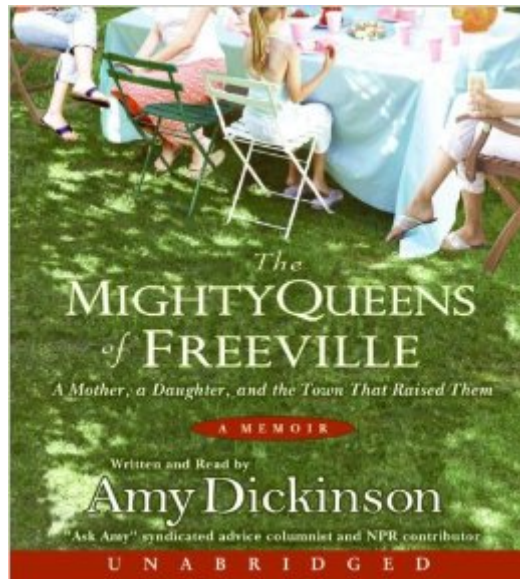


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# The Mighty Queens Of Freeville: The True Story Of A Mother, A Daughter, And The Town That Raised Them



## Synopsis

Millions of Americans know and love Amy Dickinson from reading her syndicated advice column "Ask Amy" and from hearing her wit and wisdom weekly on National Public Radio. Amy's audience loves her for her honesty, her small-town values, and the fact that her motto is "I make the mistakes so you don't have to." In *The Mighty Queens of Freeville*, Amy Dickinson shares those mistakes and her remarkable story. This is the tale of Amy and her daughter and the people who helped raise them after Amy found herself a reluctant single parent. Though divorce runs through her family like an aggressive chromosome, the women in her life taught her what family is about. They helped her to pick up the pieces when her life fell apart and to reassemble them into something new. It is a story of frequent failures and surprising successes, as Amy starts and loses careers, bumbles through blind dates and adult education classes, travels across the country with her daughter and their giant tabby cat, and tries to come to terms with the family's aptitude for "dorkitude." They have lived in London, D.C., and Chicago, but all roads lead them back to Amy's hometown of Freeville (pop. 458), a tiny village where Amy's family has tilled and cultivated the land, tended chickens and Holsteins, and built houses and backyard sheds for more than 200 years. Most important, though, her family members all still live within a ten-house radius of each other. With kindness and razor-sharp wit, they welcome Amy and her daughter back weekend after weekend, summer after summer, offering a moving testament to the many women who have led small lives of great consequence in a tiny place.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am probably not the target audience for this book seeing as I have never read or heard of Amy Dickinson before selecting the audio version of this book. I had read Ann Landers column as a kid but pretty much stopped after graduating high school in the '70's. But despite not ever having read an Amy Dickinson column and having pretty much given up on NPR the last 20 years I have to say this is a very enjoyable and interesting book. Usually I have some idea about a person's accomplishments before I start reading about their life and sort of know what the highlights are going to be. In contrast to the previous two biographies I read (Stan Musial and Alan Turing) what was a guy like me going to find interesting about some women from Freeville? Well first of all, most of the book is about 1 queen, the author, and she was cursed (or blessed from a reader's viewpoint) with a father and husband, both of which qualify for the could be in a Cads Hall of Fame. Both men left for other women and her father left behind a pile of debts for her mother to deal with. The mighty part of the title is appropriate since both Dickinson and her mother survived and prospered after being kicked by men who supposedly had taken an oath to love and honor them. Even if the author had never gotten to a point where she was selected to take over the Ann Landers column (sort of like the coach taking over a team after Vince Lombardi or John Wooden) her life would have been an interesting read. This could easily have been a 'woe is me' story about the desperate struggle to provide for a daughter and escape poverty (think Mildred Pierce becoming a writer instead of a restaurateur).

Author Amy Dickinson was a free-lance writer in 2002, when she applied to the Chicago Tribune to succeed the iconic advice columnist Ann Landers. Dickinson and the other candidates answered some sample questions which were then read by a test group of readers. The readers' first choice was to bring Ann Landers back from the dead, no surprise since her five-decade tenure as syndicated advice columnist gave her her unbeatable edge. Once that was ruled out, Dickinson got the job. "It's not the sort of job a person can train for," she writes, but in *The Mighty Queens of Freeville: The True Story of a Mother, a Daughter, and the Town That Raised Them* she gives us the story of her life and experience. Raised on a "failed dairy farm" in upper New York State, she comes from a family of self-sufficient women whose men generally don't stay around. When Dickinson's husband joined what she calls the "tidal outflow" of men, leaving her with a baby daughter to raise, she went home to Freeville and was nurtured by the women of her family. Dickinson's writing is entertaining and self-deprecatory. Single parenthood, "mothering without a net," sets the parameters of her life as she supports herself and her daughter with her writing, teaching, and working for National Public Radio. Social life? Not much, except for the

regular breakfasts with her mother, sisters and aunts. I enjoyed this audio presentation, read entertainingly by the author. She does, however, focus heavily on her own struggles and stresses at the expense of many other things we might like to know.

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