

Just kids by patti smith

[Family](#), [Children](#)



Patti Smith calls the book, *Just Kids*, a memoir rather than an autobiography. Her book is almost poetic in nature and written in a beautiful and engaging way. From the first pages, the reader is drawn to her words and imagery. In describing one of her first memories, that of a swan on a pond, she says, “the river emptied into a wide lagoon and I saw upon its surface a singular miracle. A long curving neck rose from a dress of white plumage.”

There are, of course many facts about her life as a young, starving artist but generally speaking she is giving the reader many impressions about her life rather than a chronology of the events in her life. The author, Dave Thompson, has written a more factual biography of Patti Smith in the book, *Dancing Barefoot: The Patti Smith Story*. In analyzing an excerpt from this biography, the reader is left with a somewhat different picture of Patti Smith. In it he describes fairly vividly and in almost a clinical way a less romanticized family life.

Here the reader finds out that her father was almost non-existent when she was growing up because he was out working to support his family. Her mother, one learns, is a serious Jehovah Witness. This is a very important point because it gives an important insight into how religion may have shaped her poetry and art in the future. It is interesting that in *Just Kids*, Patti Smith is very clear in mentioning how her partner, Robert Mapplethorpe is very influenced and almost traumatized by his devout Roman Catholic family.

This religious aspect of her own life is not as clearly defined in her memoir. Dave Thompson also mentions how many of the facts about Patti Smith’s

early jobs are distorted in her memoir and lets the reader conclude that perhaps the facts are not quite the facts in her own book. Dan Lieberfeld, on the other hand, in his essay, “ Artistic Apprenticeship and Collaboration- Looking Back with Patti Smith,” emphasizes the profound impact that Robert Mapplethorpe had on Patti Smith.

In it, he describes how deep their connection was. In those early years in New York City, they were crucial to each other’s survival. They literally kept each other from starving by saving every penny they had from their poorly-paying jobs. His essay describes them as “ apprentices” to each other as they each sought to become artists. As they supported each other, they also helped each other achieve their dreams of becoming true artists.

The essay reflects many of the points and themes that Patti Smith describes in her memoir with great feeling and seems true to her descriptions of events that happened in her life. Patti Smith’s memoir gives an impression of her life with Robert Mapplethorpe and how they both emerged as artists and gives a great picture of the bohemian life they led in the 1970’s. Dan Lieberman’s essay confirms the fundamental principles underlying Patti Smith’s memoir – that Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe were great friends who influenced each other.

Dave Thompson’s book puts into question some of the details of Ms. Smith’s life. Does that make her contributions to the world of art and music any less important? Does it make the vivid descriptions of the chaotic art world any less real? The answer is a clear “ no. ” The reader may not agree with her lifestyle and even her art. The beauty of her words is real and really

describes who she is. Whether she has embellished the facts or omitted some of them, it doesn't really seem to matter.