

Synopsis

Instant New York Times BestsellerA New York Times Notable Book of 2016A Time Magazine Top 10 Novel of 2016A Times Literary Supplement Best Book of 2016“Dazzling . . . A profound novel about the claims of identity, history, family, and the burdens of a broken world.”
•Maureen Corrigan, NPR“Fresh Air” In the book of Genesis, when God calls out, “Abraham!” before ordering him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, Abraham responds, “Here I am.” Later, when Isaac calls out, “My father!” before asking him why there is no animal to slaughter, Abraham responds, “Here I am.” How do we fulfill our conflicting duties as father, husband, and son; wife and mother; child and adult? Jew and American? How can we claim our own identities when our lives are linked so closely to others? These are the questions at the heart of Jonathan Safran Foer’s first novel in eleven years—a work of extraordinary scope and heartbreaking intimacy. Unfolding over four tumultuous weeks in present-day Washington, D.C., *Here I Am* is the story of a fracturing family in a moment of crisis. As Jacob and Julia Bloch and their three sons are forced to confront the distances between the lives they think they want and the lives they are living, a catastrophic earthquake sets in motion a quickly escalating conflict in the Middle East. At stake is the meaning of home—and the fundamental question of how much aliveness one can bear. Showcasing the same high-energy inventiveness, hilarious irreverence, and emotional urgency that readers loved in his earlier work, *Here I Am* is Foer’s most searching, hard-hitting, and grandly entertaining novel yet. It not only confirms Foer’s stature as a dazzling literary talent but reveals a novelist who has fully come into his own as one of our most important writers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Here I Am" tells the story of approximately one month of the life of Bloch family. A married couple Jacob and Julia are struggling with the eternal problem namely, how to live your life and while time passes still wanting with the same force to care about things and relationship that seem to be dear and valuable to them and that used to be at the center of their attention. Sam, Max, and Benjy, Bloch's children as well as their grandparents Irv and Debora are the completion of this story. "Here I Am" is, in my modest opinion, the best novel published in 2016. It is undoubtedly a masterpiece of literary art. It's an extraordinary example showing not only Foer's literary craft but also his unrestrained imagination. Most of all, in all those beautifully crafted words and descriptions he preserves accurate, convincing and touching narratives of Bloch's family struggles.

I am not sure where to begin. I am in such awe of this book. It is Jonathan Safran Foer's *HERE I AM*. I feel like a book like this comes along only once in, well, maybe a decade. I don't want to try to compare *HERE I AM* to another book or categorize it. This great work cannot be labeled. It breathes life, death, love, joy, incredible humor, deep sadness, high emotions, the strength of family, love beyond humans, pride of religion and culture, history, discovering self or not, and the here and now. I was so deeply moved by each character, the depth that the author depicted them, that I felt like I knew them, not just as I read about them, but before the book. I didn't want to let them go. I needed to re-read numerous passages to make sure that I didn't miss anything, forget messages or dialogue. When I would pick up the book again each night, I started the previous chapter again. Each time, hoping I could stretch the story out a little longer. *HERE I AM* is the story of Jacob and his wife Julia and their three boys. It is also about Jacob's father and grandfather and their family history. Their relatives in Israel and being Jewish in America. It is about a fictitious

catastrophe in Israel and how it affects Jacob's family as things between he and his wife begin to unravel. While I am reading a book, if I have not previously read any of the author's other work, I try not to find out too much about him/her, so that my opinion is not blurred in any way. I was so enraptured by Foer while reading. I wanted to know who he was. What possessed him to write this story. Was any of it from his own life. I am still so curious. I could not help but wonder what it takes to create a story so well told, so real, with such poignancy, where you bring your reader to laughter and big tears. The laughter brought me to tears. I thought of my father and how much he would have loved and appreciated this book. The inside Jewish humor and family history, it felt like stories I have heard before. It was bittersweet. Without spoiling anything about the ending, I won't share my emotions, so I will just say that it was perfect. It goes without saying that I loved, loved and loved HERE I AM.

I love Foer's writing and like the novel. He does character development so well, especially children and men. The plot deals with many issues, including an earthquake. It seemed real; I kept thinking I needed to turn on the TV and hear the latest news. The novel provides a view of Jewish homelife in America today and explores the dynamics of divorce. Not his best novel but a good novel.

I loved half of Everything is Illuminated (the contemporary half), didn't love the other book but this book is a masterpiece! It's not an easy slog. There are "gimmicks". There is foreshadowing. The children (and their parents) are perhaps unbelievably precocious but Foer and his ex-wife in real life are extremely bright people and that may be the way their family actually spoke to each other. I wish mine could. I appreciated the apparent love and understanding he shows towards Israel.

I loved this book (or most of it at least). Foer has soooo much to say about life, relationships, child rearing, religion, etc. etc. It is a very poignant book - a cry from the heart. It is so realistic in the emotions portrayed that I was convinced it was lived by Foer. It is also extremely witty, sarcastic, and irreverent. My only criticism is that it is too long and sometimes drones on. Better editing would have helped.

At times I hated this book. The story is about a marriage ending but you don't like any person. And the part about the destruction of Israel and the portrayal of the Israeli relatives is horrible. I would give this book to someone I disliked. I can tell the author has the ability to be a good writer, but since I hated the book so much I cannot find too much room in my heart for him.

I did not enjoy this book, but I am probably not in the target audience demographic. I read it because Jonathan Foer is becoming very well-known for his talent, and I try to stay somewhat current with the current literary scene. This novel deals with profound issues regarding male Jewish identity. There is only one female of note, an unsympathetic character who is cold and insensitive. I did learn quite a bit about the Jewish culture and experience, which I hope enhances my worldliness and empathy, but this novel was somber, deep, and emotionally painful. I found very little humor or light, but maybe that's the nature of the subject?

I am forever a fan of Foer. "Everything is Illuminated" had been in my top five favorite books since I first read it about 15 years ago. "Here I Am" is not as good, in my opinion, but it is still very Foer. It is filled with very thought-provoking lines. His syntax and diction never cease to amaze. Like his other fiction, this book is really about humanity. At its worst, at its best. Long, but worth the read.

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