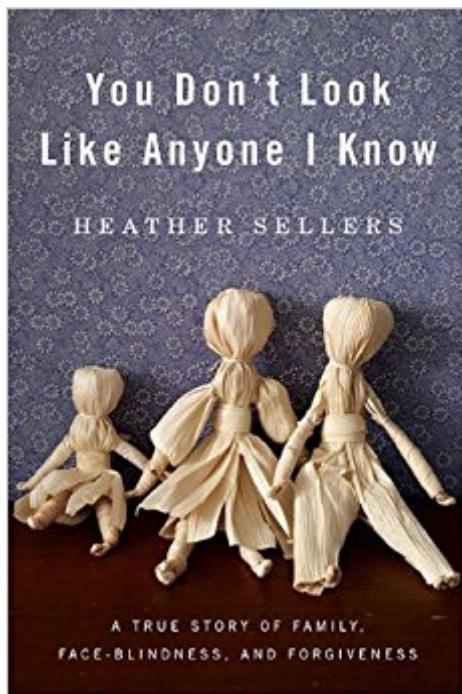


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# You Don't Look Like Anyone I Know



## **Synopsis**

An unusual and uncommonly moving family memoir, with a twist that give new meaning to hindsight, insight, and forgiveness. Heather Sellers is face-blind—that is, she has prosopagnosia, a rare neurological condition that prevents her from reliably recognizing people's faces. Growing up, unaware of the reason for her perpetual confusion and anxiety, she took what cues she could from speech, hairstyle, and gait. But she sometimes kissed a stranger, thinking he was her boyfriend, or failed to recognize even her own father and mother. She feared she must be crazy. Yet it was her mother who nailed windows shut and covered them with blankets, made her daughter walk on her knees to spare the carpeting, had her practice secret words to use in the likely event of abduction. Her father went on weeklong "fishing trips" (aka benders), took in drifters, wore panty hose and bras under his regular clothes. Heather clung to a barely coherent story of a "normal" childhood in order to survive the one she had. That fairy tale unraveled two decades later when Heather took the man she would marry home to meet her parents and began to discover the truth about her family and about herself. As she came at last to trust her own perceptions, she learned the gift of perspective: that embracing the past as it is allows us to let it go. And she illuminated a deeper truth—that even in the most flawed circumstances, love may be seen and felt. Watch a Video

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

As a child, Sellers moved between households; her alcoholic father drank all night, slept all day, and wore women's clothing on evenings out. Her schizophrenic mother provided no respite; windows

were nailed shut in her house, light bulbs were bare, sponge baths were taken in the garage. Sellers remembers watching kids play and "wondering which ones had mothers who would adopt an extra girl." But it's her realization that she suffers from prosopagnosia (face blindness) that ultimately propels her to seek professional help. At her core, she learns, she is a product of her condition; she'd never married, had no children, constantly sought new houses, jobs, cities, people. She was "only comfortable in ambivalence." To recover she must utterly change her life. In one excruciating incident, Seller's listens to a companion complain about a co-worker seated, unbeknownst to her coworker, nearby; though Sellers can see him, she can't recognize him, ultimately ruining another friendship. But with the help of a therapist, Sellers begins telling people about her condition. Sellers handles the jagged transitions between past and present deftly, explaining her life as a story of "how we love each other in spite of immense limitations." (Oct.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

Her mother was a paranoid schizophrenic who nailed shut the windows of her Florida home, draped sheets over the television, and believed she was the target of government agents. Her father was a gin-swinging cross-dresser who took swings at her with a cast-iron skillet. No wonder then that Sellers feared she herself might be crazy when she realized that she was unable to reliably recognize the faces of friends, colleagues, even family members when she saw them on the street. Eventually diagnosed with the rare neurological disorder prosopagnosia, otherwise known as face blindness, Sellers was relieved to learn she wasn't mentally ill, yet struggled to find a way to cope with her disorder. With buoyant honesty and vibrant charm, Sellers paints a spirited portrait of a dysfunctional family and a woman who nearly loses herself in her attempts to deny their abnormalities. Sure to appeal to fans of *The Glass Castle* (2005), Sellers limns an acutely perceptive tale of triumph over parental and physical shackles. --Carol Haggas

This book is a true story about a woman who suffers from something most people have never heard of...she suffers from face blindness. She cannot tell who people are by looking at them, even family members. The story tells of her growing up and obviously, thinking everyone is like she is...people accuse her of passing right by them when they wave at her in a restaurant and she says she didn't see them...they don't believe her. Even when her diagnosis is finally confirmed, people still don't believe her because they have never heard of face blindness. I really enjoyed this book and hope it opens peoples's eyes to something we never heard of and most of us will never know someone who suffers from this.

I loved this book! I realized I have face blindness a couple of years ago when I saw an article in the news about it. Before that I thought everyone had trouble with faces and I just wasn't as good at it as others, like how some people are better at sports than others. Reading about her childhood made me wonder if growing up in an environment of neglect/abuse contributes to this. It was a relief to read about the embarrassing social situations that I had also experienced and now understand why they happened. At the time these things happened to me, I was bewildered by them. It was interesting to find she had come up with some of the same coping strategies that I have come up with.

Heather Sellers is a magnificently generous and uproariously encouraging author of several books inspiring would-be authors to work on their books. And she has a style unlike anyone else -- one that is funny, upbeat, and heartwarming (her books include *Page After Page* and *Chapter After Chapter*). So when I began to read her memoir, I expected something at least partly similar. Instead, the first half of this book is quite bleak, despite Sellers' warm and un-blaming style, because her childhood had a kind of no-exit quality that makes the reader also feel a bit claustrophobic. But when Sellers realizes that at least half of her difficulties stem from a rare condition known colloquially as "face blindness," the book comes alive and gradually achieves a far more comfortable resolution. In terms of style, her memoir must have been so difficult to construct because of all the fragmentation and because of the sheer difficulty of writing about painful experiences, but she does a masterful job and her book should be studied by anyone wanting to write a memoir. Well worth the reading journey, and Sellers herself is an author deserving of readers because of her courage and kindness, in equal measure.

I was fortunate enough to have Heather as a professor in Undergrad and naturally I was inclined to read her memoir. After reading it, I am in disbelief of the events of her life. I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but if I were a story teller, I couldn't even have dreamed up something this amazing. Since Heather is a poet, the book is full of images and she makes you feel as though you are living her life right next to her. This is a special talent that Heather possesses. I highly recommend this book, not just because of my bias, but because I laughed, I teared up at points, and I learned a heck of a lot about face-blindness and the challenges a person with prosopagnosia faces on a daily basis.

A really good memoir about growing, loving, loss and forgiveness. An excellent description of face

blindness. This type of thing is typically misinterpreted by other people, like most 'hidden differences.' The author guides the reader through the discovery, the decisions, and the discussions with their community and loved ones.

As Heather Sellers wrote the most important book I use as a writer, the book "Chapter After Chapter," I was eager to read the memoir she had written. Overall, I enjoyed this book immensely. In it, Ms. Sellers alternates between largely her tween/teen years and the "present time" of the book, which is when she was 38 and, catapulted by a classmate's offhand comment at her reunion, begins to deal with two separate things she'd ignored or avoided all her life until that time: the fact that she is face blind and it's debilitating in its secrecy, and the fact that her mother is a paranoid schizophrenic. Considering this was the realm of the book, I think she did a very good job. To your average reader, reading about a childhood of such severe instability, it seems impossible that she could not have seen what was so plain, but trauma is very complex and even though that seemed bewildering to me, I think, as a kid, she found a workable method to live in this situation and as long as she could balance on the teeter totter, so to speak, nothing had to be examined. My only concerns are as follows: As a writer, sometimes I can feel the heavy hand of a writing workshop, or the heavy hand of an author's fear of what those living will think of her, and I did feel that here. The fact that her father's apparent alcoholism was barely stated by name, nor her husband's relapse, was troubling. The mother, after all, was not the only person with behavior problems. I also felt the missing brother narrative acutely, especially since there were so many instances in the book in which the existence of a brother is mentioned. Ms. Sellers obviously had a tremendous amount of material and a big story to tell, a story I enjoyed reading and read quickly. I am also sure, having read this, that the story is far from over.

Interesting to read about this rare condition. Family life was described in great detail. Writing was a little dry at times and lacked emotion.

An amazing memoir of an extraordinary life, to date. One hopes Ms. Sellers' future is less bizarre.

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