



High Fidelity

Nick Hornby

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Praised by critics for its wit and contemporary edge, a novel by an up-and-coming English writer follows the love affairs and belated growing up a "Generation X" pop music fanatic and record store owner. First serial, *Esquire*.

High Fidelity Details

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From Reader Review High Fidelity for online ebook

Jenn(ifer) says

I have a problem.

You see, when it comes to reviewing my favorite books, I'm all thumbs. Coherent thoughts elude me and float downstream like a toy boat escaping from a little boy's grasp.

Rob is my soul mate, you see. He and I are the same fucked up, insecure, too-much-in-our-own-head-for-our-own-good person. I think he would get me. Really Get me.

Or maybe it's just Hornby who gets me. Mr. Hornby, you make me want to wear dresses.

During my last year of high school and through all four years of college, I too worked in a record store with a bunch of misfit music snobs. It was the BEST JOB EVER. Hands down. Sitting around all day, listening to the new batch of promos, poking fun at the customers coming in looking for a little Ace of Base... making mix tapes for that boy who worked in the skate shop who I had a crush on. I never gave him any of them. Shyness is nice, but shyness can stop you... That's Morrissey, not me. But I feel you fella.

Anyway, you can see how I'm completely flubbing this review, right? Hornby has my number.

My favorite ice breaker with people I don't know well is to ask them to give me their top 5 (insert topic here (usually related to music)).

Top 5 female singers of all time, GO!

Oh, and since this review wouldn't be complete without a top 5 list of my own, here is my list of the "top 5 songs referenced in top 5 lists in this novel" (obscure enough for you?):

1. Tired of Being Alone - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICKToz...>
2. Alison - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vs6HbY...>
3. Lets Get it On - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18TLHh...>
4. Mr. Big Stuff - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooYEx...>
5. The House That Jack Built - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmUXn...>

Suzanne says

This read got me itching to watch John Cusack in the movie form, but I haven't looked it up yet. It is in the making as a series with the gender of the lead flipped - interesting!

This was an okay read for me, I feel my lack of music knowledge may have not made it a winner for me. Meandering young guy, not knowing what he wants out of life it seemed to me, but he wanted a girl that's for sure. Funny hearing the angsty teenage relationship uncertainty and sexual frustration from a guys point of view as it's usually flipped in the contemporary reads I come across.

In general, the meandering feeling dragged this out for me and I wasn't fussed. Also, choosing the audio version may not have been the wisest choice, I lost interest quite easily.

A modern classic, but not for me. I'm probably just too boring, and not the target audience!

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

3.5 Stars

I'd like my life to be like a Bruce Springsteen song. Just once. I know I'm not born to run, I know that the Seven Sisters' Road is nothing like Thunder Road, but feelings can't be so different, can they?

When Rob's live-in girlfriend walks out on him, he's left questioning all of his relationships and what led up to this point.

When I first read *High Fidelity* umpteen years ago, I thought it was a home run. Grand slam, even. Nick Hornby was new to the writing scene and British and young and British and had fresh material and was British and wrote hip characters (that were British) and I was smitten. Now that I'm old and jaded (and not as easily impressed by all things from across the pond), this re-read wasn't quite the home run it was the first time around. It was more like a double with an error that allowed the runner to advance to third.*

However . . . My appreciation for Hornby's talent will not allow me to rate any of his books below 3.5 Stars, I have nothing but admiration for his ability to write "anti-love stories," and my adoration for Rob, the MC, remains strong. I believe *High Fidelity* may have provided me my first experience of being 100% annoyed by the narrator and so happy to not know him in real life, while still wanting to hear his story and being fascinated by his crybabiness (made up word??? yep, I'm going with it) rather than wanting to kick his ass.

Yes, Rob, you are indeed, but somehow Hornby always makes characters like you work.

Book version recommended to? The recently dumped or pessimists in general.

Movie version recommended to? Anyone who likes John Cusack films. While you won't get a moment like this:

Rob Gordon's whining is significantly tuned down and Jack Black shines as co-star.

*After spending what seems like an eternity at various little league parks, my apologies for the baseball terminology.

Jennifer says

Nick Hornby is da bomb! Seriously. He's funny, astute and while one might think they are reading a straight-forward, comedic tale, there are some fairly deep assessments going on within. Some moments made me laugh out loud and some moments, all too relatable, made my heart hurt. Also - Hornby's book totally made me have an awesome dream about John Cusack and that can never be a bad thing. Ever.

Manny says

I have not read the book, but I have seen the movie. Let me explain how much I liked it.

As things turned out, I watched it on a cross-Channel ferry travelling from Caen to Portsmouth. The trip takes about seven hours, and I was bored. I recall that I had packed Camus's *La peste* to read, and to my surprise I wasn't enjoying it at all. I was pleased to find that I had the option of seeing *High Fidelity* with Catherine Zeta-Jones, one of my favorite actresses. I paid my £3 and sat down to enjoy the next couple of hours.

Unfortunately, as often happens on this crossing, the seas were on the rough side. After a while, I found myself feeling rather queasy, but told my stomach that I wasn't paying any attention to its urgent messages. The movie was far too good to miss. Not only that, the beautiful Catherine hadn't yet turned up. But my stomach was unconvinced by these arguments and let me know that this was my final warning. If I didn't leave now, something extremely embarrassing was going to happen.

I got up, staggered to the bathroom, which luckily was right next to the theater, threw up as quickly as I could, and then rushed back. I think I only missed about three or four minutes. I then happily watched the movie to the end.

I suppose a skeptic will object that this story says nothing about Nick Hornby's novel and everything about my feelings for voluptuous brunettes called Catherine. I admit that the evidence is only anecdotal, but I submit it anyway for what it's worth. If you are able to expand my informal pre-study into a methodologically sound experiment that produces statistically significant results, I'll appreciate it if you mention me briefly in the acknowledgements section.

Thank you.

David says

Nick Hornby writes about losers and makes them lovable. But not this time. I couldn't stand the self-pitying little git, his loser wanker record store buddies, nor their ridiculous fracking lists. Reading this book felt like

being trapped in an elevator with the pathetic Scrubs douchebag (Zachy McWhinerson, or whatever his fracking name is) for an entire weekend. You know the type - the constant puppy need for the approval of every critter on the planet, all the time. It might seem like a charming vulnerability, but don't be fooled. It actually signals a pathological narcissist whose solipsism and incessant neediness will bleed you dry.

I know, I know. Many fine books have been written about unlikable characters. Anyway, it's about the character's emotional growth. Etc. etc.

All true. But when you find the central character so annoying that just reading about him makes you twitch, it's probably time to switch to another book.

Your mileage may vary. For all I know, you're the kind of person who watches marathon "scrubs" reruns. If so, you'll probably love this book.

Jr Bacdayan says

Remember all those Romantic films or even the hapless Romantic Comedies you've seen, the infinitesimal, clichéd and hopelessly repetitive plots? The same guy and gal meet somewhere odd or mildly weird so that things are interesting. Probably a boss and employee type of thing (The Proposal? Go to hell, Ryan Reynolds, you big-mouthed wanker!) Or two people from very far places brought together by kismet or something as appallingly believable (Sleepless in Seattle, You've got Mail, Philadelphia? Wait, Philadelphia's about AIDS so it's has to be mentioned. I've got nothing bad to say about Tom Hanks. I used to love you, Meg Ryan.) Or they're sex friends, friends with benefits, all that modern freedom excuse (Friends With Benefits? No Strings Attached?) Or someone very rich and famous going for someone scrapping-by and morally compromised (Pretty Woman, Maid in Manhattan? No, Maid in Manhattan is pure rubbish. Pretty Woman is the lovable shit. I'd pick Richard Gere over Ralph Fiennes and Julia Roberts over Jennifer Lopez any day. Plus, there's something more righteous and morally redemptive about loving a hooker than a maid. You know, I don't really get why the men are always the rich guys going for the hookers and stuff. Is this a sexist thing? Is it? Probably it's more of men's domination. You know, wanting submissive women and stuff. Now we're getting in murky waters. Don't dare get excited, you feminist! This might be the insane reason why women love The Notebook. Cause, you know, the rich girl is settling for the poor lad, instead of the usual other way around.) Alright, enough examples, you get the drift. So there its exciting cause stuff's pretty complicated. They meet up, become friends or something because of a certain unfathomable thing happening. Then before long, what-da-ya-know, they fall in love. They don't care bout nothing but sex, and spending time with each other and stuff, the crazy, bat-shit, rick-rolling, fucked-up shit kinda love. Then as sure as the sun will set, something wrong happens, there's a problem or trouble and you know the drill. They go separate ways, but somewhere along the line the guy realizes that he loves the gal. And so, it's the its-amazing-how-writers-are-able-to-think-of-some-new-way-to-propose scene. Always lots of people, always making a big fuss, always saying something like: I'm an idiot because I let you go. (You are an idiotic writer, you slob.) The variances are probably minor details like: asking for marriage (insanely a sure bet), holding a stereo while saying it, change it to flowers, or probably make it rain to be more dramatic, or changing the stupid catch-phrase. So then the girl begins to cry and then they kiss and the end. Fuck you, movies! I mean, we all know they're shit and they're outrageously predictable. That they're as cyclic as women's cycles, but by Jove, we still watch the shit and feel all gooey and mushy inside. When we come out of that theater we all end up thinking: Someday I'm gonna meet someone and fall in luv. Well, too bad.

You know, these movies are largely responsible for us blokes getting the wrong idea about relationships.

Sure, music's done its bit, but movies are more demonstrative. Take me for example, I'm a wanker. I own up to it because I am. I go out with women and find fault with them, always happens with me. I'm like: she's not smart enough or her hands are freakishly small, or she looks anemic. I was even once turned off by a girl because "her fingernails look weird". These are real reasons why I copped-out on someone. I get it I'm an asshole. I'm pretty sure that I can pin it on something the movies led me to believe: perfect love. I'm hell bent on keeping my options open, I never settle for anyone cause someone perfect or better might come and I don't want to be unavailable when that happens. Sure, I flirt and do the motions. But I'm pretty... not scared, more like stressed by the commitment. Ms. Perfect might walk through that door, and I won't let (name of the very nice girl I'm out with) get in the way. When I read this book, the portrayal by Nick Hornby was so disturbingly familiar that I actually felt déjà vu on various occasions. Okay, I'm not as daft as that Rob Fleming bloke, but I'm pretty much made of the same worries. I totally get the part where Rob says he cheated on Laura because she might die. Some men do things for preemptive measures. Guys can break up with girls just because they think the girl might break up with them. And being the dumper is so much better than being the dumpee, so they do it just in case. Stupid, huh? But it really happens. Another thing is attainable women losing glamour. Say, you see a gal you like; you're really into her and stuff. When she's impossible to attain she's more attractive. When you find out that maybe she likes you back, maybe she's interested. My reaction would be to feel less attracted to her. I dunno why, but that's true, in my case. And well, in Fleming's case, when he finds out that Laura wanted him back, he immediately evolves from being depressed to moving on and finding some else, Ms. Perfect. I'm not saying all guys are the same. We're all different, but there are also lots of similarities. We all are bound by certain tendencies like most women have certain similarities as well. I'm telling you, you wanna figure out the closest thing going through your man's head then read this book.

Okay, maybe not all men are as suffocated by these tendencies. You know FRIENDS? There's a character there named Ross, Ross loves to get married. There are Ross kinda guys. These are the types of guys born for relationships. They're not scared at all by commitment and feel right at home in bondage. I'm not one of those. I have a friend like this, loves getting into long relationships and is always feeling very happy about it. Like Phil, who meets Jackie and then they break up cause of Rob then back together again to start a family. Like Ross, who gets married 3 times and gets divorced by each one yet still walks along the path of the holy matrimony. Maybe these are the kinds of guys women want; I think they're pretty rare. I think they're really weird. Then there are the Joey kinda guys, the players, scared stiff by commitment and marriage and love. Just guys looking for sex and fun, hopping from one bed to another, never finding that woman they wanna be with permanently. Why? Cause they don't even want one. Permanence is like poison to these guys. Then we have the, badum-tss, the Chandlers. These guys start out like Joey, scared by commitment and all that crap. But along the way, they either trip and wake up or they meet a Monica, a game changer. I don't think they're changed from Joey to Ross overnight. No, Chandler was still very jumpy and scared when he was with Monica, but he worked for it and understood that there are things you sacrifice if you want an adult relationship to work. Shit! What am I saying? Take these things with a grain of salt, cause I don't really know what I'm doing. But you know what? I always figured Chandler to be the loser among the guys. Now, I know different. Cause Ross was a natural, he was born to wed, Joey's gonna end up an old man living on a shack by himself, and Chandler was the only guy who really worked for the relationship he had. Bloody Hell, I hope to be a Chandler some day, cause I know I ain't a Ross, and Joey's a pretty grim option.

Alright, I confess, I'm only 19 years old. So what? So you say I shouldn't waste my time on love and relationships and the likes. I agree, I should focus more on my studies. But you know, it's like a fad, romance is the thing that makes people feel jumpy-joyous and top-of-the-world happy. I know, it's also responsible for massive amounts of suicides and murders. But, bloody hell, it's the thing that makes us feel human. Also, I can't seem to shake girls out of my head. Humans are pretty pathetic creatures, huh? It's like this love or romance thingy is our gasoline and without it we can't go anywhere in our lives. So if this is gonna adversely

affect my future, how can you expect me not to worry about it? I gotta practice you know. So that when the time comes, I'll do it right. Plus, I have other reasons. Heh heh. Oh, what a bunch of bollocks!

I must seem pretty well about, huh? Sure, I read and review lots of complicated books and stuff. Sure I go to one of top universities in my country. Sure, I've watched hundreds of romantic movies. Plus, I recycle. But that doesn't mean shit about knowing anything about this love and relationship thing. I'm as stupid as a guy somewhere wearing a Guns n' Roses t-shirt, sporting a Mohawk, coked out of his mind. Thankfully, I read this book. Here's what my shackled guy's brain managed to pick up: It's never going to be as perfect as I imagined it to be, yet somehow it will work, if you make it work.

You ever heard the saying: "You don't love someone because they're perfect; you love them despite their imperfections."? Well, I guess that needs a little elaboration. I guess you love them less because of their imperfections, but at the end of the day, you love them still.

Well, that was me giving my sophomoric thoughts about love and relationships and High Fidelity. What can I say? Nice try. Close, but no cigar. See you around.

Ginny_1807 says

Leggero e divertente senza essere mai banale o scontato, questo libro è quanto di più accattivante e gradevole si possa sperare di incontrare nel corso delle proprie incursioni nel mondo della lettura.

La trama è scarna, ma viene arricchita e movimentata da una inesauribile vena ironica, dalle brillanti trovate del protagonista e da una schiera di personaggi bizzarri e imprevedibili.

Bob Fleming ha una vera fissazione per la musica pop, tanto da averne fatto il proprio mondo, la propria forza e il proprio rifugio: oltre ad essere proprietario di un negozio di dischi che costituisce la fonte delle sue incerte entrate economiche, possiede anche una collezione privata, che riordina ogni volta che si trova in crisi e costretto a fare il bilancio della propria esistenza. Sono i brani che ama a scandire i momenti più importanti della sua vita, inoltre è in base ai gusti musicali che giudica le persone che incontra.

Anche l'allucinante meccanismo di catalogare tutto sulla base di top-five (film, canzoni, ma anche eventi e persone) è una forma di difesa, come per stabilire un controllo sulla realtà enumerandone e classificandone le componenti.

Inutile sottolineare che questo individuo egocentrico e stravagante si fa amare fin dalle prime pagine, perché le sue passioni e le sue manie, il suo egoismo e le sue insicurezze sono quelle di tutti noi, adulti cresciuti per necessità ma eterni adolescenti per vocazione nel più profondo del cuore.

Greg says

Rarely do I catch myself reading a book after I'd already seen the movie (mostly because I feel as if the movie TAKES something from the book while the book GIVES something to a movie, and thus the order should always be book first and movie second -- so that the book starts with the upper hand), but having enjoyed the movie so much I found myself craving more behind the story.

I wasn't disappointed. Biggest difference that I wasn't originally aware of was the location difference, which

helped me ease into my decision to read the book because it was already so very different from the get-go. Many scenes between the two different forms of media are the same, if slightly shuffled, and I was very pleased to see that both have several unique scenarios that have no parallel in its companion medium.

But enough about the comparisons between the book and the movie. I'll just say that they should be enjoyed together (though not at the same time) for a very satisfying overall experience.

Bottom line was that the book was highly enjoyable. It's always nice to read a quote or passage in a book that imparts some piece of wisdom you've never heard, but I personally think it's even more gratifying to read a quote or passage that perfectly puts into words some thought or feeling that you've had for years but have never been able to properly express for some reason. Hornby did this constantly throughout "High Fidelity."

Many of the experiences and emotions I've had as a young man (both as an individual entity and as part of a greater whole in relationships) I'd often found to be inexpressible despite my best efforts, so when I found myself reading such succinct expression of those up-to-that-point-nameless feelings, I found myself overjoyed that someone else gets it. And not just that someone gets it, but gets it probably better than I do. True EUREKA! moments throughout the whole book.

Guys should read it for the relief of knowing that they aren't alone in dealing with all this crap. And women should read it with an open mind and a sincere desire to get us and I guarantee they'll walk away much wiser than if they'd read all those "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus" stinkers.

Agnieszka says

Rob runs a record store in London, has two weird sidekicks, creates silly top-five lists of everything and his girlfriend Laura has just finished with him. What more could I say about him ? Well, Rob is thirty-five selfish asshole, pompous snob and a pathetic, emotionally immature loser. But I still like him . **And who is immature now, huh ?**

Do not worry, I will not treat you now with a tearful story about my ex, though I will tell you about a guy who, if I ever had compiled, in imitation of Rob, list of the most memorable and painful partings in my life, would have taken not only the first place. Actually he would take the whole podium. Piotr, do not let him remain nameless, after all the winner takes it all, so, Piotr was nice and sensitive guy, somehow wonderfully shy and helpless. He was a guy because of whom when we split-up *I lost the plot for a while then. And I lost the subplot, the script, the soundtrack, the intermission, my popcorn the credits, and the exit sign* .

Well, he was a selfish asshole and pathetic loser.

Who said that? Oh, shut up ! My older and more cynical self, I'm not in the mood to listen to you today.

We were wandering around the streets, by whole hours listening to the music, discussing books . Nothing special. *And Heaven knows I'm miserably now in my life* ... I do not remember if Piotr loved The Smiths, certainly we listened to The Clash, jazz, a bit of blues. Piotr run a record store but nowadays works on the radio, sometimes I come across on his programme and ... it's always nice to hear his voice. Oddly enough, I never thought then he had a radio voice. And really he had .

But let's get back to Rob. Hornby created a bitter - sweet, ironic portrait of lonely and scared man. Rob is a

guy with simple solution for everything, with justification for any situation. He is like a kid who believes that life is a movie in which all the others play supporting roles. But because life is neither pop charts nor listeners choice you seldom get what you think you deserve .

Hornby's observations are accurate and witty, spiced with wry humour, and even when Rob feels miserable and has a hard time - this is not any existential drama. And when he finally states that even people with, in his opinion, trashy collection of records, are ok, there is a hope for him yet.

Buggy says

Opening line: *My desert -island, all time, top five most memorable split-ups, in chronological order:*"

This is one of those modern classics on everyone's "to read" list and while it wasn't my first Nick Hornby book it is the one that everyone talks about so of course I went into this expecting to be awed. I guess I should mention that I haven't seen the movie (what! I know) so I knew nothing about the storyline, not that that would have influenced me I just went into this blind.

And, well I wish I could say I loved this (since that would make me one of the cool kids) but honestly the best I can come up with is underwhelmed. Of course the writing is wonderful and it really is laugh-out-loud funny in places but I also found myself alternating between skim reading (because the story wasn't going anywhere) and all the 80's pop music references and top 5 lists got to be a bit much. But then I'd catch myself rereading and marking numerous passages because they were just genius, describing exactly how I felt/feel.

I should tell you that the music references are somewhat dated now and anyone under the age of 40 will be scratching their heads especially if you live in America as this involves British pop music and Indie bands.

I think one of the main problems for me is that our protagonist Rob isn't a very likable character. It was hard to have any sort of compassion for him or for that matter even want to read about him. I actually found myself preferring any of the sections that placed him with other people because when we were alone in his head being all introspective I got bored. Rob is immature, selfish, self-absorbed and depressed, stuck in a job, apartment and relationship that have all gone stale. He has zero self confidence yet at the same time is so full of himself that he expects everything to revolve around him, which of course it doesn't and this in turn makes him lash out at his friends, parents and girlfriend to feel better about the state of his life.

Rob is a bit of a loser; a thirty-something music junkie he spends his days running a near failing record shop and reminiscing about the 80's when he was semi successful DJ. Rob's life has stalled and he can't see a way out so he compiles top 5 lists of his favourite bands, songs, episodes of Cheers etc, insults his equally lost friends and plots ways to kill the guy who lives in the flat upstairs and stole his girlfriend. Along the way Rob manages to grow up, (some) and realizes change might not be so horrible.

doctor says

You mean the book where a pompous sack of sexist shit gets to not only take a dump on his independent ex-girlfriend, while acting pretentious based off of his 'extraordinary' music tastes, but gets her back and

somehow everything between them just isn't just fixed - but somehow miraculously better?

I CALL BULLSHIT.

The starred reviews for this are a fucking riot, celebrating Rob's "manliness" and telling men not to share this with their girlfriends, because heaven forbid the SECRET WILL BE OUT.

what SECRET?!

THE ONE OF HOW TO BE A FUCKING WHINY WANKER WHO SEEMS TO BE THE INSPIRATION FOR JOHN GREEN'S MALE PROTAGONISTS???

fuck. you.

Eirini Proikaki says

Ο Ρομπ ε?ναι 35 χρον?ν,δεν ?χει φ?λους,δεν ε?ναι ευχαριστημ?νος απο τη δουλεια του,νι?θει στ?σιμος,νι?θει απογοητευμ?νος,η κοπ?λα του μ?λιν τον παρ?τησε για κ?ποιον ?λλο κι αυτ?ς κα?γεται να μ?θει αν ο ?λλος κ?νει καλ?τερο σεξ απο αυτ?ν αλλ? δεν θ?λει να ξ?ρει.Καλ?τερα να μην ξ?ρει.Ε?ναι ?μωσ?ΕΙΝΑΙ?Ο Ρομπ ε?ναι λ?γο μαλ?κας(σ?ρυ αλλ? ε?ναι :P).

Ε?ναι αν?ριμος και κολλημ?νος και ?χει ? νομ?ζει οτι ?χει πρ?βλημα στις σχ?σεις του με τις γυνά?κες επειδ? στην προεφηβε?α του ?να κοριτσακι που του ?ρεσε και "?βγαιναν" για τρεις μ?ρες(6 ολ?κληρες ωρες!2+2+2! :P) τελικ? την τ?ταρτη μ?ρα π?γε με ?ναν αλλο.Απο εκε? και π?ρα ?ρθε ο κατ?φορος στις σχ?σεις του.Απο το κακ? στο χειρ?τερο.Αυτ? λοιπ?ν σκ?φεται συν?χεια,?χει και τοπ-5 σχ?σεων που τον κατ?στρεψαν συναισθηματικ? και επαγγελματικ? κατ? τη γν?μη του.Ε?ναι ?μωσ ?τσι?Οι κοπ?λες τι ?χουν να πουν γι'αυτ??

Ε?ναι ?να βιβλ?ο ?ξυπνο και αστε?ο και με ?κανε και γ?λασα αλλ? αν ξ?σεις λ?γο την επιφ?νεια ε?ναι ?να βιβλ?ο που μιλ?ει για τις ανθρ?πινες σχ?σεις,τα ?νειρα,την αποτυχ?α και τη μοναξι? και νομ?ζω οτι οι περισσ?τεροι θα βρουν σημει?α να ταυτιστο?ν.Εγ? π?ντως αν αλλ?ξω το π?θος του Ρομπ με τους δ?σκους και τη μουσικ? και το κ?νω π?θος για βιβλ?α,βρ?κα αρκετ?.Και ναι,τσεκ?ρω τα ρ?φια στα σπ?τια που π?ω να δω τι βιβλ?α ?χουν .

Lisa Findley says

Top Five Reasons to Read This Book:

- 1) Offers multiple opportunities to fall off your chair laughing.
 - 2) Draws entirely convincing characters making stupid decisions and dealing with the repercussions.
 - 3) Reminds you of all sorts of artists you must check out further.
 - 4) Answers the "what if" questions of past relationships with horrifying clarity.
 - 5) Satirizes but ultimately validates top-five lists.
-

Samadrita says

High Fidelity is several things at once.

It is a specimen of guylit (I just invented the term yes) - romance and single life explained from the point of view of a man. And we have so few of those.

It is a humorous reflection on life and its many failings.

And lastly, it is the tale of a Brit singleton in his mid thirties who is unrelentingly firm in his reluctance to grow into a man.

A man who is so caught up in his fantasies of the ultimate love one is destined to end up with, that he ignores the woman who truly cares for him and consequently ends up losing her.

So the novel begins with our protagonist, Rob Fleming, listing the 5 major break-ups of his life which either hurt him too much or ended up changing him as a person for good. And he takes vicious pleasure in informing the reader that Laura, the woman who just left him, doesn't make the top 5, doesn't even come close.

How could you not get sucked into a book which begins on such a promising note?

An owner of a dingy vinyl record shop named Championship Vinyl, Rob and his two employee-cum-sidekicks Dick and Barry stumble through the maze of life, more often than not clueless about what they are doing.

They debate merits and demerits of obscure bands and music artists and are generous in their display of disdain for the ones who love their Beatles, Billy Joel, Tina Turner, Elton John and the usuals. And these hilarious conversations centering around mundane things like tv shows, movies, music and women lend the plot much of its frivolity and humour. Especially Barry, who is described by Rob as a '*snob obscurantist*', makes you laugh uncontrollably with his habit of belittling everything, his sneaky tactics of selling records of artists no one has heard of and his interactions with Dick.

And so the plot meanders through the zigzagging life of Rob, touches briefly upon the lives of all the women with whom he had been in love at some point of time and settles on his on-and-off relationship with Laura.

High Fidelity comes as close to portraying single life and romance as it actually is and not in the larger-than-life Hollywood rom-comish way. It talks about the things we all do in relationships - how we decide how much to reveal to the other person. How our feelings for a person waver time and again and how we often falter, unable to decide what we want. How we hurt the other person in the process. How we realize how precious a relationship was only after it has ended. And more importantly how we are ever afraid of making that feared transformation - be it from girl to woman or boy to man.

Nick Hornby's debut novel is a charming creation - it is like a music record by an artist you may not have heard of but you can relate to the music, nonetheless.

And you can't help but want to play the record all over again.

Rick Monkey says

I realize that I give far too many books a four or five star rating. So sue me.

Book buying isn't, you know, a quick thing for me. I browse, I choose, I read the blurbs inside, I deliberate, I read a chapter from every book I've chosen.

In short, I only read things I'm really likely to like.

So, I will tell you right now, if there were a way to give [*High Fidelity*] *six* stars, I would.

Ostensibly it's a novel about pop music and love. But if that's what you're seeing, then you are reading it wrong.

It's a novel about obsession, rejection and minutia. As such, [Nick Hornby] speaks directly to my geeky soul. Even though I'm not a music expert, I see a lot of myself in the main character Rob - escaping into pop,

defining his life through records, filling his head with facts rather than feelings and trying, oh so desperately trying, to be a real human being.

His relationships never last. If he's not outright rejected, then *he's* the one who gets full of himself and does the rejecting. He's not good with people, doesn't want to be, ultimately can't be. But he aches for them. He's a loner who can't bear to be alone. He pushes people away, but wonders why there aren't any people around.

Every word in [High Fidelity] felt familiar, even with a location (London) and a milieu (music fandom) that are unfamiliar to me. Somehow, Hornby strikes this strange, compelling balance between being incredibly witty on the surface, and being incredibly depressing beneath.

Swap out records for comics or videogames, and I *am* Rob. If you're a geek, and a male, and a member of these recent lost generations of "slackers" and "man-children", then you are Rob, too.

Fiona says

There is a 90% chance I am getting made redundant in the next week. How am I feeling? On a scale of one to rubbish, I feel Reading High Fidelity For The First Time Since I Was Sixteen And Had Just Broken Up With A Boy.

Didn't even like the job much. Just don't like the uncertainty. Quite like Nick Hornby, though. For medicinal reasons.

Look out below - apparently Goodreads is my blog today. Caveat lector.

If it matters to anyone, particularly (aside from me, obviously) - I kept my job. The office is like a wasteland and I've taken Monday off. The oddest thing. One of the solicitors said - and I agree with him - that it's better to experience this earlier in your careers. Then you won't be wrong-footed later.

For me, *High Fidelity* is quite a personal book. Now that I've read it twice, I can see that both times I've been in periods of emotional flux, on the edge of something good (well, I hope so this time anyway) and leaving behind a thing that was beginning to push me in a direction I didn't want to go in. This is interesting to me, because Rob, the main character, is quite obviously meant to be identified with, and I find myself very much apart from him.

I'm ambitious. I've always been ambitious. Rob isn't. Rob, mid-thirties, quietly renting videos and losing touch with friends he barely connected with in the first place, forever keeping his options open and wondering where everyone else is going, he's so very different from what I am and what I want to be. And yet, I think the cautionary tale is good for me.

When I was sixteen and read this, it was cathartic. This time, almost eight years later (oh god where did they go), I can see how dark it is, how bleak and unhealthy Rob's outlook is - he feels more like the sixteen year old I was, and less like the twenty four year old I am. And this time, I found a problem that I didn't have last time around. (view spoiler)

What surprised me, because I didn't know it first time around, is that this is Nick Hornby's first book. Did you know that? It's remarkably self-assured, well put together, practised. I wonder how many stories he's got hanging around in drawers at home. At any rate, it is an interesting beginning point to build on, and it puts a bit of a different spin on other books of his that I have known and loved: *About a Boy*, *How to be Good*. First time around, I saw pop culture references. This time I see his characters hiding behind them, the gaps they can't quite fill, the dimensions that endless references and guzzlings of other people's stories can't quite provide. I'm tempted to read some of Hornby's other works again, because this is a new slant on them and I would like to see how I read them differently this time.

And while I'm still writing this review, an honourable mention for how one night stands work, how being a grown-up and realising you have to pay council tax now, how they work. How rose-tinted remembrances of your friends when you were fifteen work.

I have a difficult decision to make over the coming weeks. I've been saying for months that I need to go on and do new things, that I'm not particularly happy with my day-to-day, that even the stability isn't really worth it any more. I'm glad I read this book, because I know what I need to do, and really it's now just a case of deciding how much of a wuss I really want to be.

Jessica says

This is the only Nick Hornby book I've read, and it seemed like a good introduction to the genre I imagine must be called "dick lit." I read it on a plane to the West Coast, and it was the perfect thing: started at take-off, finished just before landing, this had the perfect proportions of light and engaging for 30,000 feet. Ultimately, I found it sort of silly and empty and I had a hard time choosing between two and three stars, but I thought I'd give it a break here, because even though it wasn't funny like B Jones, it was a lot more culturally accessible (I don't remember what kind of music Ms. J liked, but I'll bet it was bad).

After all, it's only dick lit, and it served its purpose, which was to preoccupy me while I suffered through the torturous experience of flying in an airplane. I sort of liked the formula, and the idea that the boy version of "fairytale romance" isn't meeting Miss Right and riding away together on a handsome stallion, but instead just finally scraping your shit together enough to act a little bit like a grownup in time to avoid permanently alienating the charming girl who's fed up with your tiresome immaturity. Is that the standard male fantasy? Weird.

Joey Woolfardis says

Read as part of The Infinite Variety Reading Challenge, based on the BBC's Big Read Poll of 2003.

I used to think-and given the way we ended up, maybe I still do-that all relationships need the kind of violent shove that a crush brings, just to get you started and to push you over the humps. And then, when the energy from that shove has gone and you come to something approaching a halt, you have to look around and see what you've got. It could be something completely different, it could be something roughly the same, but gentler and calmer, or it could be nothing at all.

I feel like this book was written as a direct response to *Bridget Jones's Diary*, though I don't know that for

sure and I'm too lazy to check the dates. In any case, it is surely a response to all the Chick-Lit that-at the time, and even now-abounds. And at first I was thinking, "hey, this is just *Bridget Jones's Diary* but with a Penis", but it isn't. It is **exactly the same**.

The same whingeing. The same horribleness toward people the protagonists want to have sex with. The same horribleness toward the people the protagonists have had sex with. The horribleness toward the protagonist's so-called friends. The same self-serving ridiculousness and not wanting anyone else to be happy because they're not happy. The same whingeing, the same arrogance, the same patheticness. Maybe you could say that *Bridget Jones's Diary* is this but with a Vagina (but then all the whingeing is fine because having stuff coming out of your vagina once a month *that isn't just always blood* is really, super annoying, though I can't recall Bridget ever whingeing about Vagina-blood at all...)

Is that the point of these books? To take pathetic people and give them the spotlight because, deep-down, that's all of us? And we never have our voices heard, despite getting drunk every night and shouting our problems out to the night. Are you really like these characters? If you are you should be deeply ashamed and I'm glad you're stuck in a dead-end job and not actually in charge of anything. Stay there, keep your head down, procreate because you don't understand the menstrual cycle or contraception and then die. Please.

I can't work out if the protagonist-whatever his name is, I've forgotten already-is supposed to be horrible, pathetic, whingeing, annoying, perverse-in short, a complete cunt-or not: is this the anti-hero kind of thing? Where we like him because, oh, he's a bit not "normal" (whatever that is)? Bridget was a cunt, too. I hated them both. Is this what people are actually like? What's wrong with people?

This isn't Lad-Lit, or Dick-Lit, or whatever manly spin we have on Chick-Lit this week: it's just Chick-Lit. It hasn't even got a Penis, and Chick-Lit doesn't have a Vagina. It's just people being cunts. With no reference to whatever you think "cunt" actually means or the etymology of the word "cunt", anglo-saxon or Norse or whatever. Just the metaphorical sense of a person being a cunt. You know what I mean.

By the way, I've realised that Love doesn't exist, it's just Fear of being Alone: or it is if you read books like this. I had so many interesting points to make about this book and it was all going to sound like I'd thought long and hard about it, and was making fantastic points and really making you think, and going in to how Love is a construct, and Fear is also a construct so is Love really as unreal as Fear etc but I can't be bothered. I really can't. Why do men have to read this and not read *Bridget Jones's Diary*? It's exactly the same thing.

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Katarina says

Hvala Bogu i ovom do?e kraj.
