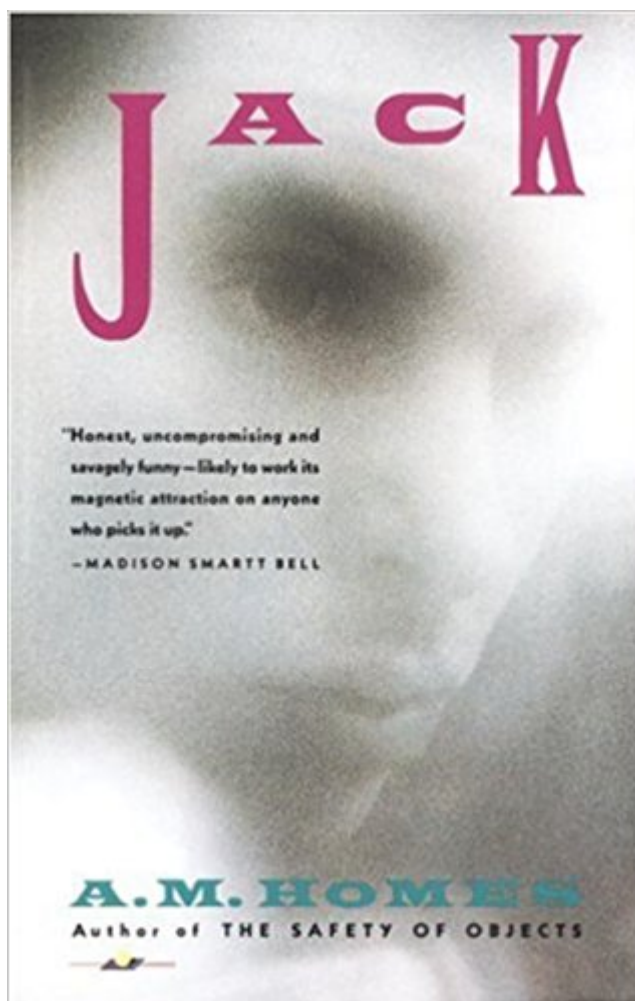




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# Jack



## Synopsis

In *Jack*, A. M. Homes gives us a teenager who wants nothing more than to be normal—even if being normal means having divorced parents and a rather strange best friend. But when Jack's father takes him out in a rowboat on Lake Watchmayoyo and tells his son he's gay, nothing will ever be normal again. Out of Jack's struggle to redefine what "family" means, A. M. Homes crafts a novel of enormous humor, charm, and resonance, the most convincing, funny, and insightful novel about adolescence since *The Catcher in the Rye*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jack is almost 16 as the story opens, struggling to keep life normal in the wake of his parents' divorce some years earlier. During a weekend outing, Jack's father admits to being a homosexual, throwing Jack's psyche and social life for a loop. Homes "perfectly captures the feelings, actions and even the speech cadences of a typical adolescent American male," commended PW. Author tour. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"A moving novel, and a very refreshing one. Jack is such an engaging, attractive human being, it's a pleasure to believe in him." —David Foster Wallace "The engaging, doggedly funny [Jack] is likable from the first paragraph, a good kid caught in circumstances too much for him. And in the particulars of those circumstances, A. M. Homes touches upon something unique. Ms. Homes handles the big subjects subtly, deftly and with an

appealing lack of melodrama. •The New York Times Book Review• "A. M. Homes has created a most endearing teenager, and an intensely real world around him .... A fine book." •Hilma Wolitzer

I read this after the extraordinary experience of *The End of Alice* and frankly, I was disappointed. I think the author captured very well the angst (and occasional comedy) of a teen coming of age and his less than shattering realization that no one is perfect--especially his own family and the families around him. (Duh!) BTW this Jack is not the Robin William's Jack of that awful Francis Ford Coppola movie.

A good read, with an insightful interpretation of a teenager's angst when he learn his father is gay.

A.M. Homes' short story collection 'The Safety of Objects' made me a huge fan of her work. 'Jack' is a decent book, but could do with a bit of the brutal whimsy I've come to expect from her work. While the plot might seem too pat to adults and the characters too noble, 'Jack' would be an excellent book for a young, straight teen to read when he is grappling with having a gay parent- Jack is a superb role model.

It was in good condition

The best part about this book is the voice. Homes creates such an accurate voice for Jack, who tells the story, that you feel the book must have actually been written by a teenager. This is not a book of page turning plot, the plot just isn't that important, but it is a book with profound emotional truth. Homes births vivid, incredibly realistic characters and opens their hearts wide enough for the reader to be able to see their own emotions in the struggles of the characters. It's what the best fiction does.

While I am not completely finished with the A.M. Homes catalogue, the ones I've read either knock it out of the park (*THE MISTRESS'S DAUGHTER*, *THE SAFETY OF OBJECTS*, *MUSIC FOR TORCHING*) or send a weak foul ball (*THE END OF ALICE*). *JACK*, which is listed as her first novel, gets to first base and stays there. Sorry for the Kinsella-esque metaphors. The problem with *JACK* is that the central theme is so dated (the book is 1989) that it's hard to relate to any of the drama. You want to pull an Olympia Dukakis and tell

Jack to “snap out of it.” It’s more like a YA novel than a novel by the woman that was unleashing the short stories that made up *THE SAFETY OF OBJECTS* during this same period. And maybe she was; any hoopla surrounding JACK’s publication is long since left the internet. You see, when Jack is 15, his father comes out of the closet, which, in 1989 was a bigger deal, but Jack, and his subsequent begrudging acceptance of his father is drawn out with odd, one-dimensional characterizations and clunky dialogue. It’s almost as if the talented Homes is writing a book as performance art, encapsulating an after-school special with the setting of a forgettable off-Broadway play. In the end it’s Judy Blume without the heart.

This was the first book that I read by A.M. Homes, well over a decade ago, and I was so captivated by her writing style that I’ve since read the rest of her novels and short story collections. Based on the number of negative reviews here, I think the subject matter in this novel must have annoyed many reviewers. You have to wonder why they even bothered to read this book in the first place. Homes, I think, does an outstanding job of getting inside the mind of Jack (the teenage boy who this novel revolves around) and lets the reader become privy to his innermost thoughts and feelings. As another reviewer noted, she does such a good job of developing this character that you would never think an “adult” was the one doing the writing. And that’s not to say the writing style is juvenile or simplistic. That’s far from the case. But Homes is a sympathetic and astute writer, and does a brilliant job of creating characters and getting the reader to care about them. This was a quick read, but a very compelling one.

Because I’ve read some of A.M. Homes’ other work, I was interested in this early novel of hers written in 1989. It doesn’t have the punch that either “*The Safety of Objects*” or “*The End of Alice*” has, but it clearly shows the promise of a young writer. Written as a first-person narrative by a Jack, 15-year old boy in the suburbs, which is Ms. Homes’ favorite landscape, we experience all of this boy’s highs and lows. His father and mother have recently divorced and his father has just told Jack that he is gay. This, of course, has a tremendous effect on the boy who has conflicting allegiance to each of his parents. Jack is also dealing with adolescence. He is starting to date girls and take driving lessons. His best friend’s parents have problems too. And someone has written some cruel words on Jack’s locker at school. The book is merely 218 pages long and a fast read and drew me right into the mind of this young man and his conflicts. If you are a fan of A.M. Homes, you might like it. But the theme is simpler than some of her other work and didn’t have the same kind of depth. But

I did enjoy it for what it was.

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