



What's Eating Gilbert Grape

By Peter Hedges

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A sad, comic and gruesome first novel featuring a dysfunctional family in Iowa. As small-town claustrophobia presses on the family, just about everything is eating Gilbert Grape - until the appearance of a mysterious young beauty from Michigan begins to change everything.

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What's Eating Gilbert Grape By Peter Hedges Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Wonderfully entertaining and amusing, this distinctive first novel goes down like a chocolate milkshake but boasts the sharpness and finesse of a complex wine, for Hedges's ostensibly country-bumpkin-style tale sparkles with sophisticated literary devices and psychological insight. Twenty-four-year-old Gilbert Grape sacks groceries in small, monotonous Endora, Iowa, pop. 1091 ("Describing this place is like dancing to no music"). Fear of leaving Endora, loyalty to his disintegrating family--particularly to obese, TV-addict Momma and goofy younger brother Arnie, "the retard"--and disgust over the technological wave of the future which is destroying the town's values have turned Arnie into "a walking coma practically." As Momma's overeating becomes suicidal and Arnie nears age 18, Gilbert is jostled out of his paralysis and into honest self-examination. The colloquial narrative voice, dialogue, colorful cast of characters and even the theatrically staged scenes are conveyed with appealing credibility. Like John Updike, Hedges invests an antihero's ordinary provincial American life with thematic meaning, fashioning the details of everyday existence into clever literary symbols. He leaves readers demanding a sequel. BOMC alternate.

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From Library Journal

Grape is 24 and stuck in a rut. Trapped by feelings of responsibility to his eccentric family, he works bagging groceries in their small Iowa town. And what a family! At its core lies his beached whale of a mother; she never leaves her TV chair and clamors constantly for more food and cigarettes. There is Ellen, his maddeningly pubescent sister; 17-year-old retarded brother Arnie, whom Gilbert loves dearly; and his older sister Amy who devotes herself to keeping everyone happy. Gilbert is saved by a beautiful and strange girl who startles him into life. That such a creature would take an interest in an apparent loser like Gilbert requires the reader's willing suspension of disbelief; but with such appealingly funny writing, one is only too happy to oblige. Highly recommended for fiction collections.

- *Sheila Riley, Smithsonian Inst. Libs., Washington, D.C.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

An ever-so-gentle coming-of-age story--a saccharine Last Picture Show--that almost smothers the evident talent of its author in an overdose of pop culture. At 24, Gilbert Grape is the sentimental favorite in Endora, Iowa, a good boy still bagging groceries in the local market. But he's not happy: he's mired in an affair with the insurance agent's wife, and outraged by the supermarket chains and burger franchises that are devouring Endora's soul, as well as the loyalties of Gilbert's friends. Most of all, Gilbert hates being put-upon by his grotesquely mediocre family: fat Momma, who eats and sleeps in her chair by the TV; saintly Amy, who's given up everything for Momma except her Elvis fetish; insufferable Ellen, a typically self-involved teenager; Larry, the vanished brother; Janice, the psychologist-cum-stewardess. The only gem in the lot is Arnie--the retarded brother whose 18th birthday is approaching--and who functions both as plot device and provider of tear-jerking dialogue. Every time Arnie does something retarded, like hiding in the town water tower or disrupting a parade, Gilbert bails him out. He enjoys playing the white knight, but as Becky, the new girl in town, intuits, Gilbert has yet to learn Life's Deeper Lessons--such as how to say goodbye, how to love, and how to cry. Suffice it to say, he does all three things by the end of this tale. But despite Arnie's eventful birthday, Momma's expiration, and her cremation in the hated family house, there's hardly any serious effect on the reader's emotions or intellect. Too predictable and too dependent on pop culture to achieve indelibility--but a first novel that does manage to impress with its playwright author's sense of form and craft. Hedges turns a nice phrase; in fact, all that's lacking here are content and nerve. -- *Copyright*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mike Greene:

Nowadays reading books become more and more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading practice give you lot of advantages. The huge benefits you got of course the knowledge even the information inside the book this improve your knowledge and information. The knowledge you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with training books but if you want really feel happy read one together with theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The actual What's Eating Gilbert Grape is kind of reserve which is giving the reader unstable experience.

Gwen Anderson:

Hey guys, do you wants to finds a new book to learn? May be the book with the concept What's Eating Gilbert Grape suitable to you? Often the book was written by famous writer in this era. The particular book untitled What's Eating Gilbert Grapeis the main one of several books which everyone read now. This book was inspired a number of people in the world. When you read this reserve you will enter the new age that you ever know prior to. The author explained their plan in the simple way, and so all of people can easily to know the core of this publication. This book will give you a large amount of information about this world now. To help you to see the represented of the world in this book.

Larry Mason:

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with good friends is thing that usually you could have done when you have spare time, after that why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not experiencing tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition info. Even you love What's Eating Gilbert Grape, you are able to enjoy both. It is good combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout guys. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its named reading friends.

Lawrence Shults:

A number of people said that they feel weary when they reading a book. They are directly felt it when they get a half regions of the book. You can choose the actual book What's Eating Gilbert Grape to make your own reading is interesting. Your personal skill of reading skill is developing when you like reading. Try to choose easy book to make you enjoy you just read it and mingle the feeling about book and studying especially. It is to be initial opinion for you to like to open a book and go through it. Beside that the publication What's Eating Gilbert Grape can to be your brand new friend when you're really feel alone and confuse with what must you're doing of the time.

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