

Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic *by* Alison Bechdel



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A fresh and brilliantly told memoir from a cult favorite comic artist, marked by gothic twists, a family funeral home, sexual angst, and great books. This breakout book by Alison Bechdel is a darkly funny family tale, pitch-perfectly illustrated with Bechdel's sweetly gothic drawings. Like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, it's a story exhilaratingly suited to graphic memoir form. Meet Alison's father, a historic preservation expert and obsessive restorer of the family's Victorian home, a third-generation funeral home director, a high school English teacher, an icily distant parent, and a closeted homosexual who, as it turns out, is involved with his male students and a family babysitter. Through narrative that is alternately heartbreaking and fiercely funny, we are drawn into a daughter's complex yearning for her father. And yet, apart from assigned stints dusting caskets at the family-owned "fun home," as Alison and her brothers call it, the relationship achieves its most intimate expression through the shared code of books. When Alison comes out as homosexual herself in late adolescence, the denouement is swift, graphic -- and redemptive.



Reviews of the *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* *by* Alison Bechdel

Fordregelv

I don't typically read graphic novels, not because I dislike the genre or haven't read some brilliant

graphic novels in the past. My predisposition is toward novels and history/non-fiction. In the case of "Fun Home", I listen to the podcast "Books on the Nightstand" and this was one of their recommendations. I've had great experiences when reading one of their recommendations and hadn't read a graphic novel in several years so decided to change things up.

"Fun Home" is an entertaining and poignant autobiography of Bechdel's childhood. Her family owns a funeral home in a small town so her father works as an English teacher, her mother an actress. They buy a charming fixer-upper which her father lovingly devotes much of his spare time to restoring to grandeur often enlisting Alison for assistance. Much more, this is Alison's story of growing up as she starts to realize she is a lesbian, her coming out as well as learning that her father was a "closeted" gay man. Her father dies after being hit by a car and Alison wonders whether this was an accident or suicide, unable to fully express himself and his true sexual orientation. It is also about the unspoken bonds between Alison and her dad after she tells her parents she is gay -- she can never quite come to ask him about his sexual orientation and he never directly broaches the subject with her before his death. The illustrations only serve to enhance the development of the Alison and her family and deepen the emotional engagement with their struggles. There are moments of sadness, but more moments of joy and discovery to be found in this exceptional autobiography.

Pemand

I first heard of Fun Home when I read an article about how it was on the summer reading list for incoming freshman at Duke University and a group of students were boycotting it. They said it was pornographic and that its homosexual themes violated their Christian moral beliefs. Learning a group is trying to ban or boycott a book is one sure way to get me interested in reading it.

Fun Home is Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir of her life growing up. Fun home is what she and her brothers called the family-owned funeral home her dad ran. This was the first adult graphic novel I've read. (And by adult, I mean for grown-ups, NOT porn.) I was really surprised how drawn into it I was. I didn't realize that characters could be so defined in the graphic format. I really felt for Alison, having to grow up with such distant, detached parents. Her pain and confusion over her father's death jumps off the page.

The only way that Alison and her father relate to one another is through a mutual love of books and reading. Fun Home is peppered with literary references and comparisons that went completely over my head. Once again I'm pulling the "I was an accounting major so I didn't read any classics in college card". If you have, you may enjoy the references and Alison's book will have even more meaning for you. However, I still liked this book a lot anyway.

There were a few nude drawings in this book, when Alison figures out she's a lesbian and starts having relationships with women. However, Alison is a talented illustrator and they looked like works of art in my opinion. If the scenes had been described using words, they would have been much more graphic. I am applying Justice Potter Stewart's "I know it when I see it" test of obscenity and this ain't it.

As far as the homosexual themes in the book goes, yes this is a memoir written by a lesbian about her relationship with her gay dad. It's a gay book. But isn't one of the great things about reading learning about people who are different than you? Reading helps one develop a deep sense of empathy. Maybe you might even learn that people you once thought were evil are not. Maybe that's a scary thought for some people and they would rather live in their insulated bubbles. I'm glad I'm not one of those people. However, I should thank the students at Duke for alerting me to this book's existence.

Put Fun Home on your list of challenged books that must be read!

Kaghma

Those foolish incoming Duke University freshmen who won't read this book need a good lesson in humility and the value of literature, which they would learn if they read this magnificent book. And I thank them for calling this book to my attention.

Not only is it intelligent, layered, original, and astonishing, it's one of the best books I've read in a long time that uses other literary works to emphasize and humanize its story. Ms. Bechdel is sly, funny, and more self-aware than most writers I can think of, and Fun Home is a triumph. I only wish I had read it when it came out so I could have been recommending it to everyone all of these years.

I can't remember the last memoir I enjoyed this much (maybe "Liar's Club" by Mary Carr) that contained so much wisdom and humor. Yes, it has much frank discussion of homosexuality but it is hardly gratuitous when it is fundamental to the natures of the two main characters--the narrator and her father, their destinies beautifully interwoven with the themes of books they read in the course of this graphic "tragicomic."

Those who look down on graphic novels as less than "literature" would do well to withhold judgment until they have read "Fun Home." It is a great--an important--book--in any genre.

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