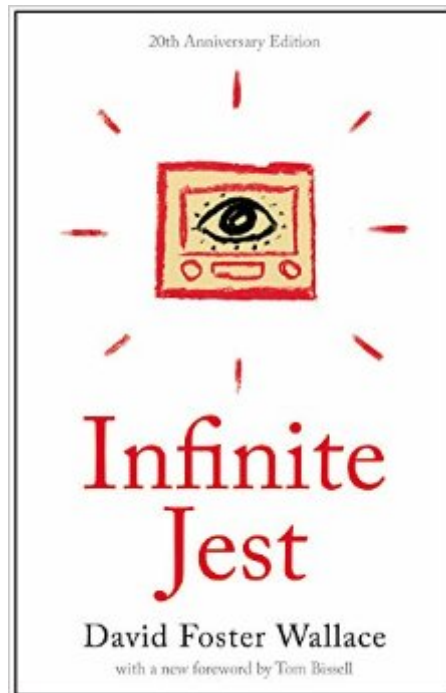


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# Infinite Jest: A Novel -- 20th Anniversary Edition



## Synopsis

This deluxe paperback edition--featuring flaps, new cover art, and a new foreword by Tom Bissell--celebrates the 20th anniversary of the original publication of *Infinite Jest*. A gargantuan, mind-altering comedy about the Pursuit of Happiness in America set in an addicts' halfway house and a tennis academy, and featuring the most endearingly screwed-up family to come along in recent fiction, *Infinite Jest* explores essential questions about what entertainment is and why it has come to so dominate our lives; about how our desire for entertainment affects our need to connect with other people; and about what the pleasures we choose say about who we are. Equal parts philosophical quest and screwball comedy, *Infinite Jest* bends every rule of fiction without sacrificing for a moment its own entertainment value. It is an exuberant, uniquely American exploration of the passions that make us human - and one of those rare books that renew the idea of what a novel can do.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I feel like there's been so much written about this book, that it almost seems impossible to try to add anything new to this discussion. However, I will try to lay out reasons to buy/not buy this book as well as a few things people might want to know before jumping into this kind of commitment.

INFINITE JEST isn't for everyone, and I don't mean that in a condescending or patronizing way: it will certainly appeal to some people's sensibilities much more than others.###Here's What You Need to Know###David Foster Wallace's INFINITE JEST is a postmodern novel with a premodern message. Wallace, who railed against irony, wanted to be sincere in his writing. So while this book

does contain many postmodern conventions, its ideas about humanity aren't postmodern at all. I think many people were disappointed that the book is "about addiction, and that's all you need to know," but there is much more to this book, and there's much more that Wallace has to say. Some of these messages are delivered with a heavy hand, and that's fine: Wallace wanted to be sincere, and he wouldn't want to dull his insights by distancing himself from them via irony or whatever else. This book is indeed incredibly long. INFINITE JEST is notoriously known for being a long book - it's just shy of 1100 pages. Stephen King's THE STAND (uncut edition) and George R.R. Martin's STORM OF SWORDS are longer than this, but I was able to clear those books much quicker than David Foster Wallace's second novel. I'm a very slow reader, and I was able to read INFINITE JEST in about two months, without taking into account the time I spent reading two shorter novels by different authors. This book is indeed incredibly verbose.

Say farewell, at least for a month or so, to your family, friends, and other hobbies. Figure out a way to fortify your fingers, wrists, and arms so you can hold this book up for hours at a time over a period of weeks. Reconfigure the lighting arrangement in your reading area for maximum glow. Find two sturdy bookmarks. Take a deep breath, let it out real slow, and you are ready to begin the monumental task of reading David Foster Wallace's "Infinite Jest." It took me three solid weeks to navigate a path through the byzantine structures of Wallace's magnum opus, three weeks of reading at least twenty pages a day (often more than that, of course) to get through the nearly 1,000 pages of text and the ninety plus pages of endnotes that make up this novel. If you have heard of Wallace before, and you probably have if you are checking out reviews for the book, you know "Infinite Jest" has quite a reputation in the literary world. You will see stuffed shirts tossing around words like "post post-modernism" and other academic jargon while referring to Wallace's oeuvre. Don't let these old fogies get you down; "Infinite Jest" is an immensely readable, hypnotically fascinating novel chock full of great humor, great sadness, and thought provoking themes. The novel takes place in Enfield, Massachusetts in the near future. In the story, Canada, the United States, and Mexico formed a federation called the Organization of North American Nations (known as O.N.A.N.). The citizens of this confederation spend their time watching entertainment cartridges playable on their "teleputers," devices that came about when broadcast television went bankrupt.

David Foster Wallace is a genius, and he knows it. But unlike other geniuses that you might know, he never tries to make you feel dumb. He just wants you to understand the same things that he does, so occasionally you'll feel out of your depth. But he's also a gifted writer, so odds are that you

\*will\* come out understanding him. And what he's saying is brilliant, so you'll feel like a better person for it. Wallace has been described as "postmodern", a word that seems to get slapped onto anything written after World War II. I don't see it. To me, postmodernism involves a few things: 1) irony, in liberal doses (e.g., DeLillo's *White Noise*); 2) a continuous awareness that we're reading a book\* and that there's an author talking to us, and that the characters are under his control (e.g., anything by Kurt Vonnegut); 3) self-reference, sometimes to the point of disorienting involution (e.g., Wallace's story "Westward The Course Of Empire Makes Its Way" from his book *Girl With Curious Hair* - and that story is, notably, a spoof of postmodernism). This may be an overly conservative definition of postmodernism, but the word's overapplication justifies some conservatism. *Infinite Jest* is not postmodern; it's just a great story with beautifully constructed characters. It is a book about a movie that is so addictive that anyone who starts watching it has no choice but to keep watching it forever - foregoing food, water, and sleep, and suffering as much pain as is necessary to keep watching. The movie itself is, to paraphrase a friend, an uber-McGuffin (I'm never sure whether I've spelled that right) - an object that never gets clearly explained, but around which the plot coheres. The movie itself is not the main point of the book.

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