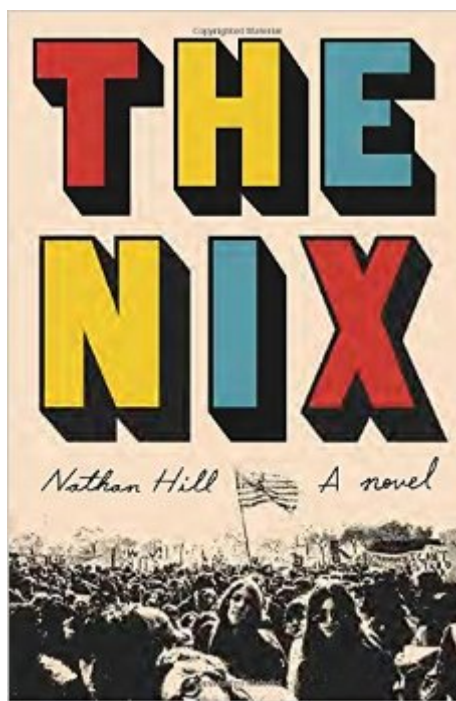


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The Nix: A Novel



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMESÂ BESTSELLERâ œThe Nix is a mother-son psychodrama with ghosts and politics, but itâ™s also a tragicomedy about anger and sanctimony in America. . . . Â Nathan Hill is a maestro.â • â ”John IrvingÂ From the suburban Midwest to New York City to the 1968 riots that rocked Chicago and beyond,Â The NixÂ exploresâ ”with sharp humor and a fierce tendernessâ ”the resilience of love and home, even in times of radical change.Itâ™s 2011, and Samuel Andresen-Andersonâ ”college professor, stalled writerâ ”has a Nix of his own: his mother, Faye. He hasnâ™t seen her in decades, not since she abandoned the family when he was a boy. Now sheâ™s re-appeared, having committed an absurd crime that electrifies the nightly news, beguiles the internet, and inflames a politically divided country. The media paints Faye as aÂ radical hippie with a sordid past, but as far as Samuel knows, his mother was an ordinary girl who married her high-school sweetheart. Which version of his mother is true? Two facts are certain: sheâ™s facing some serious charges, and she needs Samuelâ™s help. To save her, Samuel will have to embark on his own journey, uncovering long-buried secrets about the woman he thought he knew, secrets that stretch across generations and have their origin all the way back in Norway, home of the mysterious Nix. As he does so, Samuel will confront not only Fayeâ™s losses but also his own lost love, and will relearn everything he thought he knew about his mother, and himself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Samuel is an underachieving assistant professor of literature at a nothing college outside Chicago who dislikes his students, spends way too much time playing an online fantasy game, got a huge

advance for a novel he never wrote, and is pining for the girl he loved when he was eleven. His life is stalled out big time, but he is dragged out of stasis when his estranged mother, who abandoned him when he was eleven and has never been heard from since, makes national headlines for throwing rocks at a Presidential candidate - she is the Packer Attacker! Through a ridiculous series of events, Samuel is tasked with writing his mother's life story, and is forced to investigate her life since leaving him. The Nix is the story of how mother and son came to where they are -- and where they might go from here. But really, this basic plot description does not begin to do this book justice. Nathan Hill has a dazzling imagination, and the feats of writing that he performs are an absolute joy to experience. He writes one chapter from the POV of a gaming addict, an internal stream of consciousness in which the character makes elaborate plans to quit gaming, but talks himself out of it. This is ten pages, one paragraph, and it is absolutely mesmerizing -- funny and insightful and sad, about the stories we tell ourselves. Another chapter is just a conversation between Samuel and the lawyer who is representing his mother, nothing but dialogue, and it is hysterical. Another chapter is a Choose Your Own Adventure mini-book explaining how Samuel's relationship with a violin prodigy came unraveled, because Samuel does not choose wisely. Another chapter is...you get the picture. The story of Samuel and his mother is a jumping-off point for Mr.

I wasn't sure if I'd like this novel since the initial book reviews indicated that readers of Jonathan Franzen and Jennifer Egan would enjoy it. I thought I'd give it a go, and was really pleasantly surprised. While it's (unfortunately?) yet another book about a struggling writer / college professor -- perhaps the "write what you know" dictum to narrow limits -- and some of the action *is* predictable (the author will obviously get sucked in to writing about his mother because he really has no other options), the writing itself is superbly witty. As a college prof myself, I really dug into chapter 4 in Part 1, for example, in which the main character Andreson-Anderson discusses a plagiarized paper with one of his students. Describing the student's other behaviors, the narrator writes, "in class, Laura almost always stares into her lap, where she hides her phone. She thinks if the phone is in her lap she has effectively concealed it. She has no idea how obvious and transparent this maneuver is." So, totally, incredibly true; I've sadly seen it dozens of times over the years. Apart from the end of the chapter (which I won't reveal here), this whole scene could have been taken from real life. I laughed, grimaced knowingly, and wanted more. This early student-interaction scene largely saved the book for me; without it, I *might* have quit reading. The main character, after all, isn't really identifiable to me apart from his job. He plays a fictional version of World of Warcraft ("World of Elfquest") during nearly all of his free time, doesn't seem to have any sort of social life,

and allows his ex to walk (mostly) all over him.

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