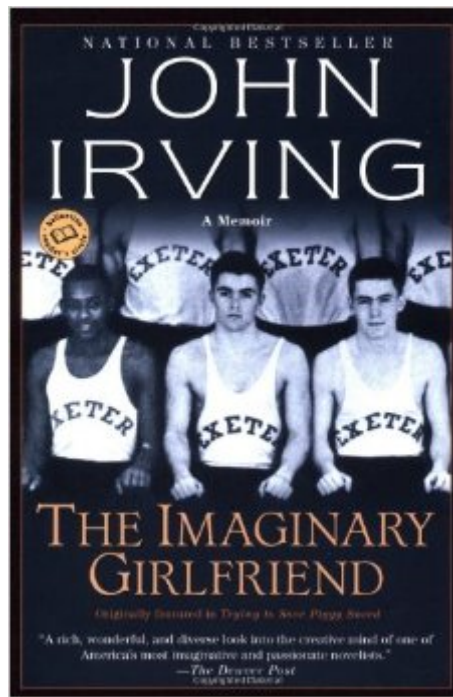


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The Imaginary Girlfriend: A Memoir



Synopsis

“The Imaginary Girlfriend is a miniature autobiography detailing Irving’s parallel careers of writing and wrestling. . . . Tales of encounters with writers (John Cheever, Nelson Algren, Kurt Vonnegut) are intertwined with those about his wrestling teammates and coaches. With humor and compassion, [Irving] details the few truly important lessons he learned about writing. . . . And in beefing up his narrative with anecdotes that are every bit as hilarious as the antics in his novels, Irving combines the lessons of both obsessions (wrestling and writing) . . . into a somber reflection on the importance of living well.” —“The Denver Post

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Imaginary Girlfriend is a terrific memoir. Irving, while taking a break from writing novels, decided to pen a short autobiography, but he brought his usual sense of humor, ability to develop characters, and readable style to the project. The story does an excellent job of explaining the life events and people who have shaped his character and writing, which I think is very useful when trying to understand and appreciate his other books. I think this story itself is some of Irving’s best writing and is certainly worth the short time it takes to read. I would recommend, however, instead of paying for the memoir alone, you purchase Trying to Save Piggy Sneed which includes this memoir as well as several short stories. You will not be disappointed if you are an Irving fan or just enjoy good, entertaining writing.

This book is a must for anyone who has ever wrestled or followed the sport. Irving does a fine job of showing how the physical exertion and emotion he put into wrestling mirrored the creative process of his writing. He is able to capture the sweat, the smells and the camaraderie of the wrestling room while showing that he and his pals were not just a bunch of one dimensional oafs. He concentrates on the creativity and diverse personalities of the wrestlers on his team. Those of you who are former wrestlers who are coaching or who are totally retired from the mat will appreciate Irving's transition from college student, to writer, to family man without ever really losing contact with the wrestling world. Stories about referees and out-of-control sports parents are all too real, but will make you chuckle anyway. A quick read. Irving shows how all of those old coaching cliches really do apply to life.

Buy "Trying to Save Piggy Sneed" instead, since it includes this work and several other pieces. It's just my stupid opinion, but I think the publisher deserves a big dope slap for republishing this seperately.

I am a big John Irving fan and have read almost all of his novels. This book was a big disappointment for me, though. Rather than deeply delve into the events and people who shaped his writing, Irving provides perfunctory descriptions of the major events in his life as a writer and wrestler. He devotes much more attention to the scores of every wrestling match he ever took part in than to details regarding the process of crafting his novels. For wrestling fans, this book might be just what you are looking for; for others, I would skip it and re-read Garp.

I give this a three star since John Irving is a fantastic story teller. But I would say about 85% of the book is excruciatingly detailed comments on his wrestling career, and those of his Sons. If you love wrestling, you'd definitely give it a 5. I, however, had a rough time taking in all the scoring and terminology. It wasn't about his life very much at all, unless his whole life was wrestling. I am glad I purchased it since it will now complete my John Irving collection, but I wouldn't advise it for someone who is less than a John Irving fanatic such as me.

Whether you're a fan of writing or wrestling, or just want to read a great storyteller giving insights into his life, "Imaginary Girlfriend" is a delightful (and all too brief) book from John Irving.

The sections on writing interested me more than those on wrestling, but Irving makes the

connections clear. The last chapter (?) on teaching writing really resonates, I think. Now I'm ready to start his latest novel.

The only reason i would not give this book five stars is because i have to save that rating for his novels and this is a memoir. It would be easy for me to love everything he had to say about his development as a writer - which I did. But why did i hang on every word he had to say about the role of wrestling in his life? Because he is so damned interesting!

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