



Catch

Will Leitch

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Everything comes easy for Tim Temples. He's got a sweet summer job, lots of love from the ladies, and parties with his high school buddies. Why does he need to go to college?

Then Tim falls hard for Helena—a worldly and mysterious twenty-two year-old. Their relationship opens his eyes to life outside the small town of Mattoon, Illinois. Now Tim has to choose: Will he settle for being a small town hero, or will he leave it all behind to follow his dreams?

Catch Details

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From Reader Review Catch for online ebook

Jasynda Pham says

In this book, by Will Leitch, he tells the story of a normal high school graduate/college guy. Tim just graduated high school, and he decides he doesn't need to go to college because he's one of the best baseball players in Illinois, where Tim lives and works. Over the summer, Tim likes to go to college parties and hookup with girls. Although he has no interest in going to college, he works with one of his good friends at an office building instead. At this new job of his, he meets someone and instantly gets attracted to her. At first, she plays hard to get but they start to evolve feelings towards each other throughout the book. As they get more intimate, Tim must decide whether he wants to stay in Illinois loving Helena or risk going to college, once summer is over.

I personally liked this book because it was a really interesting plot and I like books like this. I found this book so similar to "Catcher in the Rye", and I liked that book.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Me for TeensReadToo.com

There is a trend among young adult literature to stage the proceedings in big cities, well-known towns of glitter and glam such as Manhattan, Chicago, and Los Angeles. And although there are books out there that feature the small towns of America, they usually feature made up burgs and use euphemisms to get small-town life across. This is not the case with CATCH, and for that I can be grateful. I can be even more grateful that the author set his story in Mattoon, Illinois, a place that actually exists, is where Mr. Leitch grew up, and that is located only about two hours from both where I myself grew up and where I now reside.

Mattoon is a city, not a town, and is larger than my own hometown and yet smaller than the place I now call home. But when I opened up my copy of CATCH and immersed myself in the life and times of Tim Temples, I was immediately brought back to my own adolescent years. The Hardees parking lot where the high-school kids gather could be the same Hardees lot that I knew intimately from weekend cruising. The Lender's Bagels plant could be the reincarnation of the Quaker Oats plant that once resided in a neighboring town during my youth. Jacob Kuhns, the small-bit actor who is the most famous person ever to come from Mattoon in CATCH, and Tim's dad, who played Minor League baseball for a St. Louis Cardinal's affiliate in his younger days, could be dead-ringers for the celebrities of my own small hometown.

Tim's brother, Doug, attends the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana, a college I myself once considered attending. Jessica, the good-girl of Mattoon, could be any number of girls I went to school with. Could be, in fact, me. The "Buck Fush" bumper sticker can actually be seen, to this day, on the rusted out pick-up trucks I still see when I go back to my hometown for a visit. The yearly Bagelfest, with its parade through downtown, mimics the ones I saw as a child.

In a word, CATCH brings to life small-town America in a way that no other book has ever done. Although it's the story of Tim Temples, of the summer between high-school graduation and probable college admittance, it's a lot more than that. It's the story of what it's like to grow up with everyone in town knowing your name; of the cops understanding that you're not a bad kid for having an open container of alcohol in your moving vehicle; of people expecting you to follow in the footsteps of a semi-famous father and brother

that you know you'll never have the ability--or desire--to fill.

This isn't growing up in New York City, or L.A., or the gigantic metropolis that is Chicago. This is real life, real America, the ups and downs of growing up, of falling in love, and of wanting to be the kind of person you can be proud of. This is the story of a guy who wants to break out, not necessarily of small-town America, but of small-town thinking. This is Tim's story, and my story, and the story of hundreds of thousands of teenagers throughout Midwest America.

You can't go wrong reading CATCH, and Mr. Leitch can never go wrong by accepting who he is, where he came from, and who he's become--which is the author of one hell of a great book.

Samantha says

I kind of liked this book and it was okay. What I liked about it was that I like how the main character and the girl met at work but i forgot their names. The main character likes the girl but the girl is very sassy and mean. He tries to be nice with her but she would be mean and throw him stuff. When it was her birthday, the boy gave her flowers and the girl was nice for the first time and he was surprised. Then they went to a club and hanged out and thats where they started to hang out every night. The boy's parents were always busy so it gave him time to spend the nights with the girl. What I didnt like about the book was that some parts were confusing and the first part also and I was confused but once you start reading more of it then you will understand it better.

Julia says

This one was required for “Contemporary realistic fiction” week.

I. Hated. This. Book.

Although Will Leitch can write. Keep this in mind. I mean, REALLY WRITE.

This book tells the story of the summer before college of Tim Temples, small town sports dynasty kid from Mattoon, IL. I checked on a map; this small town is an hour south of Champaign-Urbana, two hours west of Indianapolis, and according to Google Maps, a three hour drive from Chicago. And yet, these small town hicks have never been outside county lines, for some unknown reason.

Set in 2005, the book follows Tim and his band of near-delinquent friends through their summer. Tim’s older brother Doug is back home after dropping out of college and losing his baseball scholarship. Tim’s father is busy organizing the “Bagelfest,” an annual parade/festival thing celebrating fake rolls-with-holes bagels in a town that doesn’t appear to have realized they have appropriated a Jewish cultural food. Tim and his friends work at the local plant, and spend their free time driving aimlessly around committing illegal acts and generally being a public nuisance.

Like I said, Leitch can write. His characters are wonderfully described, sometimes fleshed out, and believable as small-town people. Their antics are relatively timeless, and if you want to read a story about small-town teenagers in IL, this might be an enjoyable book.

But I hated these characters. I hated them from page two, and kept on hating them. You feel bad for the adults who are “stuck” in Mattoon, but the young people just make me disgusted. They are racist, sexist, homophobic, entitled assholes. They drink while driving (and drink terrible beer), smoke constantly, and literally do nothing to try and become more/better than their parents. They have the chance to “get out” and they don’t. They are the reason I want to only live in cities and make friends with liberal vegan activist types and art gala attendees.

And side note—they aren’t even isolated! “Getting out” is LITERALLY a three-hour drive to Chicago! That’s not HARD. That’s not even expensive. They are not geographically isolated; they are teenagers who, judging from their insane consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, junk food, and wasted car fuel, clearly have disposable income. They could go to college, or move to Chicago and get a job, or go somewhere and do something with their life. They could experience culture and other people. (The main character goes to a college orientation at UIUC and meets two Jewish boys and an Indian-American from Chicago and is SO AMAZED).

Oh, I guess the plot is that Tim is a small-town god because of his family sports dynasty and he knows his place in town and is afraid to go to college and become a nobody, especially after seeing what college “did” to his older brother. And he gets involved with this bad girl at work, who everyone but him can see is going nowhere with her life. His falling-in-love story is believable and nice to see from a boy perspective. And at the end of the book he “decides” to go off to school, although REALLY, was he going to “choose” anything different? If you’re going to summer orientation you’ve already paid for at least half, and most of that is non-refundable, and you’ve started shopping for dorm stuff and planning holiday travel plans and looked at classes and majors.

But me? I hate these people. I hate their mentality about life. I hate their entitled asshole perspective. I hate that going AN HOUR AWAY to college is THE BIGGEST THING EVER. Newsflash? It’s NOT. If Tim was a small town nobody and went away to UCLA or an art school in New York or somewhere that was, you know, ACTUALLY far away, then I could see him worrying. But one hour?! By car?! And he has a car?! GAH. I groaned (out of pain, frustration, and that wonderful dislike-of-humanity that usually only comes from a particularly juicy episode of Bridezillas) almost every other page.

As a librarian, I would put this book in the collection depending on my population; it’s well-written, believable small-town YA fiction, and would have appeal to younger small-town teens, older college kids from small hick towns...and maybe other people? I may hate it, but that’s personal, and I’m allowed to hate some books as much as any teen/adult is allowed to hate some books. You reserve the right to hate any of the books I have previously raved about, and I’ll hate this one. Deal? Deal.

TL;DR – 2/5, but only because I despise these characters and don’t care about their story. Well-written, sometimes funny tale of Tim Temples, small town high school hero, as he enjoys his last summer before college. His friends and family and new relationship all work towards helping him decide between the king-of-the-world life he knows and the “big wide world” he doesn’t.

Dalton Cowan says

What is a person to do in his or her last summer before leaving for college? This is the situation that Tim Temples, the protagonist of *Catch* by Will Leitch, must face as he prepares to go to college after graduating high school. The way in which Tim chooses to spend his final summer is how most teenagers spend their last

few weeks at home--with friends, working, and finding a summer romance. These relatable choices along with the humor that Will Leitch uses throughout the novel makes *Catch* such an outstanding book. *Catch* is a tremendous read that has become my new favorite book. A key factor in the greatness of this novel is the humor that the author, Will Leitch, constantly uses. Right away, Tim thinks to himself how graduating high school is not impressive at all, and the only people who don't graduate are the druggies and the girls who get knocked up (Leitch 3). Immediately after this, Tim thinks how his interests of breast and baseball have diverged from Jessica's interests of school and unicorns (4). Next, Tim describes the night employees of Hardee's as "teenage moms, meth addicts, and the mentally retarded" (49). Lastly, Denny's first rule of keeping a woman happy is "You are always wrong" (149). These instances along with many others throughout the book serve to give readers a good laugh, and they also help to keep them entertained. *Catch* is not just humorous; however, it also has many aspects of its protagonist, Tim Temples, that are very relatable for many high school students. These similar aspects add to the greatness of the novel, and they are a reason why I would recommend this book to kids in high school. The first of these characteristics is that Tim has a group of friends that he always hangs out with called the Horsemen (6). Next, Tim gets a summer job at the Kraft plant (16). Later, Tim and the Horsemen go cruising for fun all the time (42). Finally, Tim is scared to leave his home to go to college (53). These features of Tim help make him a sympathetic character that readers can identify with.

Throughout *Catch*, Will Leitch seems to be trying to describe what he considers the typical teenage romance. He achieves this purpose by using Tim's relationship with Helena. First, Tim makes an advance on Helena, but she denies him (26). Then Helena shocks him by returning his advances, and she gets him to make love to her (95). Later, Tim stops hanging out with his friends because he spends all his time with Helena (128). After this, he falls in love with her, and he tries to find anyway that he can to make their relationship last (151). Finally, Helena dumps Tim by saying, "Get out of my life. I don't want you" (243). These examples illustrate the typical teenage romance because they contain the rejection, sudden passionate start, the relationship consuming their lives, the hope to make it last, and the nasty break up.

In sum, Will Leitch's *Catch* is a fantastic book that I firmly recommend to all high school students. A relatable protagonist along with some humor will keep readers entertained and interested. Leitch does not just try to amuse readers; though, he also uses the relationship of Tim and Helena to show the typical teenage romance.

Word Count: 564

Samuel Watts says

Book Review: *Catch* by Will Leitch

He we go again another jock with feelings and you actually have sympathy for him. NOT!!.

This Book somehow got my attention by me thinking every number that met me every two pages meant that I Completed a chapter, "If only". Tim Temples is on his way to college and he is trying to figure out what to do with his life BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH.

Tim Temples has it "All" and everything is going his way but then a taste of reality hits him harder Than Mr T. did Rocky. He is a Time bomb ready to go of at anytime. The book does have its symbolic moments like his brother dropping out of school(violin play) then it really shows some similarity between the two. But this book continues to repeat the same thing over and over and over again like a stuttering parrot.

To be Honest I've never really liked Will Leitch's books "Life as a loser,Are we Winning, Etc. the list goes

on and I tried to to give this book a chance ,but again I've failed to realize what a idiot I am for picking up this book.

Another concerning thing that bothered me was the horrible side characters that Leitch invented and I really tried to get over but again another error that is met in this book reminds me of the previous books he writes. I am for sure that Will's Attention was good but is just another repeat of the other mountains of books iv'e Read. But this book just continues to remind me of the movie(and book) "Gone Girl".

Like Tim his character reminds me of Nick Dunne and like him they are not happy with there lives but they seem to get trapped in the people around but honestly the story is true in peoples lives but the again Will Leitch should stop getting advice from a broken record.

Flossmoor Public Library (IL) says

3 stars

- Ms. Jenn

stephanie says

four stars from A.

Brian says

I found this novel to be really appealing. The book is a young adult fiction novel. In the book, Catch, it relates to many high school students thinking about college and the future. The theme is repeated over and over again overlapping with some themes of young love and betrayal. The author, Will Leitch, presents this book with an easy to follow order, in first person. Using first person, the reader is able to feel the experiences of Tim and is able to make inferences into what Tim is thinking. The underlying theme of leaving your childhood and loving someone make this book an interesting read.

The protagonist, Tim, doesn't think of College as anything special. If anything, it is somewhere that ruins the lives of people. Tim's brother, Doug, who attends college at University of Illinois, finally came back and he doesn't resemble his past self at all. From then on Tim feels that College ruins the lives of people, "Every time I'm around him, he's scowling around in a pissy mood, bitching at my parents, really angry and shit. And I don't know what his problem is. he's even yelling at me now, and he didn't even do that when we were kids. I know he didn't like college much, and I guess it's hard to blame him, but I mean, he looks terrible. He's got this nasty facial hair that probably has bugs in it, and he's even getting kind of fat, which I never thought I'd see. I dunno. I look at him now and I think about the big brother I remember, and they're two different people (Leitch 123)". Tim starts to avoid the topic of going to College, and he starts wondering about what he wants to do himself with his life. Being the golden boy, the pride of his hometown, he finally starts thinking about going somewhere else to expand his horizons or he can stay here and drown in his celebrity status for what it is worth.

Then there is the love between Helena and Tim. Their relationship is something special and for the first time, Tim has finally met a girl that he wants to stick around with. She is everything to him; he is in his own terms whipped. The theme of love in these young adult books usually develops a character's personality. For the chick magnet Tim Temples, having a one night stand is the norm. Having a relationship with them is out of the question, it's all about sex, sex, sex. That was before he met Helena, a secretary at his workplace. Helena captivates Tim completely; he is now head over heels for her. It is really ironic that the number one playboy in high school is now in love with a girl. It gets pretty cheesy after a while when Tim is completely obsessed with Helena and kind of becomes a stalker. The humour is written perfectly by Will Leitch keeping the light heartedness of the novel all the while keeping the serious events full of emotion.

Catch is written in a way that it appeals to a lot of teenagers, mainly ones who are about to graduate. That is probably because of the theme of leaving for college/university or the way the characters are laid out, and the way they are imagined relate closely to how teenagers are in reality. It is a good read, showing the struggles of a golden boy with the pressure of his family and friends, while trying to keep his intimate relationship with the girl who he thinks is his better half. The reader of this book will always be questioning themselves just like Tim Temples, searching for the answer that is right.

Richie Partington says

19 October 2005 CATCH by Will Leitch, Penguin/Razorbill, December 2005, ISBN: 1-59514-069-7

"She takes a deep gulp from her beer and emits a tiny burp. 'Oops!'

" 'Four years of sitting in your room reading, and now you're out here with the common folk,' I say. 'What did inspire you to suddenly make the trip?'

" 'I would have come sooner,' she says, brushing her hair out of her face. 'You just never invited me.'

"I can't decide whether this is true or not. 'Well, if you had spent as much time out here as I have, you wouldn't have been valedictorian, that's for sure.'

" 'Whatever.' She shrugs. 'Besides, you're looking at this all wrong. Being here is studying--Socialization 101. I hear they have this booze thing going on at college, too.'

"I grin. 'Cheers to that!'

"We clink bottles again."

I remember as a little kid, back when I was just beginning to feel competent about my ability to read, back in the days of returnable beer bottles and of glass bottles of milk that the milkman would deliver before sunrise into that little gray-silver insulated box that sat out on the front steps, Mom helped me understand a slogan I found on a milk cap. I don't remember exactly what it said, just that it had something to do with going to college. That's the school you go to after high school, she explained. You go to junior high school, then high school, then college.

"I lean back on the hood of the car and look at the clear sky above us. The stars are brighter in Mattoon than anywhere else in the world.

" 'You probably won't get many nights like this in Champaign,' I say. 'And I doubt the campus cops are as big pushovers as Lieutenant Grierson.'

" 'That's probably true,' she says, leaning back next to me. 'It does seem a little easier to escape here.'

"Whatever Jessica's escaping from, I have no idea."

As the first-born grandson on Dad's side, I heard my grandfather Rex and my mom religiously repeat that "going to college" mantra until "high school-to-college" seemed as natural a progression as going from third grade to fourth. Mom hadn't had the opportunity to go to college, despite skipping two grades and graduating second in a large class. Meanwhile, Dad was lucky to have outlasted his third high school. I was going to be different from them and go right off to college like my oldest maternal cousin Tony, who'd already conquered two universities and was joining IBM just as I was heading into my freshman year of high school.

"I point out the Big Dipper. Jessica points out a constellation called Orion. I glance over at her, and for a moment I want to say things I haven't told anyone. About how I'm afraid to leave my friends. I want to tell her how I am king here, and there I would be just another faceless nobody. I want to tell her that college seems to have ruined my brother and I'm afraid it will ruin me.

"But I don't. I look at the stars and say, 'Yep.' And then Amy pukes again, and this night fades into the rest of them."

Despite a career that ended in the minors with a groin injury, Tim Temples' dad remains "the best baseball player this county ever saw." Tim's older brother Doug had been a high school pitcher with a good enough fastball to get him drafted in the 32nd round and offered a decent signing bonus. But Tim's mom had held fast to her conviction that Doug needed to go up to Champaign, take advantage of the four-year full athletic scholarship he'd been offered there, and hone his skills playing college ball. Now, after the four years of free college, Doug is no longer a ballplayer, is way out of shape, hasn't completed his degree, and seems volatile, bitter, and rudderless. What is Tim getting himself into by going to college up in Champaign?

CATCH by Will Leitch explores the days and nightmoves of Tim Temples' summer between high school and college. Tim, if not the star his dad and brother were, was nevertheless a pretty decent high school catcher, and is certainly known fondly to most everyone in town. He is going to spend these summer days before college picking up some money lugging cases of Lender's bagels (fresh off the line) over at the Kraft plant where many of his friends and fellow high school graduates will be settling into their new "careers" in the workforce.

"No I cannot forget where it is that I come from
I cannot forget the people who love me."
--John Mellencamp, "Small Town"

The small, southern Illinois town of Mattoon, plays a major role in these proceedings. While in real life there must be thousands of Mattoons across America, with the equivalent of its Hardee's where all the high school kids hang out in the parking lot late at night, the well-known secluded spot to go parking with a sweetheart, or the special little place to go be by one's self and think about the future, Will Leitch does an impeccable job of painting this particular community as a unique, all-by-itself small town. It's a place where Lieutenant Grierson lets the "good" kids he knows like Tim and Jessica get away with just about anything, and where everyone knows your name.

With the author having created such a memorable setting, we are well able to find Tim's frequent naivete to be credible and amusing, such as when he and Jessica head up to Champaign for the weekend to attend Freshman Orientation and he meets--for the first time in his life as far as he's concerned--someone who is Jewish as well as someone who is gay. And then there is Munesh, the student leader of Tim and Jessica's orientation group who is "a tall skinny Indian guy" with the "Buck Fush" sticker on his backpack:

" 'So, Munesh...wait, is that the right pronunciation of your name?' I say.

" 'Yep, that's it,' he says, chewing some leftover french fries the bartender gave us.

" 'So, um, where are you from?' I say. 'Like what's your homeland?'
" 'My homeland?' he says, smirking again. 'Uh, let's see...Chicago. Well, Naperville, actually, but I think you get my point. You're obviously from downstate.' Jessica laughs and Eric gleefully conveys my first-ever-Jew anecdote, cackling. I blush, but I laugh too. 'Sorry.'
" 'Oh, hey, not a big thing, man,' he says. 'Whole different universe out here. Wait until you start meeting'-- his voice lowers to a sarcastic whisper--'the black people. They're just like us, except taller.'
" 'Yes,' Eric puts in. Shame they can't dance, though.'
"The table explodes with laughter, and Eric claps me on the shoulder. In that moment, I decide I do like him. And all told, I like being the butt of the joke. It's a refreshing change of pace."

In fact, Tim Temples will come to see the other side of any number of things in very important ways this summer. And as Tim undertakes this summer journey to discovery, Will Leitch's CATCH provides us an abundance of humor, tension, and truth each step of the way.

Richie Partington, MLIS

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Alee1 says

My independent novel, *Catch*, was a very good book. Will Leitch, the author of the book, did a great job of keeping me guessing about what was going to happen next. He also did a great job of showing people what most young adults go through in making tough decisions in their lives, such as college, love, work, and leaving home. Our narrator and main character Tim Temples shows his struggles on going about things from beginning to end. During the story Tim meets a girl, Helena, at work who he really likes. After meeting Helena and getting to know more and more things about her, Tim's viewpoint of the way he makes his choices and does his actions changes. He actually changes from just having one-night-stands to actually having a relationship with one girl. He also goes through another change of having to leave a place that was emotionally attached to him.

Tim has a tough time making decisions about college. He wants to go to Illinois University in Champaign, Illinois just like his brother and live out his dreams. There is just one problem, Tim is afraid of leaving a place where he has been "king" for most of his life. He is also afraid that college will turn him into someone like his brother. He was talking about his changed brother with Helena when he says, "..., he looks terrible. He's got this nasty facial hair that probably has bugs in it, and he's even getting kind of fat, which I never thought I'd see....I look at him now and I think about the big brother I remember, and they're two different people...And I feel like college did it to him or something"(Leitch 123). Tim eventually learns to let go of the fact that he would just be another fish in a big pond, so he went to Illinois University for the next four years of his

Tim encounters a woman at his workplace, Helena, who shows Tim to see the world in many ways. Tim at the beginning of the story was a carefree man.

He just wanted to get girls and hang out with his friends for the last summer he is in Mattoon. He doesn't want to have long lasting relationships; he just wants to have fun.

During the summer his dad made him get a job at a local plant carrying boxes. At his workplace he meets a woman, Helena who is sexy and he likes her. At first she is mean to Tim and doesn't like him a whole lot.

One day, playing as a joke to make Helena mad, Tim got her a rose from a local gas station for her birthday. Surprised she took as a gift he was giving her from the heart. Things started taking off from there; a relationship was developed and Tim started spending most of his days and nights with Helena. Along the road there is a bump in their relationship and Tim didn't know what to do. He was afraid he'd lose her for the rest of his life. He'd never encountered anything like this before. He had to find ways to manage to save the relationship. He talks about saving his relationship when he says, "A plan. For some reason, I hadn't thought of it like that. Needing a plan. A course of action. Maybe that's the main reason Helena was mad. I didn't have a plan" (Leitch 221). Eventually they resolve their issues, they end up ending the relationship. Overall, I thought this book was really good. The writing style was consistent and very funny. I think Will Leitch wrote this novel off of past experiences because on the inside of the front cover of the book it mentions that Will grew up in Mattoon, Illinois. I also like reading young adult fiction books, like this one, because I am usually able to relate to them.

Agatha Donkar says

I've read a lot of YA novels; I've read a lot of YA novels written for a teenaged sports-obsessed male population. A LOT. And this was objectively one of the best: the writing's good, Tim's a legitimately sympathetic character (even when he's being an ass, and he often is, I absolutely understood the social constructs that *made* him that way, because Leitch sets it up so well), and it doesn't get a perfectly happy ending. I've read YA novels for teenaged, sports-obsessed, male audiences that weren't as good as this, but got far more press and praise. Which, frankly, I just don't understand. This wasn't perfect, but it was really, really good.

Plus it was vaguely gay and featured Mormon jokes and lots of nit-picky obsession about the St. Louis Cardinals, so I know that Will really did write it himself, not some ghost writer. It's like Will was looking into my *soul* before writing his YA book! I approve subjectively, too.

Beth says

This was a fun read because it's set in a small midwestern town right next to my own hometown. It was very reminiscent of many Midwestern teens experience! I enjoyed it!

John says

Small town jock meets eccentric older girl who teaches him a thing or two about the world and the way he'd been wired by those around him. A quick read and an entertaining coming of age story.

My doctor saw it the other day and said "the only coming of age story he needed to read was catcher and the rye." But I like revisiting those paths of my life. This book put me back to my own youth.

I picture this book being read by those around the world who then say "that's America?"

Kate Johnson says

This story is about Tim Temple's summer in small town Illinois, Mattoon, after high school graduation, before he leaves to Champaign for college. He is popular, his "posse" is called the Horseman, his father and older brother are the town's best baseball players, Tim likes to party, drink beer, and have meaningless "hookups" (your typical jock). Tim takes a summer job at the Kraft plant and there he meets Helena, a very bitchy 22 year old who drinks way too much. When Helena is stood up the night of her 23rd birthday and runs into Tim at a bar, they start talking and end up in bed together, which begins an intense summer romance. "There is something about a girl who casually calls you an asshole, I guess." (p.46) Tim's first love, "I'm not sure how to explain these past two weeks, except to say it's the first time I've ever really wanted to hang out with a girl – not for a hookup, but because I actually like her more each day than I did the day before; each day is a different adventure. Everything about her is different from anyone I've ever been with before – everything." (p.102) Helena has had a very hard life (nothing like Tim's), her dad died, her mom is sick and has to be taken care of, she can't leave town, she didn't go to college, she's an alcoholic... (but Tim wants to fix this, to protect her). "I want to change Helena's life. And mine. There is no question. I want them to change together." (p.157) Tim starts doubting whether he really wants to go to college or not. "I mean, what's college going to do for me, anyway? Doug look like college stole his soul. I mean, here, I've got this great job that pays a ton of money, I've got a home I don't have to pay a cent for, everybody know me, I can get into any bar I want to, all that. When I get there, I'm going to have to make all new friends and a whole new life. But I kind of like my life here, you know?" Another thought: "I like my life here with you." (p.143) Then Tim goes to his orientation and he gets wrapped up in the idea of college that night and forgets to call Helena. When he gets home the next day and goes to her house, he finds her passed out and half dressed in bed. It turns out, she had sex with his brother Doug (they graduated together and have had a sexual relationship going back for years, which Tim was unaware of). "I don't know how I can make this any clearer to you. It's not happening... Did you really think we had a future?" (p.243) "She had walked out of my life. And I wonder if she was ever there in the first place." (p.244) Tim is brokenhearted, but weeks later, the night before he leaves for college, finds Helena waiting for him at his favorite spot. They talk and she admits that she did really like him, but it wasn't meant to be. He was meant to get out of that town. "Just my turn. Something about that makes me feel better. Everyone goes through heartbreak. And separation, and displacement, and confusion, and the aching suspicion that they have no idea what they're doing – at all. It's just my turn." (p.283) This is truly a touching story of first love, love that wasn't meant to be, moving on, and finding courage. "She bends down and kisses me on the forehead. 'Be safe, Tim,' she says. I start to say something; I start to tell her that she's wonderful, that my life is different somehow for having her in it. I start to tell her that I think she's amazing. I start to tell her that I'll never forget her. I start to tell her something, anything. But she's already down the hill, to her car, to whatever awaits her." (p.284) The story ends with Tim's dad throwing the car keys at him as they leave for Champaign and "I catch them because, as I've said time and time again, I can catch anything you throw at me." (p.286)
