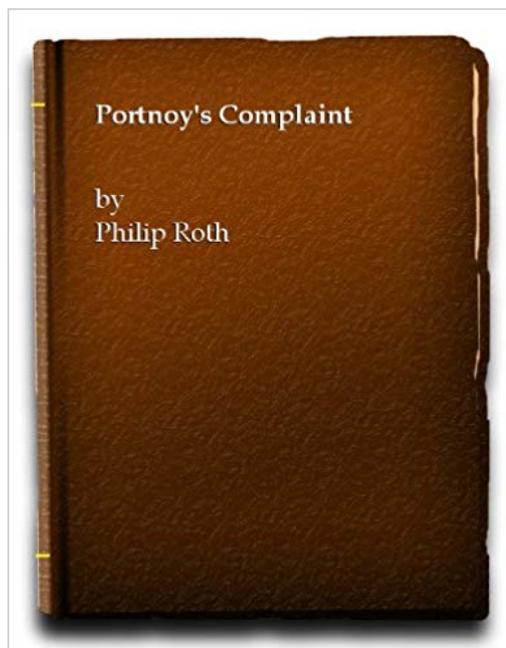


Portnoy's Complaint by Philip Roth



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Author: Philip Roth
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Portnoy's Complaint *n.* [after Alexander Portnoy (1933-)] A disorder in which strongly-felt ethical and altruistic impulses are perpetually warring with extreme sexual longings, often of a perverse nature. Spielvogel says: 'Acts of exhibitionism, voyeurism, fetishism, auto-eroticism and oral coitus are plentiful; as a consequence of the patient's "morality," however, neither fantasy nor act issues in genuine sexual gratification, but rather in overriding feelings of shame and the dread of retribution, particularly in the form of castration.' (Spielvogel, O. "The Puzzled Penis," *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, Vol. XXIV, p. 909.) It is believed by Spielvogel that many of the symptoms can be traced to the bonds obtaining in the mother-child relationship. With a new Afterword by the author for the 25th Anniversary edition.



Reviews of the Portnoy's Complaint by Philip Roth

Domarivip

I admit that this book was a random purchase. I had been dealing with insomnia and I thought if I purchased a book of which I had no prior knowledge or information I could just open it up in bed at 2:30 AM and in just a paragraph or two would be lulled to sleep. Mistake.

I ended up laughing out loud and waking my wife.

Loved the book. Especially the nostalgia and sense of being there, real-time, New Jersey in the late '60s. Immersive.

tamada

This is my second go-around with Philip Roth. My first read was 'Ghost Writer' for a Holocaust literature course. After a recommendation from my professor for a book to utilize for my Master's thesis (the depiction of psychiatric care in 20th century American literature), I can safely say that my professor knows a good book when he reads one.

Alexander Portnoy is, at times, completely annoying, yet there is something in his complaint that evokes a degree of sympathy and, for some, empathy. Sure, he's got more than enough to make even Freud's head spin, but he isn't wholly detestable. Roth writes this character so convincingly that I imagine the Doctor's reactions as he is sitting there listening to Portnoy ramble on. The issues involved in growing up Jewish dominate the novel, but there are multiple fascinating themes co-occurring as Portnoy's story develops.

If you don't mind reading about penises and vaginas on every page and can tolerate an often abundant usage of Caps to emphasize Portnoy's mental duress, you should consider picking up this witty and thought-evoking read.

Uaoteowi

When I read this as a teenager OH SO MANY YEARS AGO, I thought it was a classic. I bought this as a gift for a young friend. Read a few pages and realized that it was no longer anything I'd want to reread. Still, Philip Roth is one of my top 5 favorite authors. His Pulitzer Prize winning book American Pastoral is one that I read cover to cover in one sitting.

Wooden Purple Romeo

Not since Catch-22 have I read a book that could be so emotionally moving and so utterly hilarious to read. Roth's style is amazingly addictive, so that you feel like you have to keep reading to see what bizarre things happens next.

The main character of this story, Alexander Portnoy, is one of the most relatable characters I've read. At his core, he is a teenager in rebellion against his overbearing parents, trying to reconcile the societal pressure he feels to live up to their standards with a desire to have fun. Everyone has been Alexander Portnoy at one point in their lives. It's in the ridiculous ways that Alex tries to rebel that give this book it's edge.

Let it not be said that Phillip Roth is a shy writer. Portnoy's Complaint describes in exact detail the sexual escapades of our hero, both for the laughs and for the drama. While they aren't for everyone, I couldn't stop laughing and reading.

I recommend this book to anyone, especially college students going out into the world.

Ese

This is a book that was considered scandalous when it came out. (It actually mentioned masturbation, more than once) The literary device is that the whole book is a one-sided conversation with Portnoy's psychiatrist. This allows the airing of some pretty intimate details and hangups without seeming gratuitous to most people. The book is also funny but requires some appreciation of the humor and pathos of the ethnic background, which should be no problem since the entertainment industry has been heavily influenced by Jewish humor and verbal style. The "story" keeps the readers interest. My "review" is more of an impression or opinion than a full review, but there are several available I'm sure.

Veleanor

My brother and I are both very senior citizens and live on opposite coasts. We haven't seen each other in years so our "literary" discussions occur on Facebook. I recommended a book that surprised him because he considered it risqué. He challenged me to read "Portnoy's Complaint" because he found it the smuttiest book he had ever read. I told him I had read it many years ago and would reread it if he would agree to read "Geek Love" which I found to be the most "memorable" book I had ever read. A cruel trick I played on him. I enjoyed "Portnoy's Complaint," though it did focus on masturbation more than I recalled but the novel really addresses Jewish identity issues which may have changed somewhat over the past decades but undoubtedly remain in the minds of many Jewish people. I found it interesting and entertaining and a good reminder that we all have a point of view. As for my brother's experience with "Geek Love," he certainly found it memorable...but he is trying to forget. I suspect I haven't been forgiven. ;o)

Cemav

A mix of bawdy humor and remarkable insight. A work of pure brilliance. The book is explicit in tone, and tests the reader's capacity for the outrageous throughout, but isn't that what great fiction is all about. Roth is clearly a genius. One of the legends of our era. His novels are easily among the greatest in popular literature.

A confirmation of all the things we dread about our lives. The unjust divisions we are born to in a country that makes us believe otherwise.

For every secular Jewish kid screaming in the dark comes this richly drawn narrative that reads like a how to guide for getting out from under your parentage.

This is a must read for understanding the destructive nature of ethnicity in a nation of whiteness. And the inescapable fact that no one really has a home. Just an illusion like reality itself.

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