



Submarine

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The dryly precocious, soon-to-be-fifteen-year-old hero of this engagingly offbeat debut novel, Oliver Tate lives in the seaside town of Swansea, Wales. At once a self-styled social scientist, a spy in the baffling adult world surrounding him, and a budding, hormone-driven emotional explorer, Oliver is stealthily (and perhaps a bit more nervously than he'd ever admit) nosing his way forward through the murky and uniquely perilous waters of adolescence. His objectives? Uncovering the secrets behind his parents' teetering marriage, unraveling the mystery that is his alluring and equally quirky classmate Jordana Bevan, and understanding where he fits in among the pansexuals, Zoroastrians, and other mystifying, fascinating beings in his orbit.

"It's in my interests to know about my parents' mental problems," he reasons. Thus, when he discovers that his affable dad is quietly struggling with depression, Oliver marshals all the daytime-TV pop-psychology wisdom at his command—not to mention his formidable, uninhibited powers of imagination—in order to put things right again. But a covert expedition into the mysterious territory of middle-aged malaise is bound to be tricky business for a teenager with more to learn about the agonies and ecstasies of life than a pocket thesaurus and his "worldly" school chum Chips can teach him.

Ready or not, however, Oliver is about to get a crash course. His awkwardly torrid and tender relationship with Jordana is hurtling at the speed of teenage passion toward the inevitable magic moment . . . and whatever lies beyond. And his boy-detective exploits have set him on a collision course with the New Age old flame who's resurfaced in his mother's life to lead her into temptation with lessons in surfing, self-defense . . . and maybe seduction. Struggling to buoy his parents' wedded bliss, deep-six his own virginity, and sound the depths of heartache, happiness, and the business of being human, what's a lad to do? Poised precariously on the cusp of innocence and experience, yesterday's daydreams and tomorrow's decisions, Oliver Tate aims to damn the torpedoes and take the plunge.

Submarine Details

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From Reader Review Submarine for online ebook

Rachel Louise Atkin says

My experience of this book was too personal to write a review, but I loved it.

Hossain says

In most cases books usually outshines their movie counterparts. At least, it seems to me. I thought I would never watch a movie that is arguably better than its source material. I have to say for this cases movie was better. But first I have to admit that I have watched the movie first and I was mind blown by it, especially in the “hiding tonight” song scene and in the ending. And obviously the soundtrack by Alex Turner was superb. So first the complaints—

1. I basically didn't get the title. The relation between the plot and title remains vague to me.
2. This is a coming of age tale, right? But I didn't see any character growth of Oliver. He remains same from beginning to end. I didn't see the coming of age of Oliver.
3. The ending of the movie was just great, but the book's ending was somewhat disappointing.

And now the praises—

1. I like the black humour of the book. I have a soft spot for funny hilarious books or movies.
2. He is just too good student for me. His analysis of Jordana's email made me realize how poor I am in English. This and future reviews will be my attempt to practice my English.
3. There is some mention of Bangladesh and foods of Bangladesh. According to Oliver Wood-Apple is a popular food in here and I didn't even hear of this fruit. But after a Google search I realized that Wood-Apple is really quite popular food in here I just didn't know the English name. In the end I had to agree with Oliver that Wood-Apple (?????) also isn't my top fruit of choice.

In the end I have to say that I don't care if you read the book or not you better watch the movie.

Sub_zero says

Submarino es una de esas novelas que contienen todos los ingredientes para salir bien parada de una cita conmigo: referencias extraordinarias; un protagonista adolescente, curioso, excéntrico, inteligente pero socialmente inepto, que intenta asumir el control sobre sus hormonas mientras cree contemplar cómo se desmorona el núcleo familiar sin que él pueda hacer nada por evitarlo; además, una prosa aguda y desenfadada que deja entrever como quien no quiere la cosa sorprendentes reflexiones sobre amor, amistad, sexo, el futuro y todas esas cosas que a los quince años parecen tan abstractas y a la vez tan decisivas. Sin embargo, la validez de la receta no asegura el éxito en su preparación. Hay algo en el *Submarino* de Dunthorne que no me termina de convencer. Como queriendo hacer honor a su nombre, todos los elementos de la novela (trama, estilo, estructura, personajes) empiezan a hundirse en su segunda mitad y la fórmula que tanto me estaba gustando al principio acaba perdiendo casi todo su lustre. Por lo que me cuentan, la adaptación cinematográfica está bastante lograda, así que -sin que sirva de precedente-, casi os recomendaría apostar primero por ella y leer la novela solo en caso de que os convirtáis en fans acérrimos de la historia.

Maia Robinson says

you'll love this book if you're into:

- homophobia
- sexism
- racism
- fatphobia
- abuse (gender violence) apology
- abuse (bullying) apology
- rape apology
- pedophilia-related jokes
- religion-related jokes

Rebecca McNutt says

One of those few cases where the film is much better than the book. :-(

Don't get me wrong, I loved the 2010 film *Submarine*, it was an amazing experience to watch. But the book? Well, I'm not much of a fan of pervy sex jokes or fart jokes, and at least the film spares viewers of those for the most part. The book had a number of lines that made absolutely no sense, trying so hard to be obscure and intelligent that it failed to get to any sort of point. It has its moments of true humor and good writing, a few good quotes here and there, but mostly it was just overly bizarre, and not in a good way.

Tfitoby says

Maybe it's just me but doesn't *everything* get compared to The Catcher in the Rye? A modern day version, a version crossed with Godzilla, Holden Caulfield on speed, best thing since sliced Salinger? I choose to discount these comparisons for three reasons: hyperbole, im always disappointed **and** most importantly, I distinctly remember finally reading it and wondering what all the fuss was about.

Joe Dunthorne's debut novel about teenage angst, alienation and rebellion in Swansea in the late 1990's was inevitably compared to said adventures of Master Caulfield and once more I find myself wondering what all the fuss is about.

There are moments of great levity interspersed with others of great gravity, both handled well considering this is a book that features a teenage boy inadvertently trying to put his fist inside a virgin in a theatre sound booth and same boy writing awkward teenage love letters to his mother from his father in an attempt to get them to "*turn the dimmer switch down*" on their bedroom light.

It's quite a charming novel of coming to terms with yourself and your parents and sadly those themes and the age of the protagonist means this does limp in to the dreaded young adult category of literature. Whilst *Catcher* has become known as a book for teens it was intended for adults and as such deals with things beyond the school yard as it investigates it's issues of identity and alienation, *Subamrine* gets bogged down in the minutiae of bodily fluids, obvious attempts at making Oliver a modern day *pícaro* but forgetting to make him sympathetic in any way at all. At its heart this is immaturity masquerading as mature, a wolf

dressed in the sheeps clothing of *a large dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopedia* set, perfectly mirroring its protagonist.

I must be honest and admit that I only had an interest in reading this because of the fantastic movie adaptation. It's such a charming, funny and interesting movie and I was intrigued as to whether the novel was the source for this or the film maker Richard Ayoade. The answer was a little from column A and a lot from column B. The adaptation made this novel better, it added a magical quality missing from (OK maybe it was slightly hinted at) Dunthorpes prose, made the story of Oliver Tate more cohesive and most importantly adding layers of sympathy to the supporting characters in the life of this neurotic, self obsessed, teenage boy and even Oliver himself.

See the movie, for once book not essential.

Michael says

Review from Badelynge

Maybe if Joe Dunthorne's Submarine had clothed its covers with far fewer off the mark testimonials, I would have been a little more forgiving in my judgment of this book. But for the sake of balance alone somebody has to pooh-pooh all the best thing since Catcher in the Rye statements. To live up to such statements Oliver Tate (our narrator) would have to seem like a real character - but he never does. Maybe he was never meant to. Submarine sort of lives in a skewed reality not far removed from a post watershed episode of *My Family*. Other times it's hard to believe Oliver's ramblings are anything other than the voice of the true author, Joe Dunthorne. To be fair the first chapter was ok. It seemed quite light, quirky, with some pretty clever lines: 'Depression comes in bouts. Like boxing. Dad is in the blue corner.' Unfortunately that line was the last of them and even that one had been wasted on a cover quote. Are there any truths uncovered in this book, other than suggesting that 15 year olds aren't always as right as they think they are? Back to those pesky testimonials. No, no, no. 'Adrian Mole for adults, with a much more complicated protagonist, truer to life and infinitely funnier' *Big Issue*. I think somebody should go back and read the *Adrian Mole* books again, because this couldn't be further from the truth if Oliver Tate had written the quote himself.

Jo says

Ever wondered what it would be like if Wes Anderson got drunk on vodka and watched the entire box set of *The Inbetweeners* in one night?

Reader meet *Submarine*. *Submarine* meet reader.

Aah, and herein lies the conundrum.

For I really dislike *The Inbetweeners* (I know, I know... I have received many a horrified glare when I have divulged this information. I just don't find it funny because I'm a horrible, stuffy prude) *but* I adore Wes Anderson.

This could have gone either way and I think I knew this risk before I started this book. I am nothing if not a risk taker.

So, let's see shall we?

Did I enjoy this book?

Very much so.

Did I laugh at this book?

I barked like a seal a few times, so yes, again... very much so.

Is it a bit vile and vulgar and is there lots of graphic sex and fumblings?

Ho yes.

Considering I only read this book so I had something to talk to Richard Ayoade about (I'm kidding. Our **imaginary** conversations would be about lots of excellent things from films to music, to whether it would make him uncomfortable if I touched his hair), I really, *really* enjoyed it.

I like to call books like these "It got dark" books; meaning you pick it up in the afternoon and you read...and read....and read and then the next time you look up well, um, it got dark.

This is exactly what happened with *Submarine*.

My **inhaling** reading of Mr Dunthorne's debut was only hindered occasionally by me stopping to jot down some of my favourite quotes and then pick up my phone so I could text them to my sister.

I battled (well ok, maybe battled is getting a bit giddy) with the decision to whether I should class this as young adult. I know that just because a book has a fifteen year old protagonist doesn't automatically make it a young adult book. Like I said before, this book has lots and lots of awkward sexual shenanigans in and frank discussions about things that might not be to everyone's liking. So if you're put off by that, maybe give this book a miss or at least approach with caution.

But, even though people might argue with me saying it's not a young adult book, I believe if an author writes a book where there is a fifteen year old narrator and it's a realistic portrayal (which I personally feel Mr Dunthorne managed brilliantly), then why shouldn't a fifteen year old pick the book up?

Plus, classing this book as YA would make it *infinitely* cooler because YA fiction is all the rage right now and all the indie kids read it and pretend they liked it before it got famous.

(FYI, we hard core YAddicts read Hunger Games before it was cool)

It's kind of like I'm doing Mr D a favour reviewing this on a YA blog. I'm sure he appreciates it.

cough

Anyway, I loved Oliver. I'd probably *hate* him if I met him in real life, though. If we had gone to high school with each other I would have watched him cautiously from behind my ill-advised fringe and think that he was odd and trouble. He'd be the kind of guy I'd cross the road to avoid passing... but I'd be *intrigued* by him.

I understand that that probably says more about me than Oliver, but that's kind of how I felt about him in this book. I wouldn't say I necessarily liked him as a character, but he was a brilliant narrator. I loved seeing the world through his warped-tinted spectacles.

Some of my favourite Oliver quotes, which I have realised won't be funny out of context:

[On pocket-sized Encyclopaedias] "*It would only fit in a pocket that was specially designed.*"

"I slam my fist on to the table to no effect. It's made of stone."

"I would never say snog. I would say osculate."

[On condoms] “*The smell nothing like a positive first sexual experience.*”

I find that a book like this is incredibly difficult to describe why it’s funny to people because if you don’t find it funny, then no matter how many times I say “*specially designed pockets*” and cackle, you will still look at me blankly and wonder why we are friends.

But *I* laughed.

I don’t really want to go into the story because, if I’m honest, there’s not *that* much of a story. It’s about a boy growing up in South Wales where things aren’t always peachy and the boy observes them with dry humour.

The only gripe I had with this book is that I wish certain parts had been explored more in depth. There were some things that seemed to either get overwhelmed by Oliver’s personality/narration, mentioned a few times and then forgotten about or, at the end, solved and wrapped up in a neat bow.

Theme Tune.

Hiding Tonight by Alex Turner.;

It’s like this song was written for this story.

Heh... heh....

Actually, that um... *joke* would have been funnier if this song *had* been written for this story. But, it’s not true because I think Mr Turner wrote these songs before the film soundtrack, so I’m not just unfunny; I’m also a liar.

I couldn’t find the perfect song for this book but I love this song and... wait, why am I even justifying myself? It’s Alex Bloody Turner.

Also um... with regards to Welsh Week. I’m... um, sure that the Arctic Monkeys are from Sheffield which is in England which is part of the UK along wiiiiiiith..... Wales!

Also, I’m sure they played in Wales at some point and really enjoyed it.

cough

I really enjoyed this book but I know that it won’t be for everyone. It’s clever, it’s witty, it’s occasionally vulgar and it’s definitely a hipster’s paradise (which is *nothing* like a gangsta’s paradise... something I found out recently. But that’s another story for another time.)

I’ll let you make up your own mind whether that’s a good thing or not.

This review is part of Wythnos Cymraeg || Welsh Week. Also it comes with a snazzy film review.

Algernon says

Things I’ve learned from Submarine (I planned to list 100, but I got tired of the game rather fast):

- you are a triskaidekaphobic if you are afraid of the number thirteen
- it's OK to spy on your parents in order to find out things about yourself (*I recently discovered that my mother has been typing the names of as-yet-uninvented mental conditions into Yahoo's search engine: 'delusion syndrome teenage', 'over-active imagination problem', 'holistic behavioural stabilizers'*)
- a nepenthe is something that helps you forget sorrow and suffering, like a bottle of poppers.
- sometimes it is important to skip school for an afternoon (this might be a nod to Ferris Bueller)
- cooking and love-making are, after all, interchangeable skills
- it is generally true that 15 years old are obsessed with sex (*I've discovered that masturbating in the darkness of my empty wardrobe is excellent, particularly because of that new-born feeling as you stumble back into the well-lit room. A kind of Narnia.*)
- in related news : a parthenologist is a specialist in the study of virgins and virginity.
- love means that *she's the only person I would allow to be shrunk to microscopic size and explore my body in a tiny submersible machine.*
- every human eats six spiders a year while asleep.
- gross out humour is the number one entertainment for the younger generations : *Out in the bay, the Cork ferry may look like civilization but it probably contains at least one person vomiting.*
- paruresis is the fear of peeing in public places
- there's a place called Llanwrthwl somewhere in Wales. (and that's probably one of the easier to pronounce names from the country)
- people from Cardiff are closer to apes than the rest of the members of the human race.
- meditation is like a long bath
- an egregore is a kind of group mind which is created when people consciously come together for a common purpose.
- to exungulate means to trim or cut nails or hoofs.
- *Car journeys are the frowning parentheses at the start and end of any good holiday.* (this quote is actually one of the really good ones in the novel)
- syzygy means the alignment of three celestial objects.

Some of these may be made up words, but I didn't care enough one way or another to check up on them. Ollie, the 15 y.o. who writes in his journal all this stuff, is real keen on dictionaries and likes to show off to all and sundry how clever he is. He is, of course, also self-obsessed ('**Why don't we talk about me?**'), a bully, sex-obsessed, hypochondriac, a self-serving liar, bored, eccentric and interesting in his own eyes,

unnecessarily gross and annoying by the end of the story to me.

It's a generational thing I guess, and the fact that I don't appreciate the toilet humour, the vomiting and the farts and the general ickiness of the presentation makes me an old-fart in the eyes of the younger generation. I could make comparison between Submarine and such classics as The Catcher In The Rye, The Graduate, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Superbad. The novel aspires to such lofty ideals. Olliver is the Swansea translation of the angsty, smart, sensitive teenager who hides his vulnerability by lashing out at the people around him.

After the first couple of chapters, I was captivated by the humour and the style of presentation, but the story got old quite fast when I realized that's all there is to it - more style than substance and too much reliance on being shocking and trending (1990's Yuppie style). I believe there are some serious pacing issues and the novel goes on too long, especially for those readers who become disenchanted with the first person narrator. I saw the movie before reading the book, and the same thing happened there : I loved the first half hour, and then fell asleep when it kept going nowhere in the next five hours (I know the movie is shorter than that, but that's how it felt).

That's not to say other readers will not be more susceptible to the charms of Ollie and his brand of humour. I thought the girls in the book were well rendered, both the pyromaniac Jordana and the bullied Eve. I also think some of the issues of bullying in school, communication between generations and the way parent marital troubles reflect on the sanity of the children are worthy subjects of analysis. And I believe Joe Dunthorne has it in him to be a great modern writer. Here's a last quote to illustrate both that he can write, and what the book is all about:

This is theatre. It feels like this could be some clever extra scene from the play, and in a minute there's going to be a song about how lucky we all are to be young and beautiful and live in Swansea at the end of the less awful half of an absolute bum-out of a century.

Charlie says

I picked this up in a bookstore because it was at a discounted price and the first few pages really caught my attention. Oliver Tate as a smart albeit eccentric teenager struck a chord with me, and at first I felt I could relate to the character. I enjoyed the character's analytical view of the world around him and the humour that comes with it, but that's about where it ends.

Oliver Tate does things which most teenagers may threaten to do after an argument, but would never dream of doing in real life. It's simply unrealistic. Also, despite his unique personality, he surprisingly fits in very well at school and has no problems hiding his true self in order to gain popularity, which is something that a real teenager with a similar sort of personality (ie. myself) would struggle immensely to do.

A lot of the language and situations presented in the book are extremely vulgar and graphic. Whilst it may be unsuitable for any younger teenagers, I doubt that the book would appeal to adults either due to the protagonist being a 15-year-old boy at odds with his parents. I had hoped that a character with Oliver's personality would not also be subject to stereotypical teenage, loutish behaviours. I really began to lose faith in him, especially about half way through the book where Oliver does something which would be seen as criminal and foolish under any circumstances.

The plot is pretty non-existent, dependant only on Oliver's increasingly idiotic behaviours to push it forwards. Expect a typical story written from a rebellious teenager's eyes, full of issues faced by teenagers and their friends and family. Overall, it is an easy read with some humour, but not much else.

Allison says

I picked this up because I ADORED the film version. There are some pretty gaping differences b/w the two the biggest being that in the book, Oliver just kind of annoys me. In the film, he is much more sympathetic (though not relatable to me) and I do think the right scenes were left out of the film version. The style was hilarious and I'm pleased at how very Welsh it all seemed. By that I mean I really got a sense of Oliver's place in his world and the place where he lives. I recommend you see the film. Read this too if you want to compare but this may be one of the rare instances when I prefer the film to the book. (Did I really just admit that?)

Camilla says

Book #3 in #BookTubeATHon2015.

(Read an author who shares the same first letter of your last name.)

Raeleen Lemay says

This was such a strange, wonderful book.

Ciara says

i found this book tremdeously disappointing. it caught my eye at the bookstore, i guess because of the dust jacket. i'm a sucker for design, seriously. a jacket can make or break a book for me (see my review of [ruined by reading](#) for another example). however, i was smart & i exercised restraint. i left the book sitting on the shelf & got a copy from the library instead. thank god! it's the story if a disaffected welsh teenager, a boy. he suspects that his parents are having marital troubles, & that his mother might be pursuing an affair with her meditation guru. he has also found himself a girlfriend & manages to get her into the sack, so he is obsessing over the fact that he lost his virginity while he obsesses over his parents' love/sex life, even going so far as to count his mother's tampons to make sure she doesn't get pregnant. i think that is where the book truly lost me. who does that? i'm all for demystifying the human body & wish that more dudes were comfortable with the fact that ladies tend to menstruate, but counting one's own mother's tampons really crosses a line for me. i can't craft an eloquent explanation as to why, but nonetheless. plus he runs kind of hot & cold with his girlfriend ("treat her mean, keep her keen" is his mantra...along with all teenage boys throughout the history of the world, which is why i just didn't bother dating dudes until i was in my 20s), who finally wises up & dumps him. there's a scene where he kills his girlfriend's dog too. he seems to think it's a kind-hearted act, some kind of euthanasia, because his girlfriend is allergic to the dog, but he poisons it with fertilizer & it's just really sick & unnecessary. oh, & he stalks his mom to a meditation center to make sure she's not boning

her guru. & does the same thing when his mom goes on a meditation trip to the beach. i'm just not into stalky teenage boys, sorry. i guess this is a kind of updated youth in revolt, another book that was lauded as being an honest portrait of precocious teenage male sexuality, but just left me feeling kind of ill.

Nikki says

I wanted to like this, but I really couldn't get into it that well. It felt like the story wasn't really progressing that much and sometimes I would actually forget what I was even reading, because it all seemed so random and messy. Didn't live up to my expectations!

Beatrice says

Oliver Tate is a Welsh teenager with a penchant for theatics and complicated words. He is our narrator.

Our author, Joe Dunthorne, punctuates his book with clever turns of phrases, keeps his sentences succinct and uses natural phrases that flow together well. His writing is fantastic. He gives Oliver such a unique voice, making this entertaining and easy to read.

But there's an errant sadness that runs through this book. Oliver is coming of age and realizing that he cannot control his life--that no one, not even his parents, can control their lives.

The sadness doesn't dominate the text though. It highlights the hilarity and sometimes frivolous nature of life, especially Oliver's.

The following are two of my favorite quotes (which are almost impossible to understand out of context--another reason to pick this book up!):

"And it was strange being his wife for a while; it was nice that he was being so open and I liked hearing him swear, but I can't say that, after a few weeks of listening to him moan, I didn't see the appeal--theoretically--of running off with the guy who comes once a month to do the garden."

"She's the only person I would allow to be shrunk to microscopic size and explore my body in a tiny submersible machine."

Bettie? says

Noah Taylor ... Lloyd Tate

Paddy Considine ... Graham Purvis

Craig Roberts ... Oliver Tate

Yasmin Paige ... Jordana Bevan

Miss Abernathy says

Cuando he terminado de leer Submarine mi primer pensamiento ha sido:
¿Qué m?i?e?r?d?a? acabo de leer?

La lectura de este libro ha sido en varios momentos divertida, ya que los pensamientos del protagonista en algunas situaciones son bastante particulares, pese a ello lo veo como un libro carente de emociones.

Es ligero de leer, aunque pienso que pudo haber sido mucho mejor, ya que los tramas y los personajes se podrían haber desarrollado mucho más. No he conectado con este libro, me he decepcionado con él pensando que sería otra cosa.

Jessica says

Quite frankly this was amazing.

Kylie says

I read this in a matter of days, closed up in my stink hole (sink hole) of a room, coughing violently and slathering vaseline on my peeling lips. It comes at no surprise that this book reminded me of first love ended and turned into old love, parents, and dead dogs. This book is also a movie. I saw the movie roughly a year ago and received the book as a gift soon after that. I've been listening to the movie soundtrack ever since. It is one of the few constants in my life. Who am I kidding? Most things in my life are constant. I avoided reading the book. I used a trivial pursuit card as a book mark. I just looked up book mark to check if it is one or two words. It is one. I am glad that I read this book a year later because I think that it means something different to me now than it would have then. I will not read this over to check the grammar. Happy Valentine's Day.
