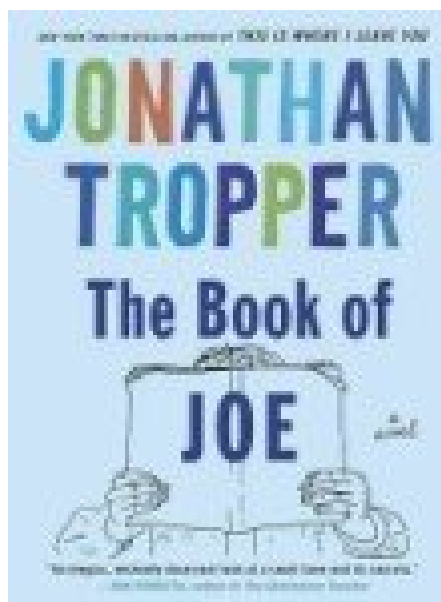




The Book of Joe

Jonathan Tropper

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Right after high school, Joe Goffman left sleepy Bush Falls, Connecticut and never looked back. Then he wrote a novel savaging everything in town, a novel that became a national bestseller and a huge hit movie. Fifteen years later, Joe is struggling to avoid the sophomore slump with his next novel when he gets a call: his father's had a stroke, so it's back to Bush Falls for the town's most famous pariah. His brother avoids him, his former classmates beat him up, and the members of the book club just hurl their copies of Bush Falls at his house. But with the help of some old friends, Joe discovers that coming home isn't all bad--and that maybe the best things in life are second chances.

Fans of Nick Hornby and Jennifer Weiner will love this book, by turns howling funny, fiercely intelligent, and achingly poignant. As evidenced by **The Book of Joe's** success in both the foreign and movie markets, Jonathan Tropper has created a compelling, incredibly resonant story.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Book of Joe Details

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Author : Jonathan Tropper

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From Reader Review The Book of Joe for online ebook

Carol says

This is my third JT novel and like the others, it drew me in from the beginning and kept me interested until the end. The story is entertaining, packed with emotion, interesting characters and wit. I truly enjoy Jonathan Tropper's writing style and highly recommend this sentimental page-turner.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Joe Goffman is a self-described asshole. He's such an asshole that he wrote a scathing "fictitious" novel about his hometown where he completely lambasted nearly everything and everyone contained there. He never dreamed the book would become not only a national sensation, but also an A-List movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kirsten Dunst. He REALLY never dreamed he'd have to go back to said hometown and face the subjects of his novel. However, when his father suffers a stroke, that's exactly what he has to do.

Boy am I regretting my decision to keep requesting Tropper's books from the library. I was like a junkie and just couldn't get enough . . . and now I've read them all. "Joe" was Tropper's sophomore novel, and it is where he came into his own. He hit the mark with the self-deprecating "asshole" lead and his merry band of friends/family. He found that magical balance of quick wit and heart-stabbing emotion and has used it in every novel written from "Joe" on.

HURRY UP AND MAKE THESE MOVIES!!!!

Jennifer Tatroe says

Jonathan Tropper's *The Book of Joe* reminds me a lot of Michael Chabon's early work stirred up with a bit of Nick Hornby. Echoing so much of two of my favorite contemporary male authors, it's no surprise that, by the end, I really fell in love with this book and can't wait to read more from the author who wrote it.

Joe Goffman is a lapsed Jew from a small town in Connecticut. After leaving home as a bitter and estranged teenager, he wrote a scathing (and bestselling) novel about his experiences growing up in Bush Falls, brimming with caricatures of the people he encountered there. Seventeen years later, he finds himself back in the town, face to face with the ghosts of his past.

Tropper could have easily written a book full of caricatures, himself. Certainly, a small town setting lends itself to that. Instead, he endows every character, from Joe's shark of an agent, to the town's celebrity basketball coach, with a soft underbelly. Everyone in Bush Falls is undeniably complex and human. By the end, I knew these people as if I'd grown up with them, myself.

In the end, it's a book about coming to terms with the past, about rediscovering one's self, and about re-evaluating truths we once thought to be self-evident. The solid story and fleshed-out characters are woven together with some amazingly beautiful writing. At one point, Tropper writes, "The rain beats manically against the window and I feel the urge to run outside and dissolve." I feel it too. *The Book of Joe* absolutely

swept me away.

Reese says

A psychiatrist friend once told me that the psyche knows no greater pain than shame, that shame is so painful that, within a nanosecond, it is experienced as anger.

The word "angry" clearly falls short of capturing the intensity of feelings about Jonathan Tropper's Joe Goffman, who had thechutzpah to make the name of his hometown the title of a novel -- one that would become a best-selling book and then a movie. The fact that Joe's work is fiction does not diminish the embarrassment felt by the "real people" who recognize themselves in his characters. So in Bush Falls, Joe Goffman is despised -- of course -- he pressed almost every shame button in the cockpit. When Joe ends a seventeen-year absence from the town where he was born and raised (Dad is dying), he is essentially signing up for Angry Manifestations of Shame 101. We, Tropper's readers, get to audit the course.

The Book of Joe heightens our awareness of the connections between the cause(s) of "major" anger and both what it produces and for how long. And Tropper has done more than create action figures for a showcase of angry responses.

Well-crafted, impactful lines and once-beautiful relationships made more beautiful by repairs allow me to call *The Book of Joe* a beautiful work. But as Tropper's protagonist-narrator beautifully notes, "One of the liabilities of. . . beauty is the ease with which the slightest gracelessness shows, like muddy footprints on white carpeting" (262-63). The novel is not free of blemishes. During a scene in which Joe learns how close to death Wayne, his longtime friend, is, Tropper's narrator tells us: "I let out an audible sigh, wishing that I were by nature a more expressive person, and Wayne sighs as well, probably wishing he didn't have AIDS at all" (87). Probably? Really? Really stupid. Not "muddy footprints on white carpeting" -- perhaps horseshit on white carpeting?

Speaking of shit, Jared (Joe's nephew) uses the expression "a real big bite out of the shit sandwich" (259) when Wayne reveals his age: 34. Seeing Jared's comment, I could hear my late brother saying, "Life is a shit sandwich without the bread." But what we would be wise to come away from this novel with is a deeply felt understanding of the importance of unselfish (not selfless) relationships. They are the bread that allows us to swallow the shit, to eliminate the shit, and to "keep our shit together."

The Book of Joe speaks, I believe, to a broader audience than Tropper's *This Is Where I Leave You* and transmits more valuable messages than readers are likely to find in *This Is Where I Leave You*, so why only 4 stars from me? *This Is Where I Leave You* has "crazy" characters whose behavior is quite often outrageous; it's too funny to read in a place where people want/need quiet. Such books get to have wacky people doing the unbelievable. If *The Book of Joe* contains funny material, I missed it; and for me to be willing "to suspend my disbelief," the outrageous has to make me laugh. In addition to important relationships, laughter is what enables me to "keep my shit together," what lets me see more stars than are probably there, and what stops me from wanting to say, "This is where I leave you."

Amy says

I just love Jonathan Tropper ... something about his writing and characters just speaks to me. Although this particular novel wasn't quite as good as *This Is Where I Leave You*, it's a really good novel that was a joy to read. I laughed, I cried and everything in between. Tropper just has a way of making you FEEL as you read - the good, the bad and the ugly. This book definitely reminded me of the TV show *October Road* (which was one of my favs before it was cancelled way too early).

I wouldn't say the plot is mind blowingly original but I think it was well done and kept my interest throughout. It's really the characters that make this book stand out for me. This entire novel is essentially a study of human relationships and emotional growth.

I really liked this one and definitely recommend it to anyone interested in a novel that has warmth, humor, and interesting characters. It's a fairly quick and easy read ... but one that is definitely worth the time.

Melissa says

Really good book.

After a horrible senior year in high school, Joe moves away from his home town. Once Joe is on his own he rights a sort of tell all book about his home town, and his home town is not happy. Actually, a lot of people hate him in his home town. His mother passes away, but his father, brother, high school sweet heart, and his old best friend are home waiting for him when he returns.

I read somewhere that this book is being made into a movie. I have never seen the T.V. show, but *October Road* from the commercials looks a lot like the book.

MUST READ.

Dashka says

I wanted to like this book. I had every reason to -- not only was it the only book I had with me on vacation, but it had been recommended by someone whose opinions I trust and the author had been compared to Michael Chabon and Richard Russo, writers I love. But no matter how much I tried, I could not ignore the absolute awfulness of the writing. Tropper piles on adjectives randomly, giving ridiculously elaborate and yet banal descriptions of mundane things like drinking a soda ("long, thirsty sips") or smoking a joint ("one long, meaningful drag" -- which makes you wonder what the meaning of a meaningful drag might be) while at the same time falling back on the most trite and obvious cliches when describing important things -- like his characters. The love (or really sex) interests are invariably described using words like "perfect," "flawless," and "hairless" (really!) -- there's not a single, fond conjuring of a woman's physical quirks other than a brief mention that one woman's imperfections "only serve as foils to her perfection." Instead, we're treated to descriptions that seem to have been ripped out of a *Penthouse Forum* letter -- "her full, impossibly red lips" and "her breasts straining against the dark fabric of her sweater" and so on. Meanwhile, the characters are mostly one-dimensional cliches -- the dim-witted bully, the sadistic coach, the pursed-lipped sanctimonious Christian mother of the gay athlete, the tragic homosexual, and, of course, the high school sweetheart who remains true and sensible in the face of the hero's self-destructive imbecility, biting her lip on page after page whenever Tropper wants to convey that a thought has entered her pretty head. As much as I tried to soldier on, I ended up defeated at page 226 by the book's overwhelming awfulness.

Kelli says

"God," I say. "Remember high school?"

"Full of promise, full of dreams, full of shit. Mostly just full of yourself. So full you're bursting. And then you get out into the world, and people empty you out, little by little, like air from a balloon."

Jonathon Tropper is my age. I know this because I looked it up somewhere in the midst of listening to this book. I had to look it up and yet I think I knew the answer long before I saw it. How else could it be? How else could he get everything so right? This story opens a door that most of us closed a long time ago. The story is funny...at times laugh-out-loud funny...but it is also sad and relatable and real. That is Tropper's gift. His characters are so honest that they embody people you know, people you knew, people you wanted to know. His presentment of high school is spot on. Didn't we all think we were so grown up? This is a middle aged man's look back at the glory days that maybe weren't as great or as bad as they seemed. There is a little bit of everything in this and I just loved it all. It is amazing how four short years can shape us so much. I have always said that there is no love like high school love. It is the perfect mix of hopefulness, naivety and hormones.

"Everyone always wants to know how you can tell when it's true love, and the answer is this: when the pain doesn't fade and the scars don't heal, and it's too damned late." Amen, Jonathon. Amen.

*I have a hard time believing this was written over ten years ago. The writing is at times overwrought, the characters a bit cliché but this is still fantastic. 4.5 stars

Jake says

So the story is this:

Smartass non-athlete kid grows up in a shitty sports town, moves away at 18 and writes a book savaging everyone he grew up with. After 15 years, the now-successful writer has to return to town because his father (who he hated) is sick.

There's potential there. Despite being a blatant rip-off of Elizabethtown (maybe not the best thing to swipe from, BTW), this could work if one could avoid all the typical 'prodigal son' clichés. Such as:

Former jock turns out to be gay.

Former antagonist grows up to be the po-leece.

Former antagonist turns out to be 'not that bad'.

The gay character has AIDS, and just don't take no crap no more!

I'm sure there's more, but frankly, I couldn't get past 100 pages. If you're gonna have an unoriginal idea (and

really, most are at this point), you have to make it your own. Tropper tried early, but fell way short.

He could have pulled it off with a little more edge, a little straight-up 'fuck you' from the main character. Instead, the guy just comes off as whiny and annoying. With a little bit of the Bateman brothers injected into Joe, this could have been quite readable.

Instead, it made me throw up into my own eyes.

Rick says

First off, this was a difficult book to rate. On the plus side, it made me laugh; it made me cry. I was caught up in the character's lives and cared about them. The author has a winning and simple way with prose. The negatives are what made me downrate it so much. Aside from the main character's intense self-pity that we're hammered over the head with, I had trouble suspending my disbelief for his best friend, Wayne, who deserved a much fresher and more thoughtful approach. Wayne is one of two gay characters in the book; the other dies as a teenage suicide. And, of course, Wayne himself is dying of AIDS, KS, wasting, the whole nine yards. The problem with this, and the place where the author loses credibility for me, is that Wayne's full-blown AIDS occurs in 2004. In 2004, a whole array of live-saving and health-maintaining drug cocktails were on the market to treat HIV. As someone very familiar with the HIV/AIDS landscape, I had trouble believing Wayne. His character would have been more believable in the early 90s, when such cases were much more common. In 2004, it was much rarer to find someone with full-blown AIDS, especially in a relatively affluent part of the US. I'm not saying people still don't die from AIDS (or didn't in 2004), I'm just saying it's rarer. The author, at the very least, should have had a conversation wherein Wayne laments that none of the cocktails worked for him. It happens. But the way it is now, I just think the author was ignorant about gay people and the disease and that made it hard for me to enjoy what otherwise was an enjoyable book. Even better, though, would have been not to saddle the gay main character with something as stereotypical as AIDS, but something like Stage 4 cancer. The same results could have been achieved without resorting to the cliché.

matteo says

An absolutely incredible book. It made me laugh, it made me cry, it made me think. I read a lot of books, but I rarely respond to them like I did to this. Upon finishing it, I immediately called several of my friends and told them to go get it RIGHT NOW, because it felt like Tropper was writing exactly what we had been through. Tropper writes as though he is in the minds of his readers: you can feel the love, hatred, hurt, joy, confusion. The story might not always be fantastic, but his ability to connect is.

treehugger says

So, I really, really enjoyed this book. It's about a man who, upon realizing he is inhabiting an empty, soulless life and hearing about his estranged father's life-threatening stroke, returns to his small hometown in Connecticut. There are some really predictable things that happen from here, but the study of human relationships, the resiliency of the human heart, and final note of home on which the novel ends really did it for me. There was big emotion packed into this book, and it dealt with some of the really big issues that face our generation (not giving up too much of the plot!)

And, in reading this book I realized we're ALL assholes..and as Joe says, "you can really learn a lot from an asshole.." It's in not taking our lives for granted and in focusing on what is important that I think Joe (and all of us) can find a way out of asshole-dom.

Lemme know what you all think!!!

Kamryn (GreyZone) says

The Book of Joe by Jonathan Tropper is *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* plus *Winger* for adults. It's the type of hilarious that earns actual laughs rather than exhales, it's the type of insightful that makes you want to look at the people in your life differently. It's profound because it's about *life* rather than made-up magic and romantic ideals.

Joe Goffman wrote a best-selling book absolutely slandering his hometown. Upon his return, he has to face everyone and their dog who was made into a disgusting caricature - all the while dealing with his own lack-luster life as a rich, self-proclaimed jerk.

Tropper is magical in the way that he can make unrelatable events universal. Using nothing but good writing, he affected me using basketball. I passionately hate sports, not to mention I haven't rode any of the highs and lows of these main characters. It's a unique, undeniable talent that made this novel so fresh and engaging.

The reflection on death, life, fathers and sons, and teenage lust alike are done in a way that's straight-forward, but remarkably lacking pretension. It's a solid, concise read that hit me in a way realistic fiction usually doesn't. Plain and simple, it's a basic idea made extraordinary by a fantastic author.

I recommend this to anyone who loved the two popular YA books I mentioned at the top. It's funny, smart, a bit smutty, tear-jerking, and insightful. It's one story about real, ordinary life that is strikingly remarkable.

Maida says

Remarkable. I laughed, I cried, I shrieked, I cringed, I pondered... and then I laughed some more!!! Witty & beautifully crafted, this book inspires tolerance, openness, vulnerability, resilience, & an affection for human idiosyncrasies & imperfections. Thank you, Jonathan Tropper, for taking me on such a glorious journey!!!

"I find that most people worth knowing are f*cked up in some way or another."

"We make mistakes. They don't make us. If they did, we'd all be royally f*cked, especially a couple of assholes like us."

"To err, as they say, is human. To forgive is divine. To err by withholding your forgiveness until it's too late is to become divinely f*cked up."

"Full of promise, full of dreams, full of shit. Mostly just full of yourself. So full you're bursting. And then you get out into the world, and people empty you out, little by little, like air from a balloon." ~ Jonathan Tropper, *The Book of Joe*

5/5 stars

Elyse says

Loved it!

When I want a book with heart that I can count on being hilarious--
an author I turn to is "Jonathan Tropper".

After having read the most awful book of my life recently ---(a book which actually made me angry on so many levels--a book which calls itself "NOTHING"), --- I wanted a moving, funny, compulsively readable book ----

"The Book of Joe" was the perfect fit ----ending 2012 ---starting 2013!

Eric_W says

BEWARE: This book was originally published under the title of Bush Falls.

He's a prodigy of alienation. Now a successful writer, having written a book about his home town, Bush Falls, that savaged the place, Joe receives a call from his sister-in-law that his father has had a stroke (he was at the top of the key, had just released the ball, and came down unconscious. Basketball aficionados present noted the ball swished.) Joe's brother, Brad, ex-sports star, and their father never had much time for Joe. His mother had committed suicide, a manic depressive, for whom the piles of pills didn't work, so Joe wrote a book about his town, never dreaming it would be published which has made him personna non grata, but it made him rich. Now finds he is obligated to go back home for his father's illness.

So as with Tropper's other books, in the first few pages a similar scene is set: death, sex, familial dysfunction, alienation. Tropper's books all have similar themes and characters: a stepson/nephew/child. dying parent, dead parent, sibling, a main character alienated from his family. That does not mean they are redundant; each is different in its own way and each equally appealing and often funny and poignant. I like them all. Note, however, that this book is much darker than the others.

Listened to the audiobook read by Scott Brick who provides excellent narration.

Jonathan Ashleigh says

This is Where I Leave You is wonderful and if you liked it enough - you will probably read this book (also by Jonathan Tropper), but you probably won't like it as much. I wish it would have stuck with it's original title - Bush Falls. I like that a lot more, as it is the book which the main character writes that makes everybody hate him. I did like this book but only because it was sort of like This Is Where I Leave You. The characters were good but did not have the dimensions I was looking for. The ending was kind of morbid in a way that was also trying to be cute; I can take morbid but please refrain from also making it cute.

Sean Kennedy says

I really enjoyed *This Is Where I Leave You* despite its at times-overbearing resemblance to a feelgood independent script aiming to be Oscarbait, so I decided to check out Jonathan Tropper's back catalogue.

The Book of Joe is very similar - awash in cinematic cliches such as the estranged son returning home due to illness in the family, reacquainting with an old girlfriend he never got over, etc etc. It actually pulled together in TIWILY, but not here.

I think what annoyed me the most was the use of the gay characters. This book seemed like it was written in the 1960s, as they both died tragically - one from suicide, and the other from AIDS - but along the way they both teach VERY IMPORTANT LIFE LESSONS to the heterosexual characters so they can have their happy ending.

I mean, come on.

By the time I got to the end, where the happy heterosexual couple dance and kiss in a shower of their dead gay friend's ashes, I almost threw the book against the wall. Damn those dead tragic magical gays who only live and die to make their straight friends happy.

Michael says

When his father suffers a stroke, Joe Guffman returns to the hometown he left behind 17 years before to confront his past and ponder his future. The biggest complication--Joe wrote a fictional book based on his life growing up in the town that didn't exactly sit well with some of those who depicted in his novel.

Upon his return, Joe is involved in a bar fight, has a drink thrown in his face and finds copies of his book thrown onto the front lawn. But Joe is having other issues--his second book isn't working, he's estranged from his brother and his father is dying. In the midst of all this, Joe seeks to reconnect and make peace with his past, get back with his high school girlfriend who he never really got over and figure out what the future holds for him.

Jonathan Tropper writes about fundamentally flawed males in each of his books and you'll find no more flawed character than Joe. Told from the first-person perspective, we see and hear things from Joe's eyes, as well as getting bits and pieces of the book thrown in. Both work together to create a portrait of Joe who is seeking approval and acceptance by his family and friends all while trying to be his own man and stand on his own two feet, not defined by what others say or the expectations they have of him. With *The Book of Joe*, Tropper makes some interesting comments on the nature of relationships guys have not only with other guys but with the women around them.

Along the way, you'll get to know Joe and while you may not always agree with what he's doing, you'll still come to like the guy. It'd be easy to say that Tropper is the next Nick Hornby. While Tropper does have some influences from Hornby, it's clear that he's an emerging writing just waiting to burst on the scene to a wider audience. Maybe, like Joe, he needs to have one of his books made into a wildly successful film.

Rachel says

Granted, I only read about forty pages of this one before deciding it wasn't my thing. But I was struck by how right Jennifer Weiner and Jodi Picoult were when they said that men's fiction that has the plot tropes of "chick lit" is always just called "literary fiction," and I would hold this book up first as an argument for that.

There are points in the first 40 pages when, in my opinion, it approaches saccharine. Despite being a person who cries practically on command at every viewing of *Watership Down*, I am really not a fan of reading this gushing feeling. Whether it's written by a man OR a woman.
