

***Learning by Heart***

**Mert McMichael**

**Reviewed by: Jiann Arcayena, 15**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity**

**[www.bethestaryouare.org](http://www.bethestaryouare.org)**

*Learning by Heart* is a compilation of short stories that are in poetry format. Each short story is like a prayer to God thanking him for everything he has made for the human race. Each prayer has a different story to tell, the stories vary from prayers about nature to prayers about life and its struggles. But one thing each prayer has in common is its references to the beautiful love and mercy of God.

The powerful adjectives used in each prayer story bring the different characters and their emotion to life. Although my mind's eye could see and feel the characters the prayer stories had too much variation, for example one story was titled "Beavers" and another "Out of Place." Though these stories had beautiful meaning their plots were too different for me to transition from a happy story about a beaver's determination to build its damn to the incredibly sad story about feeling lost in your self.

There were some poem prayers that I loved but there are a greater number of stories that I didn't love. I was expecting a lovely story about learning by using your heart but instead the book was mostly about nature and its beauty, and although the stories about squirrels and beavers are cute they are not intriguing and not what I expected. In addition I am not interested in a compilation book of short stories I prefer books with main characters because I like examining a character and their personality. Plus I found the reference to God in each story repetitive.

I suggest this book to the older reader one who has had the time to appreciate the flowers and the animals. In addition the reader must be someone that is very religious and has learned all of life's lessons. I think that this book would be great as a birthday gift to grandparents. I think that this book is meant to be read by the wise and experienced catholic adult. I don't think that this book would do very well in libraries because the cover is reminiscent of a children's book and there is no summary on the back of the book. I believe that *Learning by Heart* would be a great read for a specific reader, but then again that is only my opinion.