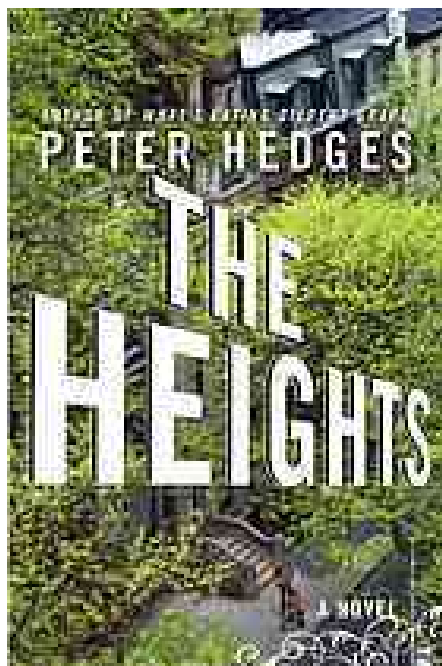




The Heights

Peter Hedges

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A "devilishly delightful" (*Bookpage*) new novel from an Academy Award-nominated screenwriter and the author of *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*.

Tim and Kate Welch are seemingly the last middle- class family in the exclusive neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights, New York. Tim is a popular history teacher, and an ordinary guy. Kate is not ordinary, but she aspires to be. Brought up by a hippie mother, Kate stays home with their two young sons trying to be the responsible parent she never had. But their neat and tidy world is turned upside down when Anna Brody- beautiful, wealthy, and impulsive- moves into the most expensive brownstone in Brooklyn, and draws Kate and Tim into her world.

Watch a Video

The Heights Details

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Author : Peter Hedges

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From Reader Review The Heights for online ebook

Jaime says

I liked this more than I expected to. For some reason, I had been putting off reading it, afraid that it was going to come off as pretentious. Thankfully, I was wrong. It wasn't pretentious, but it was one of those novels that didn't really go far.

I was able to connect much more with Tim than with Kate. Tim is a bumbling young father who is somewhat misguided, and more than a little confused about what he wants out of life. Kate was much more dry, and frankly, uninteresting. It's telling that, several weeks after I've finished the book, I can't remember anything about her character other than she went from being a stay-at-home mom to the sole breadwinner.

Anna Brody could have been an interesting character, but she's a little too mysterious. I have no idea what she may have seen in Tim, other than that he was there. I think the story would have benefited from some further exploration of that situation.

The book has been compared to Tom Perrotta, but it lacks some of Perrotta's depth. Overall, I'm not sorry I read it, but it's not a story that's going to stick with me.

Danie P. says

Tim and Kate are happily in love with two boys and struggling to make ends meet. Tim is a history teacher and Kate a stay at home mom. When Kate meets their new glamorous neighbor Anna, things start to change for the happy family. Tim takes a sabbatical to take care of the kids and Kate is offered a lucrative job working for a charitable foundation. With Anna and Tim going on play dates and getting closer Kate begins to drift back towards her former college days lover. The ending is to be expected but also surprising in a manner.

Courtney says

One of the worst books I have ever read, and I can't put into words how much I hated it. The main characters were entirely unlikable in every way imaginable, and the only characters I had any sympathy for at all were the children in both marriages and Bruno, the boss. The only redeeming quality is that the writing was decent..... the content, however, was atrocious. When you find yourself rooting against both people in a marriage because they are both horrible, selfish, petulant, child-brained morons, you know the book has gone south. I also actively rooted against the people they both wanted to cheat with, who were also petulant, selfish, child-brained morons.... or worse, if I had the words to come up with worse insults on a Sunday.

Horrible, horrible book. I am just glad it's over.

(And I apologize to my friends who recommended this to me who loved it- but we will have to agree to disagree on this one.)

The one star I gave it was for the actual writing. If it weren't for that, I would have given it no stars and been perfectly content.

I'm going now to wash my eyes out.

Kathleen says

Wow, this is a first. I sit down to write a review of this book and the word that pops into my mind is vomitous. From the utterly unlikeable married couple at the center of the story to the ridiculousness of the story (coupled with details that are idiotic and plotlines that trail off into nothingness), this is one of those books that any sensible person would put down after 20 pages. I am begging for an intervention - help me stop HAVING to finish any book I start. Anna Karenina is in my to read pile and I am slogging through this tripe. It was awful. It was painful. It was, in a word, vomitous.

Dina Roberts says

I enjoyed this book a lot in the beginning; a little less in the middle, and then went back to loving it in the end.

The book takes place in Brooklyn. It's about a couple who, despite being in love and happily married; are both tempted to have extramarital affairs. It's told through first person-alternating viewpoints. Mostly we hear from the husband and wife. Every so often we hear from someone else.

Some of the book takes place in Disney World. I thought the scenes there were very interesting and powerful.

Penny Booker says

It wasn't terrible, but I feel like I could have spent my time doing lots of other, more fun things.

Sandra says

The Heights by Peter Hedges is an entertaining story with funny, likable and believable characters. It is a story of the danger of "secrets" in a relationship.

Tim and Kate Welch, a young married couple with two small boys, live in the Heights (Brooklyn) surrounded by the wealthy elite. They are the outsiders - young and poor. Tim is a history teacher working on a never-ending thesis and Kate is a stay-at-home Mom.

Then Anna Brody-Ashworth moves into the neighbourhood and life changes for the Welchs. She becomes fixated on Tim and Kate - seeing them as the ideal couple and the ideal parents.

As Tim takes a leave of absence to stay home with the boys thus allowing Kate to take her dream job, Tim finds himself more involved, more obsessed with Anna.

The narrative voice moves between Kate and Tim almost like the cuts in a movie. The voice of Tim's former student, Bea Myerley, pops up from time to time to provide some comic relief from the intensity of the narrative. In some ways, reading *The Heights* is like reading a script and would make a wonderful movie. Perhaps this is what the author, who is an experienced screenwriter, intends.

Diane says

The Heights by Peter Hedges is the story of Kate and Tim Welch, and their life in the Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. Tim's a history teacher at Montague Academy, an elite private school and Katie is a stay-at-home mom; together they live in cramped apartment with two young sons. It's not easy existing on a teacher's salary for the couple. In fact it appears this couple is the only middle class couple still living in *The Heights*. Despite this their life seems relatively content.

All that changes when. the wealthy and married, Anna Brody moves into a brownstone nearby. Suddenly the Welches are invited into that world of privilege, and everything changes. Kate is offered a high-powered job, which she accepts and Tim stays home with the boys to work on his long neglected dissertation. It is about at this point when the story stopped working for me. although there were funny parts, for me it just seemed to get a little too silly, and cliched.

The story is told in alternating chapters by Kate and Tim, and a few minor characters. I did not care about the characters, many of whom were yuppie-ish and self indulgent, and others who were just plain whiny or unlikable. The audio book readers (the author was one) were fine, but the story grated on my nerves after a while. (I also had a review copy). This book just wasn't my cup of tea; it lacked substance.

Peter Hedges is an author and screenwriter -- What's Eating Gilbert Grape, and About a Boy. I can see how this book too, might be adapted to the big screen down the road.

M says

In truth this book deserves two stars for its rather smutty and childish nature, but I found it so readable that three stars seems more fair. This book reminds me of *Little Children* (but with an urban edge), *Morningside Heights* (yet another book that makes more of a neighborhood than there actually is) and *Election* (it really echoes it in many ways).

The Heights is about a swanky section of Brooklyn and centers around Kate and Tim, a seemingly happy couple whose lives fall apart when a new, mysterious woman comes to town. This woman's allure attracts Kate as well as Tim and things sort of spiral out of control. The adults act like children, and often the book tries too hard to be cool, but all in all the writing is pretty good and the pace is excellent. My main complaint was that while the narrative was engaging and often entertaining, whenever the characters 'joked' it fell so flat it was painful. But - if you are willing to read a book that you should be too embarrassed to read, then this is a fast and entertaining read.

Jennifer Rayment says

I had a feeling I would like this one, just because the author wrote the screenplay for two delightful movies

that I love, About a Boy and Dan in Real Life. He has a talent for creating characters that are flawed, complex but loveable. In other words Real! I really enjoyed this novel and did not want to put it down. It is a deftly told tale of the dangers of keeping secrets in a marriage. The storyline was compelling and the characters interesting, almost like you know people just like them. The writing is crisp and at times laugh out loud funny -- trust me, I snorted on the bus many a time!

I loved the scene where Kate called Tim to tell him that their son had finally pooped in the potty. This is the world I belong to and it is truly the little things in life that parents often treasure and celebrate. This is where Peter Hedges excels in both his novels and his screenplays, he captures some of these "real" moments beautifully and truthfully. Many a time while reading this I felt myself nodding vigorously along with some of his observations on life, marriage and children. As a married (For 16 years) mom with two small boys I have understood and felt the emotions that Kate is struggling with. I felt myself hoping that even though Tim and Kate were in a situation that has destroyed many a marriage, that they would make it.

My only disappointment with the novel, was the character of Anna. I didn't find her character very developed, almost like she was a caricature of a real person. I really could not understand the fascination that the other characters had for her.

Most importantly for me, there was an illusion to a happy ending for the couple. Maybe this makes me a simple person, but I NEED a happy ending for me to truly enjoy a story.

Some of my favourite quotes or passages.

"I amused them and even myself, and for a few hours I was not only the mother I never had, I was the mother of all mothers"

"Hurry home, okay? We won't flush until you get here"

"I remembered something Tim once said: Children fall asleep so you can love them again"

"I mean he's begging me for it, so I make Dan the Bear an offer "Fine sweetie. Make a million by Easter and you can F*** me in the A**" ...

Some Men wait their whole lives to overhear this kind of conversation. Unfortunately, it was time to go pick up Teddy and Sam from preschool, so I stood up to leave. From the stunned expressions on their collective faces, it became clear that while they hadn't noticed me before, they noticed me now..... So to put them at ease, I turned and said. "Forgive the intrusion, but what happens if he doesn't make the money?" Claudia paused. "I haven't provided for that" "My suggestion for what it's worth, if he doesn't make the million by Easter -- then YOU f*** him in the a**. Then Claudia slapped her knee and roared triumphantly "Yes!"

I will be surprised if this novel is not turned into a movie.

Thomas Holbrook says

The Heights is, by evidence presented in this book, an area of Brooklyn that is “out of place” – it is inhabited by the Nuevo Riche, Trust Fund Benefactors, Hedge Fund managers and others who are friends with those “who run the world,” located inside the borough known as “the real Brooklyn.” In this enclave, within the

walls of a very modest apartment, reside the Welch family, Tim, Kate and two young boys. Tim teaches history at the exclusive Montague Academy while he works on his Ph.D. dissertation, Kate has elected to rear their sons rather than return to her work in the Non-Profit sector. How these two can afford to live in such a location on a teacher's salary is never made plain, but one thing is crystal clear – their love for each other is comfortable while their surroundings become increasingly uncomfortable.

When Kate is offered a job “giving money away” as part of a new non-profit charity, The Welches see this as an opportunity to switch roles for a year – Tim will complete his dissertation and care for the boys and home, Kate will provide the financial support for the family (as her new salary is approximately three times what Tim was making as a teacher). All is wonderful in this new paradigm until Anna Broody moves into the neighborhood. Anna is rich, mysterious, rich, classy, rich, aloof and rich. Kate and Tim are both, for different reasons, connected to this individual who seems to embody the dreams of each of the Welch adults. Thus begins the tension that causes this humorous, heart-breaking, “year-in-the-life-of” novel to hum with energy, intrigue and familiarity.

Mr. Hedges is a talented writer (proven in his writing the novel and screenplay "What's Eating Gilbert Grape") and has his characters grow in the course of the year the novel encompasses. Tim goes from an overly sensitive parent unaware of his community connections to a capable father who can navigate the treacherous currents of the neighborhood city park. Kate easily returns to her days as a Non-Profit executive, learning the painful truth that her home can run, splendidly, without her constant attention. The minor character, Bea, is worth the investment in reading this book; she plays the role of an adolescent Jiminy Cricket to perfection, albeit with a deeply flawed point of view. Anna Broody, a “mist that on the moors” character, provides the backdrop for the reader to witness how Kate and Tim make discoveries that propel them toward a more determined future.

In this audio version, the chapters, told from the viewpoints of different characters, are voiced by three different actors. By the time Bea completes the story well told, I was completely satisfied that my new friends in The Heights would be “just fine,” I simply would not be able to see what that looked like, exactly. In the year witnessed, there were moments of horrible choices lived through, words spoken that blessed and cursed, growth hard-earned proven by the scars collected and joys discovered that were impossible without the excavation provided by their experiences. This is a book for adults, as the language, situations and some of the activities are, hopefully, of an adult nature.

Anne says

I bought this book a few years ago, and since then have had it sitting on my "to read" pile. Now I wish I had picked it up sooner. The story is told in a very subtle manner so it feels like you are just checking in with friends rather than following a plot. But woven into those check-ins are some great observations about life, and commentary about wishing for what you don't have.

Hedges' style of writing made this very easy to read. The characters created were flawed enough to be real, and honest enough to be likable. I really enjoyed it!

Hillary says

The Heights is the story of Kate and Time Welch, a young married couple living in Brooklyn whose lives are turned upside down by the arrival of a new neighbor, the alluring and enigmatic Anna Broody. On the whole, I liked this book well enough, but expected more from it. Written in short chapters that alternate in viewpoint between Kate and Tim (with a few other characters sometimes thrown into the mix), the pace of the narrative

is quick and propels the reader forward. At the same time, however, the style doesn't allow for much character development and everyone, including Kate and Tim, remain somewhat elusive and superficial. Accordingly, even the seemingly influential Anna Brody never makes much of an impact, a feeling fueled in part by the fact that there isn't much plot to be had here and the reader is left wondering what's the point of it all. Overall, not a bad read, but a rather forgettable one that never really scratches the surface of either the characters or their seemingly consequential actions.

Valerie says

There were a lot of things I didn't like about this book. But I won't go into that, because in all honesty it hit me to the core. I've never been in any kind of situation portrayed in the book, but I deeply felt everything that was happening in the book....and at the end I felt like someone had punched me in the stomach. Just a deep emotional connection to the characters! I was sitting there going "NO!" "Don't do that!" "Good choice" I didn't agree with some of the author's choices, but overall this book was an incredible journey! When you are deeply affected by the characters in a book, it is a great sign of a wonderful book to escape with .

Monica says

Literary fiction with a beachy pace, but I feel like I've read this story so many times before.

It didn't help that we were getting baby boomers repackaged as fresh 30-somethings in contemporary Brooklyn. The gender issues, relationship dynamics, and antiquated technology seemed pulled right out of the 80s, but there were several references to pop culture events that place the setting firmly in modern day. I guess that's more of editing problem, but as a contemporary to these people they felt more like my parents than my peers.

Cute but ultimately unsatisfying. And I did like Bea. I also think this is one of those rare books that would make a much better movie.

Sarah says

Tim Welch is a history teacher at a private school still working on his dissertation about loss. Kate Welch is a stay at home mom who loves taking care of her children. Everything changes when they meet Anna Brody. Tim takes a year off, Kate gets a job. New feelings appear. Told from several different perspectives, but mainly Tim and Kate you get to learn what life is like in the Heights.

Hedges, who wrote both the novel and screenplay for Whats Eating Gilbert Grape as well as several other screenplays has come up with one of the most over told stories ever. It's rare for an avid reader, such as myself to think "This would be better as a movie" but it's true. The story unfolds like some mediocre character driven drama. The book itself reads like an Oscar nominee, not an Oscar winner, one of those dry dramas where everyone makes bad choices and says terrible things and people rave about it for a few weeks and then when they think about it years later they're all like 'yeah, that was kind of terrible'.

The characters themselves are contrived, Kate is endearing in the beginning before she becomes annoying. Tim is interesting before becoming pathetic. Anna Brody is always mysterious before you realize she is

about to cause to most uneventful causal event ever.

There is obviously a demographic for novels like this, and with it being only 293 pages it's a little hard to justify putting it down. Hedges, stick to writing for the screen. Love your movies, hated this novel.

Jill says

Just excellent. I would recommend this to anyone who enjoyed "Prep" or "Admissions." A simple story of ruin. Not really one of deception and secrets, but plain, simple ruin.

An ordinary family living among extraordinary wealth in The Heights. But it's not just about the poor amongst the wealthy. It's about an ordinary family making it, not making it, whatever, in New York.

It's pretty much a set up for a movie--I'm surprised it hasn't been optioned yet!

Lobstergirl says

I can't finish. It's just too not good / prosaic / lacking / ordinary / pedestrian / drivelly. (This is how the author writes, with a lot of slashes.) The author desperately needs a haircut and also a career change. Will probably be made into a movie, as author is a scriptwriter.

Judy Mann says

What a stupid stupid book. This is so sappy and so gooey and so downright creepy. All this jolly family goop - Like some kind of Christmas card by Norman Rockwell only in this one he moves to Brooklyn and paints such sweet pictures of how deep down all us educated sweet white people really love to do good for EVERYONE. I'm puking just describing it.. I MEAN GIMME A BREAK.

He - whatever his name is - goes into a three day depression because his favorite homeless guy dies. Are you getting an idea here? He -Tim (I just checked)is just oh so tipsy-so wrapped up in everything gooey-so GOOOOOFY. Yes GOOOOOFY.

Don't read this book unless you want to hear how really deep down all us rich white people are JUST SO SWEET . And CUTE.And let's not forget CUDDLY. CUDDLY. CUDDLY. And I'm going to puke.
JM

Lisa says

This is not the kind of thing I usually read, and there's a really good reason. It was pretty shallow and yuppie-ish and self-indulgent. The writing was fair, good enough to keep me reading but not good enough for me to ever read another by this author. The first half of the novel was markedly better than the second half, but still not that great. It was okay. The characters didn't ring true to me. These are not people I know or would ever want to know. This book had a kind of keeping-up-with-the-Jones' thing going, and that is not what I care about or can relate to. This book would be better if it was written in a kind of tounge-and-cheek sort of way. The book flap says, "At once light of touch, laugh-out-loud funny, and packed with emotion and depth of

character". What?!? Was that person writing about some other book? I did NOT get that from this book. This book was soap-opera-y and ordinary and gossipy.

Here's the one part that struck me as well written and well observed: "What I found funny, of course, was that Philip Ashworth was equally complicated. Maybe all of us are complicated, but because of our tenuous place in the world, our contradictory selves aren't indulged. And because they're not indulged, those interesting, inappropriate, shoking parts of us wither away and atrophy. Maybe Philip and Anna were complicated only because they could be". Now if the whole book was written like this, it would have stood a chance, even with the next to nothing, done-to-death plot and all. But alas, t'was only a fleeting paragraph. Sigh.
