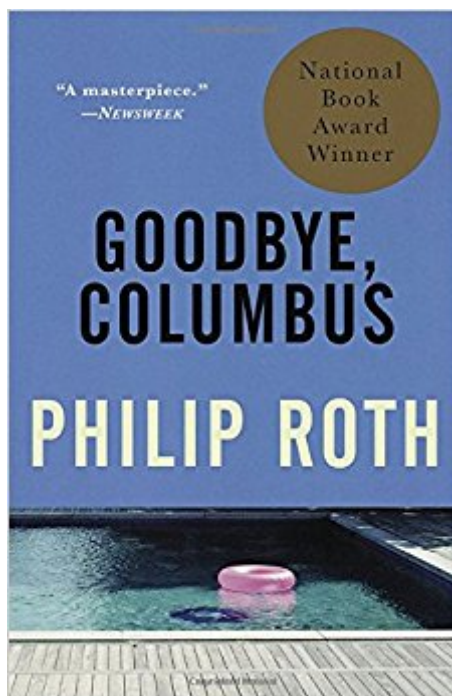


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Goodbye, Columbus : And Five Short Stories (Vintage International)



Synopsis

Roth's award-winning first book instantly established its author's reputation as a writer of explosive wit, merciless insight, and a fierce compassion for even the most self-deluding of his characters. *Goodbye, Columbus* is the story of Neil Klugman and pretty, spirited Brenda Patimkin, he of poor Newark, she of suburban Short Hills, who meet one summer break and dive into an affair that is as much about social class and suspicion as it is about love. The novella is accompanied by five short stories that range in tone from the iconoclastic to the astonishingly tender and that illuminate the subterranean conflicts between parents and children and friends and neighbors in the American Jewish diaspora.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In 1974's *My Life as A Man* Roth examines how a writer revises his reality, compiling two stories "by" one Peter Tarnopol and a third in which Tarnopol is the fictional protagonist. Vintage will simultaneously reissue *Goodbye, Columbus*, Roth's National Book Award-winning first novel, together in a new edition with five short stories. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This release by the 1960 National Book Award winner will acquaint listeners with the world of American Jews in the 1950s and to Roth's wit and insight into the problems accompanying assimilation. A widely respected American writer, Roth is the author of 22 books, including *American Pastoral* (Audio Reviews, LJ 10/1/97) and *I Married a Communist* (Houghton, 1998). *Goodbye, Columbus* features Neil Klugman, a young man from Newark living with his aunt, and Brenda

Patimkin, an archetypal Jewish American Princess, whose summer romance illustrates the tension between old world values and the new suburb-based culture. Provocative and entertaining, the other stories tell of likable characters, mostly men, who embrace their Jewishness yet must face conflicts in family and community. Although written nearly 40 years ago, these stories illustrate truths about America and its relationship with Jews that remain relevant today. The readers, who include actors Theodore Bikel and Elliott Gould, are all excellent, capturing the particular characteristics of Jewish American speech. Highly recommended for all libraries. Nancy R. Ives, SUNY at Geneseo Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This collection of short stories, first published in 1959, earned Philip Roth a National Book Award and was his first major work. The title story portrays an ultimately unsuccessful relationship between two late adolescents, one from working-class Newark and the other from suburban Short Hills. It's not only a pointedly satiric look at suburban life in the 'fifties, but a commentary on the American Dream and, equally significant, a study of how class aspirations and hostilities can poison a relationship, or become a surrogate for any relationship at all. The characters unconsciously invent ways of escaping any real intimacy, and the story shows the loneliness that often comes with the pursuit of superficial happiness. The other stories explore this conflict between superficial escape and more authentic confrontation in different contexts, but they all concern the dehumanizing potentials of the American reality, a reality that, Roth has written, often exceeds the wildest literary imagination. For anyone interested in Roth's writing or in thinking about the underlying themes of our culture, this book is a must.

The writing is, as expected, of the highest caliber. Just finished "Roth Unbound: A Writer and His Books" which was excellent, so decided to read in order of publication every book Roth has written. This is the first one, but its proofreading is a disaster. Two examples, runners pass a shot putter, but in the next paragraph he's a "shot nutter"; an uncle made his fortune in "barley and com" ... huh? Okay, it was only \$7.69 but all of the OCR glitches made it too painful to read any longer after getting almost halfway into the book.

First Love is a really wonderful novella that was the first work of Philip Roth. It was published in 1959 and won the National Book Award. What makes it so wonderful? The quality of the prose is exceptional. It is precise and often poetic without ever using that overly precious tone from which

many short story authors suffer. Roth takes careful aim at upwardly mobile Jewish life-- most of the stories in the volume look at least subtly at the internal (identity) clash that arises as Jewish families start integrating into the mainstream middle class. What's nice is that he is unflinching and often critical without ever feeling as though he were being mean. Goodbye Columbus is beautiful and thought provoking, wry but not bitter. The novella is published together with five short stories, "The Conversion of the Jews", "Defender of the Faith", "Epstein", "You Can't Tell a Man by the Song He Sings", and "Eli, the Fanatic". "The Conversion of the Jews" is generally considered the best of the lot, but personally I was more drawn to "Defender of the Faith". All five stories are worth reading, even if they are not as strong as the title novella. Highly recommended.

The winner of the 1960 National Book Award, its title story "Goodbye, Columbus" explores the end of love, discovered. This story is actually a novella, which is accompanied by 5 nice short stories. The novella is well worth the admission price as a tale of young love between two 20-somethings from New Jersey; it blends issues of the heart, class and the sexual mores at mid-20th century and touches on the differences among Jews as well as Jewish *assimilation* in the 50's.

Roth is one of the best writers in the English language. If you haven't read any of his books, you should do so. Try this one first and then go on to Portnoy's Complaint and a extraordinary look at old age titled The Dying Animal. He's one of a kind. I first read Goodbye Columbus about 50 years ago and had forgotten how good the man really is.

If you like his other work (or haven't tried one of the others yet), this is a great option

In his first book (Portnoy's Complaint), the main character (Philip himself?) was a high school student. In this book, he is out of college and staying with his aunt for the summer. This gives him a chance to experience life in a different way that he could if he had stayed in the big city. He sees a beautiful girl and finds a way to meet her and they fall in love. He does everything possible for her to love him and it works out well for a while. I don't want to spill the beans so please read it and find out what happens to these star-crossed lovers!

I find Philip Roth's debut novella, Goodbye, Columbus, to be much more enjoyable than his more famous work, Portnoy's Complaint. For one thing, Columbus is much shorter - it gets to the point. It

is not endlessly repetitive, the way Portnoy is - nor is Roth as full of himself in this more modest work. Goodbye, Columbus has all the heart that Portnoy's Complaint lacks. It is the proverbial "coming of age" story of Neil Klugman. Neil is the Philip Roth stand-in - like Roth, he is a poor Jewish boy from Newark. He has his first great love affair with Brenda Patimkin - a rich girl from Short Hills. Brenda is all he could ever want in a woman, so everything should be perfect...right? The reader may guess at the stops along the way, but predictability isn't really the issue - it's the journey that matters. I found the short stories in this collection less appealing. They are all on the same theme: the aversion Roth feels towards Jewish-American culture, while being a Jewish-American. This is one of the central themes in his novels as well, but his short stories are not able to support this theme as well as the other diversions that make his novels enjoyable. As such, the short stories are one-trick-ponies, and I found them tiring. Perhaps this is the reason that Roth is known as a novelist and not a short-story writer. However, the book is worth purchasing for the novella alone.

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