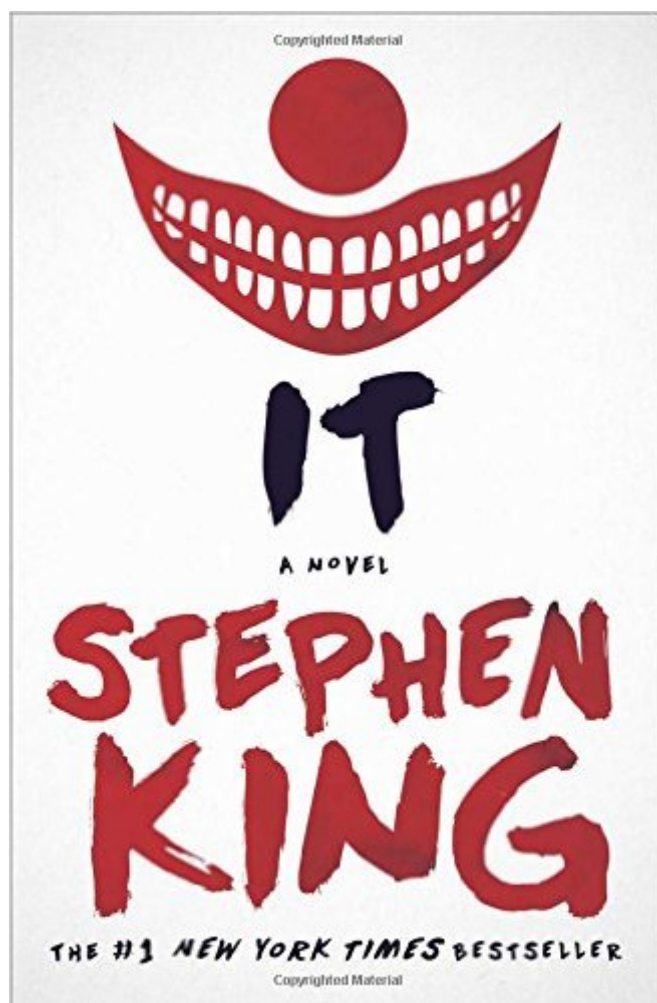


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It: A Novel



Synopsis

“A landmark in American literature” • (Chicago Sun-Times) “Stephen King’s #1 national bestseller about seven adults who return to their hometown to confront a nightmare they had first stumbled on as teenagers” | an evil without a name: It. Welcome to Derry, Maine. It’s a small city, a place as hauntingly familiar as your own hometown. Only in Derry the haunting is real. They were seven teenagers when they first stumbled upon the horror. Now they are grown-up men and women who have gone out into the big world to gain success and happiness. But the promise they made twenty-eight years ago calls them reunite in the same place where, as teenagers, they battled an evil creature that preyed on the city’s children. Now, children are being murdered again and their repressed memories of that terrifying summer return as they prepare to once again battle the monster lurking in Derry’s sewers. Readers of Stephen King know that Derry, Maine, is a place with a deep, dark hold on the author. It reappears in many of his books, including Bag of Bones, Hearts in Atlantis, and 11/22/63. But it all starts with It. “Stephen King’s most mature work” • (St. Petersburg Times), “It will overwhelm you” | to be read in a well-lit room only” • (Los Angeles Times).

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Customer Reviews

"The terror, which would not end for another twenty-eight years--if it ever did end--began, so far as I can tell, with a boat made from a sheet of newspaper floating down a gutter swollen with rain." This is the first line of "It," the beginning to one of Stephen King's masterpieces, and probably the most incredible story I've ever read. Those who complain about it's length... they need patience. Those

who complain about its characters... they need to look around at themselves and others. Those who complain about it being vulgar, vile, or horrific... that's part of the story, and not to embrace it means you miss out on something extraordinary. In the summer of 1958, seven friends encountered something horrible in their town of Derry, Maine. This something fed on children, hunting them, preying on them, and devouring them. It could shape itself in any way It liked, whatever their nightmares suited, but always with one trademark: the semblance of a clown. The seven friends all had something in common: They had all escaped It at some point. And in that summer, they learned about It, confronted It, and killed It... or so they thought. 28 years later... A boy named Adrian Mellon is apparently thrown off a bridge by two other boys for his sexuality. It seems like an open-and-shut case, but the boys claim that there was something down below... a clown and a cloud of balloons. Soon the friends are being called back to Derry, told that It is back. They made a vow, sealed in blood, to return if It wasn't dead. Each of them is now very successful, and the thought of returning to Derry, of going back to the horror that they'd all forgotten, is more than they can bear, but they had made a promise. "It" is two stories being told at once. One is the story of their childhood, of their first encounter with Pennywise the Clown, their troubles with the local bullies, the impact of It upon their lives, their own personal struggles, and the eventual defeat of It. This is told from the beginning of the book to the near end of it. At the same time, the story of the return to Derry, of the research done to see what It was, the memories that were now urging to return, and subsequent events that followed which I won't spoil here. Both timelines alternate in their tellings to fit one another perfectly, even if not in perfect chronological order, and they're even further juiced with quick points of time long before their own, dipping into what else It has been up to. This construction is utterly beautiful in how it's placed, and completely builds the story up for all its plot points and climax. "It" also easily avoids a problem with many long Stephen King books: Plot threads that go nowhere. The characters are completely immersive and none are the all-too-well-known clichés. Bill Denbrough is the leader of the group, with a bone to pick with It, and his own problem of stuttering. Richie Tozier has a smart mouth and a big ego, one that hides things from the others that he's ashamed of, even in denial of. Eddie Kaspbrak is asthmatic and weak, but he has courage within him to help his friends. Stan Uris is a sensible and supportive friend, who helps bring understanding of things. Ben Hanscom is an overweight and loving boy who brings his own ingenuity to the group. Beverly Marsh is a tough, yet sweet girl, whose own problems at home help prepare her for what she must face with the others. And Mike Hanlon, a boy chased by the bullies for the color of his skin, who comes across the group with a desire to help, and also leading to one of the more emotional parts of the story, the Great Rock Fight. These are the seven friends

whose unity and circumstances held them together against It, and who vowed to return. It isn't long before they feel familiar, as if you've known them all your life, as well as the troubles they've faced, especially those of punk and bully Henry Bowers, whose endless torment drives them into the very heart of It's lair. "It" is a story that does take some patience to get into after the initial hook, but afterward, you'll have trouble putting it down. The night I finished it for the first time, I was 200 pages from the end and it was already midnight, but I just had to keep going. I couldn't wait until morning. I had to read, see, feel... I had to know. Everything builds and builds, as well as giving off the love, excitement, and horror that abounds, and it doesn't let down. Every single event, be it touching, scary, or vulgar, is necessary to form the complete picture of what may be one of the greatest books you will ever read.

After finishing IT for only the second time, I feel I must add my comments to those listed below. I found this book to be one of the greatest fiction books I have ever had the pleasure of curling up with for several weeks and reading (any book that can have me go through the full range of emotions over and over again and then get me to spend weeks reflecting on thoughts from the last two paragraphs has to rank up there). SK has managed to write the scariest novel I have ever read but also weave in multiple underlying themes (Good vs Evil, racial discrimination, the reality of childhood as seen through the eyes of a child - who can forget the schoolyard bullies?) that kept me thinking the whole way through the book. Rather than bore you with a long review - just read the book you'll be glad you did (although due to the mature and sometimes inappropriate content of a number of scenes, I don't recommend this book for anyone under 13/14). As a parting comment, the book is best summed up by my dilemma - Which is scarier: Pennywise or the reality of what happens to us as we grow up and leave childhood behind?

"IT" is, bar none, the best Stephen King novel I've ever read. Since most readers are probably at least somewhat familiar with the book, I'll briefly say that "IT" is about a group of eleven-year-olds menaced by a monster (also called IT) on a child-killing rampage, which takes the shape of whatever will scare the victim most -- then, the same people reunite in their hometown as adults, to confront the thing in hopes of defeating IT once and for all. At the very least, the book is jim-dandy entertainment, a riveting page-turner. The writing is Stephen King (admittedly not everyone's cup of hemlock) at the top of his form; the idea of a Mobius strip story/ies is clever; the stories themselves are both gripping and skillfully interwoven; the thrills and scares (and gross-outs, of course) come without letup; and the plot, though based on a simplistic and slender premise (Good Guys confront

Bad Guy; who will prevail?), is a quite satisfactory cliff-hanger...But what really puts "IT" severed head and shoulders above King's other books is the authenticity of the emotion. "IT" is the Stephen King novel with a heart -- a bloody, still-beating heart ripped out of its owner's chest -- but a heart nonetheless. What distinguishes King's books in general from those of, say, Dean Koontz or John Coyne; and "IT" from the more mediocre of King's books; is the sensitivity and compassion (odd words for King, but in this context, I think they're fitting) with which he writes about his characters. They're kids (at least throughout the majority of the book), but they're also real people -- individuals with thoughts and feelings and likes and dislikes and hobbies and ambitions and (usually dysfunctional) families. We care about them. We laugh when Richie tries to charm the ticket taker at the movies. We quail when Beverly's irrational father rages at her. Our hearts ache with pity for Ben when he denies writing the haiku because, "if a fat kid like me wrote a poem to a girl, she'd probably laugh herself sick". And when they successfully stand up for themselves (as in the rockfight scene), we stand up and cheer for them. They're brave, they're flawed, they're sweet, they're smartassed, they're goofy. The kids' part of the story would make a great Spielberg movie! King takes the readers into the world of his book in a way that's nothing short of phenomenal. We're transported back to middle school days: the sights, the sounds, the smells; the teachers, the classmates; watching the clock on the last day of school, the barrel of sawdust that the custodian sprinkles on the floor before sweeping (which I'd completely forgotten about until the moment I read that!). King remembers it all, and evokes it vividly here. IT is a thoroughly fascinating and horrifying nemesis (especially in IT's werewolf and hobo forms; others, such as the bird, are less effective) -- but as is often the case in King's novels, the human monsters are by far the most frightening and best portrayed. Brutish school bully Henry Bowers, vacuous and crazy Patrick Hockstetter, the distressingly numerous abusive fathers (Beverly Marsh's and Eddie Corcoran's and Henry Bowers', and I'm probably forgetting someone), the adult Beverly's abusive husband -- all are crueller, creepier, and more malevolent than any supernatural creature could possibly be. The section with the gay-bashing teenage hoodlums was also superb -- perfectly capturing every detail of the wretched boys' speech, clothes, and homelife -- rendering them empathetic without mitigating their loathsomeness. There's also quite a bit of humor (thank goodness). Richie, the class clown, provides many of the "chucks", but most everybody gets their moment in the spotlight. Eddie Kaspbrak is usually meek and depressed, but when his overprotective mother won't let him take gym, he sardonically wishes she could see how fast he runs with IT chasing him. The scene where Henry's sidekick tries to explain that he can't join the gang for bullying and mayhem the next day because he's got a job delivering the local "Weekly Shopper" newspaper was hilarious, though in a dark way. King's gift for language,

and memory for how childhood really feels, combine to recapture the humor of the days when the very word "girdle" was enough to reduce everyone to hysteria. A few quibbles: First, the book's supposed climax and denouement were disappointing -- muddled and uninteresting -- a real letdown, especially after eleven hundred pages on a roller coaster. Second, the Corcoran boy (Dorsey's brother) should have been named Jack, Charlie, Bob, etc.; introducing a new "Eddie" after we'd already read several hundred pages containing a main character with the same name created needless confusion. Third, some gross-outs were overdone. Over-the-top descriptions are part of King's charm, but the book was already well-written and interesting enough that including the literary equivalent of plastic doggie-doo detracted from the overall quality. Fourth, the editing is downright sloppy in spots, e.g., "this fact or concept or whatever it was to him" when "this concept" was all that was needed; or when Richie is Catholic on one page and Methodist on another. And finally, the scene in the tunnel was rather dismaying. It's King's book; he can put all the sex he wants in it -- between consenting adults. A scene depicting group sex with an eleven-year-old girl is a bit outside my comfort zone. Those considerations aside, though, "IT" is King's best book, hands down. Highly recommended to all King fans -- "IT" is scary, sad, funny, heart-tugging, rousing, compulsively readable -- all the reasons why Stephen King *has* fans. If you've never read him, this is the book to start with (sure, it's a 500-pound gorilla -- but there's no such thing as a short, palatable Stephen King novel suitable for newbies). Amazing what the man is capable of doing when he rolls up his sleeves and gives it his best shot.

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