



Adios, Nirvana

Conrad Wesselhoeft

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When you piss off a bridge into a snowstorm, it feels like you're connecting with eternal things. Paying homage to something or someone. But who? The Druids? Walt Whitman? No, I pay homage to one person only, my brother, my twin.

In life. In death.

Telemachus. Since the death of his brother, Jonathan's been losing his grip on reality. Last year's Best Young Poet and gifted guitarist is now Taft High School's resident tortured artist, when he bothers to show up. He's on track to repeat eleventh grade, but his English teacher, his principal, and his crew of Thicks (who refuse to be seniors without him) won't sit back and let him fail.

Adios, Nirvana Details

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Author : Conrad Wesselhoeft

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From Reader Review Adios, Nirvana for online ebook

Caleb J. says

This book is dangerous, and not in a good/cool/edgy way. The story follows a teenage boy coping with the death of his twin brother, and I'll admit that when the author gets his tone right, it is pitch-perfect. But too often it seems that the narrator forgets that grief, healing, and the quest for identity are what this book is about. Too often, the book strays from that notion of loss and degenerates into the Self-Important Chronicles of a Self-Described Artist. Everyone, literally every single person in the book, is infinitely supportive and understanding of the narrator, constantly encouraging him and telling him how wonderful he is, and the boy responds to everyone with thick, derisive condescension. And no one even notices or cares.

The moral of the story really seems to end up being, "if you work hard to martyr yourself at every moment, everything will turn up aces." The only conflict in the story is that Jonathan never likes what he's doing, but he does it anyway and just complains and drinks Red Bulls the whole time.

Which brings up another point: the things included purely for characterization are what are really dangerous in this novel. Throughout the course of the book, this kid abuses caffeine, energy drinks, sleeping pills, and alcohol. He and his friends also use the word "faggy" to describe something on two different occasions. I'm sure Mr Wesselhoeft would justify himself by saying that that is how teenage boys actually talk, and some may well talk that way, but not all. I think it is morally irresponsible to subtextually endorse homophobia in a book about a social outsider's search for identity. These are not things that should be portrayed positively in a young adult novel.

And my final bone to pick with this book is really a pretty minor thing: much of Jonathan's characterization is about how he's such a wonderful poet. Every character says things like, "You're such a good poet!" or "You've got a real gift!" In fact, he even wins a competition solidifying his reputation as the finest young poet in the state of Washington. If, as an author, you are going to make such a big deal about how great a poet he is, you should not include any of his poems in the novel. They will not live up to the hype. In fact, just about every bit of poetry scattered throughout the novel is almost completely forgettable, and that the narrator makes such a big deal about his own work makes him seem much, much, much more self-important and unlikable.

Ray says

Honestly, I got this book because it had a guitar on it. And fire. And because it said Nirvana, which is one of my favorite bands. That too. I know it was a stupid idea not to read any of it... but I did it anyway.

After I brought it home, I read the inside flap. The first line: "Johnathan may be able to connect with eternal things through the drunken haze of vodka-injected grapes..."

I closed it and looked at the cover again. *Holy crap. What the hell did I just get?*

I am not one to do that sort of things... vodka-injected grapes... and I think it is stupid for a kid to do something like that.

I read it anyway. In one long (2 and a half hours) sitting. As the book went on, it just kept getting better and better. The characters were dynamic and while I was devouring this book, I realized everything I took for

granted.

My family, for example. With those feelings aside, I thought that this story was amazing. It wasn't like anything that I had ever read before.

Going into chapter 8, I already knew that I was going to like, if not love, this book. Then. There were those beautiful words that I love so much. xD

"So I ditty around on Green Day's '409 in Your Coffee Maker,'"

Seriously? I was like *HELL YESSS!* So it was there, that last grain of sugar (or taurine, whatever you prefer) that made this story amazing.

Other amazing musical mentions were made in this book. For example, Pearl Jam. Another great band. I just couldn't put this thing down.

I don't want to give too much away, but this story really drew me in through real-life experiences and funny dialogue. It showed the love and endurance of friendship and brothers, even after death, in a twisted sort of way.

Jim says

This is my favorite debut novel by a YA author since "Looking for Alaska". I was hooked by the end of the first chapter and could not put it down. Jonathan is a budding writer and guitar player, locally famous for being the youngest winner of a prestigious statewide poetry competition, but he is also depressed and grieving after the recent, unexpected death of his twin brother, and his schoolwork is suffering badly. Faced with the prospect of having to repeat his junior year, the school principal offers him a two-part "makeup assignment" instead - to meet with a dying World War II veteran at a local hospice and write the man's memoirs, and to play a certain song at the school graduation ceremony. The story is enjoyable in its own right, but what takes this book to the next level is Jonathan himself. He is a wonderful main character, as richly complex as any real person, with a narrative voice that is by turns philosophical and brutally honest, fueled by all the raw emotions of a teenager. I would definitely recommend this to creative teens who are into things like writing poetry or playing music (middle school may be slightly too young), and of course anyone who just likes a good YA book.

Thebookbutterfly says

I wasn't really expecting to like Adios, Nirvana. I found it on the bottom shelf of Barnes & Nobles and picked it up last second, because I'd read a good review on Steph Bowe's blog. I wasn't even going to give it a chance.

I'm really glad I did.

It took ages for me to get into. (Ok, not ages. More like days, but something.) During the first two or three

chapters, I was debating between whether Conrad Wesselhoeft was insane or genius. But it's not something you can debate about—I realized that the further I read into the book. He's one of those people that are just both.

Jonathon is completely, utterly, without-a-doubt a teenage boy. He felt a bit like a reminiscent of Tom Mackee in *The Piper's Son*. He had this love of music that just blew me away. I loved how his favorite songs (Here Comes the S-O-N) played such a huge part of the book and in his brother's death. Some parts had me smiling so wide that I could hardly contain it and some of Jonathon's quips were so sarcastic that I had to laugh. He was rude and pushed people away a lot, but I enjoyed hearing about him. I found him quite endearing and his flaws only made him more so.

One of the things that really made *Adios, Nirvana* a favorite book for me was how deeply the loss of Jonathon's brother Telemachus was felt. Hearing some of the stories about Telemachus just made me *ache*.

All of the characters had voices that were honest and authentic. This is probably due to something that I read in the author's note, "Much of *Adios, Nirvana* was inspired by my son Kit and his many friends, who tromp through my kitchen, jam on guitars, and leave behind a trail of laughter, crumbs, and ketchup stains."

That made me smile.

The writing really left me with a jumbled mind and mixed emotions. It was like finding a battered copy of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in the library and realizing that's someone has penciled in so many notes that they've made in their own story. Jonathon draws a lot of references and emotions out of poetry, and most of it is just gorgeous to read about. Ordinary, gritty city days and transformed in Jonathon's voice. They hold hope and promise along with tragedy and truth.

Here's a quote:

"Writing, in the zone, is about the best feeling ever.

I'm way past writing for the fun of it. Lots of times it's not fun. I write because I have to.

If Stalin or Hitler arrested me and tossed me into one of those camps, I would carve words with my fingernails. If they cut off my fingers, I would write with my teeth. If they pulled out my teeth, I would blink my words to any listening bird. If they cut off my eyelids, I would fart code into the troposphere.

You'd have to kill me to stop me from writing.

It's how I breathe."

This book is about tragedy, but it's not tragic. It has music and hope and heart and the words just have this flowing feeling to them, like they're lyrics. Jonathon is a teenage boy, inside and out, and he was a breath of fresh air in YA literature. It made me see the world in a different light and any book that can do that is pure, insane genius :)

Molly Blaisdell says

Fearless. This is a book some may call dangerous. Some may call it evil. Some will hate it. No matter who

you are; this book is going to make you uncomfortable. It will make you angry at times. It will challenge you to your core. If you want to read books that leave you the way you are and let you escape from yourself, try some dystopian/vampire/boy-saves-us-from-all-evil book. Try a milk toast version of Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys or a fairy tale. If you wish to "swim toward the shimmer" take the time to plumb the depths of this story.

Adios Nirvana is freefall in language and in purpose. It does not slant the world to make it more palatable or more politically correct. It reveals the world as it is, like chiaroscuro. It's about light and shadow. No varnish to make it all pretty. Jonathan, broken, grieving his brother, lost Telemachus, Jonathan dwells in an almost dream-like world of shadow. This story circles about the depth of friendship, an immortal guitar, obscure prophesy, and the suffering that binds generations. If you live in an ivory tower of righteousness expect to feel your foundations to weaken.

I loved this journey into chaos and music. You will find firecrackers hid in the pages of this book. And they will burn you more than any literal fire. This is a book about the language of emotion, the language of the natural world, it will bring you on a cloud of imagery closer to reality than you ever have been. Voices will emerge. You may find your own voice. I'm not book reviewer, but I love this book. I've dog-eared the pages. I wake up in the night to search out phrases within the music of this story. It's a book about putting your fears aside and living your life, recognizing the value of your story and the need to tell that story, I think. Like Walt said, "Everyday of light and dark is a miracle." And like Jonathan -- "there are miracles in the moments."

Swim toward the shimmer. Swim.

Donna says

Sad to say, this was another Did Not Finish. By the halfway point I just felt the plot was sluggish and I really couldn't stand the voice. Not to mention it went far too into guitar detail for my liking. I mean, I get it. The kid's a guitar player. But with all of the chord talk and types of guitars, I found myself zoning out. I like a good guitar as much as the next guy but I'm not at that level. I just couldn't appreciate the knowledge.

The voice of the story was the biggest issue for me. It was angsty to the Curt Cobain degree. Like the kid stepped out of 1992 dripping in unwashed plaid and Doc Martins. Not only did I feel the voice was misplaced for the setting (it's a current setting but seeped in 20-year-old music, surely not every teenager in Seattle is gaga for the ancient grunge scene still), it was just trying too hard to be all "I don't give a shit" pissy and I just found it really annoying. Yeah, I get it. The kid's brother died (whom I couldn't get over the fact that anyone would name their kid Telemachus) and he's coping but I'm not a fan of anyone wallowing in their own self-pity, let alone a kid set to his own devices in a contrived situation where no one really gives a crap.

I could blame it on his mother but I just felt her really cliché. Some deadbeat pseudo-whore that leeches off of her son, forcing him to make a better life for her instead of being the mother she actually is. Yeah, it's a shitty situation but I just felt it was tired so I couldn't really empathize with anything.

So between Jonathan's pissing and moaning and constant guitar-playing and "LOOK AT ME" pseudo-suicide attempts, the mismatched and misplaced voice and a stumbling-along plot, I just couldn't make it to the end. Maybe if the voice were different. Maybe if it didn't try so hard to be a byproduct of Curt Cobain's pre-emo emoism and Mitch Albom's latent inner-teen's nightmare. Maybe if it was just truer to itself, I would

have liked it more. Maybe someone with a little more patience than me could make it through to the end but I just didn't care enough about the MC, or his story, to do it.

Molly Ringle says

I'm out of my depth when it comes to discussion of guitars or beat-style poetry, both of which are important to this narrator, but still found this a relatable and vibrant book. Though dealing with a teen boy in a sad place in life indeed, it wasn't as depressing as I expected. Jonathan's breezy, quirky, vibrant voice gave a youthful and almost upbeat feel to his tale. Plus, West Seattle! With Eddie Vedder doing a cameo as one of the characters! How cool is that?

Alissa says

Cannot express how much I enjoyed this book. It's a whirlwind of good characters, descriptions, and writing.

Jonathan is deep, insightful and creative, but not to an overwhelming degree. There are lighthearted, purely comical moments. The dialogue is a bit iffy; there's an excessive use of whoa! and ching! and other strange exclamations. And the romance... well, it doesn't exist. What little there is isn't worth having. It fits, but isn't one hundred percent convincing.

The friends aren't characterized – essentially they're just names stuck to one adjective. For example, Nick. He is nice. Ta da. They're not by any means useless. They just don't add or take away from the story. Pretty free-floating. Wish they'd been included more, especially Nick.

Not so sure the parents served any real purpose. Felt like there was more building with them, but the end cut off the rest of their story, which was a shame because they're characterized well. You get a good sense of who they are, but you never get the why.

The writing itself is beautiful. Poetical. Even though it's not written as poetry. Jonathan's voice is very distinct and boyish, yet thoughtful. Sure, he eases his pain with writing and reading and music, which are all typical cures, but it's the way he does so that makes the story unique.

And Telly – he's not there, but his character is something special. It's a great touch. The brother connection stands out most throughout the entire story, and it doesn't sound repetitive or cliché. It's pure.

Adios, Nirvana doesn't go above and beyond, but it's solid.?

(www.thegrammariansreviews.blogspot.com)

David Patneaude says

I've said it before and I've probably written it before, but the "buzz" thing is an ongoing puzzle to me. In other words, how does one book, maybe good, maybe not so good, maybe awful, get tons of attention, and another, maybe very good, go largely unnoticed?

I don't know exactly how much notice Conrad Wesselhoeft's *Adios, Nirvana* received when it was published in 2010, but I don't recall seeing it featured on bookstore shelves or lauded in reviews or given awards. Those things should have happened, though. The book has flawed and wounded but likable and memorable characters who change and grow, a believable narrative, credible language, conflict, humor, and a strong voice. What else do you need?

Overall, Conrad's writing is excellent, and he does a fine job of balancing the various elements he has going on in the story. And then there's the feeling that this could be real, that these are real people, kids and adults, that you want to get to know better. This is the kind of fiction that involves you enough that you want to know what's going on with the characters now, now that the ending has been written. Jonathan, Conrad's main character, is a smart kid, but he's believably smart. He's a kid, not an adult in kid's clothing. He behaves like a kid, feels like a kid, hurts like a kid, takes risks like a kid.

This kind of verisimilitude is what is missing in some of the stories I've read (yes, even those that get "buzz") that are written about and for young adults. But this story gets it right, and the author should take a deep bow, even though his show may not have attracted a full house.

Jake says

One of my favorite books I've ever read. Jonathan is such a relatable character who really shows the poets plight. I understand him so much and I think its really awesome that Conrad Wesselhoeft was able to capture such true personality. I blew through this book twice. The first time, in just a few short hours. I think 5, or so. It was constantly appealing, never a dull moment at all. The references throughout of famous poets like Charles Bukowski and Walt Whitman, the guitarist Eddie Vedder, it was all so.. perfect. Everything fit perfectly in this book, there was no gaps missing, no questions left unanswered that needed to be answered. The book inspired me so much, and i've recommended it to so many people over and over. It is an absolutely a must read for every teenager, every aspiring poet and anyone who enjoys a good book. It isn't a long read, or an extremely tough one but there is some very deep concepts which really made me think and feel exactly what Jonathan felt. Please, read it!

Shy says

Losing someone you truly love is probably the most tragic event that could happen in a person's life. It is even harder when the one who was taken away was the one you looked up to, shared your passions with and whom you confided in. This is what happened to Jonathan – this is the story of his life, his guilt, his grief following the death of his better half, his twin brother, Telemachus/Telly.

Jonathan is a young poet that everybody wants to be but a torture soul that no one wants to become. Since the death of Telemachus, he is no longer complete and he feels that no one can patch him back, to make him whole again. He crawls through life in a mindless stupor, dwells in self-pity and seems to only survive by consuming endless amount of taurine and caffeine tablets. Realising how self-destructive Jonathan has become, his best friends, which he called "his Thicks" and those others who know his true potential start devising a plan to wake Jonathan up from his prolong daze, to make him realise that his life is one that is worth living. What does it take for someone to begin moving on and embrace life? And can the course of life of the hopeless be changed by those who he loves and respects?

Adios, Nirvana is a book that portrays loss, grief, friendship and a value of life. The skeletal bone of the

story is rather simple and of little meaning: a boy seeking for ways to handle his grief. However, the complexity of the messages hidden behind its intricate, raw, brilliant writing is what makes this book important and moving. Conrad Wesselhoeft is definitely not the kind of author who tailors his writing to make it more acceptable to everyone as he depicts reality of life as it is, no sugar coating and no polishing. I have no doubt that some people might feel rather uncomfortable with the way this book was written and some offensive language used along the way, but to me, this makes this book more real and believable.

One of the aspects in Adios, Nirvana that I thoroughly enjoy is the way the author slowly reveals the vital information, carefully creating the tension inside of the book. Ever since I start reading, I've wondered why Jonathan called his brother "Telemachus" but not by his real name. My question is answered towards the end of the book and it sort of emphasize the relationship between these two brothers, how one of them is one half of the whole and how truly decapitate Jonathan feels after his brother is gone. Other than that, Wesselhoeft also did an excellent job with the characters in this book. Jonathan is not entirely likeable from the beginning but the author lets readers embark this journey to see the changes in him and the real person that he suppresses beneath. The other characters too are very well-written and it can easily be seen how each and every one of them trying to help Jonathan moving on with his life.

Despite feeling that the ending is a little too rush; I am still overall satisfied with this book. A bittersweet story that talks about seizing the moment and understanding that despite every hurdle, life can still be the way we craft it to be. Adios, Nirvana is a book that I deeply love – the kind that leave imprints in my heart that won't fade in many years to come.

Taken from my bookblog: The Bibliophile's Journal

Steph Bowe says

I just finished *The Sky Was Everywhere* by Jandy Nelson, which is about a girl grieving the death of her older sister. This novel is about a boy grieving after the death of his brother. So they are essentially about the same thing - the loss of a sibling (siblings who both characters lived in the shadow of) - and I found it fascinating the way the two stories and two protagonists and two authors dealt with the same theme. Lennie, the narrator of *The Sky Was Everywhere*, dealt with her loss with a new romance and becoming close to her family again - in this novel, Jonathon has quite a different journey. The greatest element, to me, was his friendship with the man whose biography he was asked to write - all of the scenes with him were brilliantly written.

At times I found Jonathan to be quite an alienating character - I'm not sure whether it was the writing style, or the intention of the author, but he seemed to me quite superior at times, as if he knew better than everyone else. That's probably quite representative of teenagers (*ducks, avoids tomatoes*) but every now and then the character would say something (something sexist, or ageist, or just stupid) and I thought, if you were real, I would smack you upside the head about now. But there was a lot of voice and a lot of attitude to this character, which I liked. He was no Bella Swan. The other characters, too, were fantastic - everyone was brilliant (I really felt as if I knew Telly, even though he was dead for the entirety of the book). I loved it and I hated it and the fact that I had such an emotional response to it means it must be fantastic.

Strongly recommended if you like books with a musical or poetic theme, and a very snarky narrator. I think this novel could be equally enjoyed by both teenaged girls and boys.

Beckyt says

When I picked up this book, I never expected to read it in one sitting -- but I did. Excellent story, well crafted.

Conrad Wesselhoeft says

Where did I get the idea for "Adios, Nirvana"? Real people inspired many of the characters (though, at core, they are fictional). My father was the inspiration for David, and his experiences as a Navy lieutenant during World War II became the template for David's war experiences. I modeled Jonathan's friends, the "Thicks," on the posse of my son, Kit. We were going through tough times as a family, but we were all lifted by our friends. The boys surrounding Kit injected his life with so much friendship, so much fun and smack talk--and they still do, thank goodness. That's what the book is about--the healing power of friends and family.

I believe that stories pull us closer together, as small groups and larger societies. Storytelling is more than mere entertainment; it is essential for teller and hearer alike.

Please check out conradwesselhoeft.com. I welcome all feedback--rant, rave, or mixed. Best wishes to all on their reading and writing journey. Conrad Wesselhoeft

Isamlq says

Among my favorite movies are Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous* and *Elizabeth Town*... Relevance? These are what *Adios, Nirvana* reminds me of. In fact, the two things things that I enjoyed the most about these movies and this book are *Music and heart*. Now, I know next to nothing about music. I sing off-key; I cannot play any instrument, so these just make my appreciation/admiration of anyone with skills in said areas all the greater... Precisely why I enjoyed this book so much.

On a bridge, that's where this book starts. From there it grabbed me by my eyeballs and would not let go till the last page. *That's* how good it was. I try to steer clear of book flap words to describe things I've read. But I'll make an exception in this case. This book is **riveting**.

It's well written. It's lyrical without being annoying. Poems just aren't my thing, knowing that this book is about a boy, a poet really, this book did not alienate me at all. Normally, when I see a stanza here or a stanza there, my eyes glaze over and I lose interest. That did not happen here because it's also humorous without being too snarky.

It's a disarmingly straightforward: Jonathan's brother is dead. Jonathan's life is heading nowhere, and that's despite his being a poet/prodigy. His life is focused on finishing his *Tales of Telemachus*, his friends, the THICKS, and hopefully finding a girlfriend. Opportunity comes knocking in the form of an blind, old man who would like to hire Jonathan to write his life's story. So is this another Tuesday's with Morrie? A little because there's a lot of the old man teaching our boy a thing or two about letting go and forgiving. But honestly, not at all, because this is all about Jonathan ... and Telly.

Half of the time you get a picture smacked into your head instead of words and words and words that build a story up. Basically it's VIVID. Take this for example, "... Looking like the great grunge god Eddie Vedder,

of West Seattle and the world. My boxers ride my bellybutton. My Levi's ride my butt crack." Reading that, it's almost as if I were recollecting something I'd seen before.

The way Jonathan spoke was quite engaging too. I wouldn't agree with half the things he said, but I did get a kick out of the way he'd put it. Consider this, *"It's true, I am hard on my books. You don't get your money's worth till you've slammed them against the wall a few times. Broken their backs. My books are my family- the more they hurt me, the more I hurt them..."* Sacrilege! I would never do those things, but I really loved the way he said it.

But Adios, Nirvana is mostly sad because everything our boy, Jonathan does, wants to do, will do and can do circles back to Telly. But Telly's gone... all but from Jonathan's of memories him.

Jonathan describes his writing thus, ***"I prefer chaos because there's no structure, no logic, to how I write. I write fast. Free. Gut."*** I guess that's the best way to describe ADIOS, NIRVANA too.