Ambulance Girl by: Jane Stern

Ambulance Girl by Jane Stern is a strikingly honest depiction of a woman who decides to face her greatest fears in order to free herself from the depression she lives in. Stern comes to the realization that she is not in control of her own life. After an episode where her plane was stranded on the runway waiting to lift off for six hours she decides to become an Emergency Medical Technician. This book chronicles her experiences as an EMT and the lifestyle she leads afterwards. During her schooling she spent many hours talking to her psychiatrist discussing her fears. For example, she was deathly scared of the being in the back of the ambulance because of the tight quarters and claustrophobic feeling. However, the back of the ambulance eventually becomes like second nature to her after awhile. Near the end of the book she nearly falls back into the same depression of her past after seeing a close family friend have a stroke only to be saved by EMTs. The man continued to live even though he was paralyzed on half of his body, but this forced Stern to question if she was actually saving some of the people she brought to the hospital.

This book relates very well to the overall theme of our class. It does not have specific details about diseases or vaccines. However it does show a very real story of a woman who was not complete in her life until she took control of it. By becoming an EMT and serving other people Jane Stern fully realized her potential in life. Additionally, this book portrays an occupation directly related to the subjects we are studying in the class. Jane goes to a hospice and helps to bring in an AIDS victim who has been completely demolished by the disease. She deals with patients who suffer from heart disease and stroke. Most importantly, it provides a very genuine feel for the subject matter we have been studying and applies many of the things we know to a story.

Throughout the story, we hear a lot about Jane’s husband, Michael. This provides us with a very rare insight into an often overlooked character. Throughout the book Jane deals with her depression, followed by a burnout all the while she is accomplishing many victories. However, the love of her life is having a completely different experience. He experiences a life with a wife who rarely spends a full night next to him in bed due to her emergency response radio. He also struggles mightily when Jane is going through the burnout of the job. In the end, this book represents clearly how a medical profession, especially one as taxing as volunteer on-call EMT work, can affect a marriage. In the conclusion of the story, in finding herself she realizes that Michael is her soul mate, something she took for granted for most of the story.

This book should be read for many of the same reasons why it relates to the class. Most importantly I think it gives a great insight to a specific career field in a time when many of us students are searching for that perfect career for ourselves. And if you still need extra incentive, it is an easy to read, genuinely interesting book. I often found myself losing track of the time while I read this book. I highly recommend Ambulance Girl by Jane Stern.