

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin purple lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from dark purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct geometric shapes like triangles and quadrilaterals. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

The 158-Pound Marriage

Written by John Irving

Published by kctv7

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The 158-Pound Marriage

By John Irving

The 158-pound Marriage

The darker vision and sexual ambiguities of this erotic, ironic tale about a ménage à quatre in a New England university town foreshadow those of *The World According to Garp*; but this very trim and precise novel is a marked departure from the author's generally robust, boisterous style. Though Mr. Irving's cool eye spares none of his foursome, he writes with genuine compassion for the sexual tests and illusions they perpetrate on each other; but the sexual intrigue between them demonstrates how even the kind can be ungenerous, and even the well-intentioned, destructive.

The *158-Pound Marriage* is book three in my John Irving Challenge, in which I am attempting to read all of his novels in a year's time. So far, I'm right on track to finish in December.

I understand John Irving's obsession with wrestling. After all, he was a wrestler. I even get why he uses Vienna as a location in his first three books. Because he was a student there for some years before he wrote his first novel. But where does this man's affinity for bears come from? He uses them in figurative and literal fashions. I'd love to pick his brain some day on the subject.

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John Irving has written the first drafts of all of his novels longhand. Considering how long some of his books are, that is a tremendous feat. He jokes that he saves trees by using both sides of the paper, but you should see how many lines he writes on a single page; about five to ten. At least that was the case in the videos I watched of him working. While this information has nothing to do with today's topic of discussion, *The 158-Pound Marriage*, it does play into my John Irving project. When I do these challenges, I like to look into the personal life of the author to see how they tick. Being an author myself, I've written plenty of stories longhand, but never an entire novel. My hand throbs just thinking about such a feat. Maybe one day, but that's a huge maybe.

If I had to place this novel among the other two novels of Irving's I've read thus far, I'd have to place it right smack dab in the middle. It's much better than *Setting Free the Bears* but not quite as good as *The Water-Method Man*. And, as I noted in my review of the former, I again see hints of the style that I enjoyed in the beginning of *The World According to Garp*, especially the story behind how Utchka (or Utch, if you prefer) got her name. The way that was told reminded me of how Garp's mother came to be pregnant with him. I have to say, that little bit of backstory was likely my favorite part of the book. Not

that the rest was downhill from that point, but nothing else topped the opening chapter.

What I found utterly riveting was Irving's sneaky character development. I was reading along, wondering where the hell this story was taking me, when all of a sudden I realized I cared for every character on the page. Severin, Edith, Utch, and even the nameless narrator were so well drawn that I found myself heartbroken whenever they were sad and enraged whenever they were mad. These folks were alive in my head, which brings me to the sex.

The love scenes in this novel, um... they, er... they caused uncomfortable situations to arise in my pants. I'm not usually aroused while reading sex scenes in books, no matter how lurid or descriptive they might be. I'm a physical, visual kinda dude, is what I'm getting at. I don't mind sex in stories, they just don't turn me on. That was not the case in this book, and I have no idea why. Simply and unabashedly put, boners were had during the reading of this novel.

Try and get that image out of your head. You're welcome.

Strangely enough, I cannot pinpoint what I disliked about this book. It seemed every third or fourth paragraph was poorly written or wasn't more than an infodump. Irving has some lovely phrasing running around here, but more than half of it was stationary; didn't move me in the least. It's almost as if he had collaborated with a far less talented author. Such an odd experience. But, if you put a gun to my head and asked me what was wrong with the parts I didn't like, you'd just have to shoot me. I pride myself on being able to articulate well the issues I find in books, but this time I'm coming up blank. I just didn't like certain parts. *shrugs*

In summation: Overall, my experience with Irving's first three novels has been a pleasant one. They're certainly nowhere near as bad as I was led to believe. Setting Free the Bears being the one exception that I'd not recommend to anyone but completionists. Even Irving admits that, if he had submitted his first novel today, it likely never would've seen publication. And I agree. Yet this one feels more like a second novel than his second novel did. The Water-Method Man feels like a third book. It feels like the novel I'd expect before *The World According to Garp*, which is (excitedly) next on my challenge's list.

Final Judgment: An arousing, if unbalanced, narrative. ...more

The 158 Pound Marriage Review

Caveman get lonely. Caveman get wife. Caveman get bored. Caveman wife-swap. Caveman get jealous.
Caveman get lonely. Caveman get wife. Caveman get bored. Caveman wife-swap. Caveman get jealous...

(I could go on).

relationships really aren't all about the sex. john irving kicked even more ass before he was widely read.
read it.

The 158 Pound Marriage Pdf

It's John Irving. One cannot go wrong with John Irving.

A tale about the trials and tribulations of relationships that are fraught with infidelities, an area of expertise in the writing mind of John Irving, I was expecting a whole lot more from this book than I actually got. As with most Irving novels, there's plenty of Vienna for the reader to sink their teeth into (after all the John Irving I've read over the years I feel almost as intimate with Vienna as I am with my own Toronto, and I've never even been there!), and no bears to mar or confuse thi

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The 158 Pound Marriage Summary

This is the tale of two couples who decide to share each other, or become a ménage à quatre, in an attempt to even out things in their relationships. It's Edith and Severin in one corner, Utchka and the unnamed, unreliable narrator in the other. The title of the book relates to wrestling, but the fighting image is close enough...anyway, Edith and the narrator have two things in common: they are both trying to be writers and they both met their spouses while traveling in Vienna. Severin and Utchka share a native language and have both lost family and suffered as children during WWII. Severin teaches German, but it's his position as a wrestling coach that is important to him.

John Irving has an outstanding talent for character development, and these well-drawn characters play a part in a fascinating drama. Is this all about sex, or something more? What are each of the four getting out of this arrangement? Unsurprisingly, one person will eventually call an end to this entanglement, and even though they all know that this is inevitable, it doesn't prevent the emotional upset that ensues.

There is some interesting use of symbolism throughout the book, and Irving's writing style is always very pleasing. I enjoyed it, though it always bothers me a little when the narrator remains nameless. In this case, I'd like to know who to slap, though I admit that by the end, I was pulling for him to make things right again with Utchka, the only one who seems to understand herself and who is understandably very hurt.

...more

After reading John Irving's *A Son Of The Circus* a few months ago and enjoying it (see my review: <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>), I decided to read another of his books. I chose *The 158-Pound Marriage* because, unlike many of Irving's other works it was a slim volume ideal for carrying whilst commuting.

The narrator is an academic who writes historical novels. His wife, Utch, was born in Austria soon before the Soviet Union marched in at the end of WW2. Severin, also born in Austria, tea After reading John Irving's *A Son Of The Circus* a few months ago and enjoying it (see my review: <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>), I decided to read another of his books. I chose *The 158-Pound Marriage* because, unlike many of Irving's other works it was a slim volume ideal for carrying whilst commuting.

The 158-Pound Marriage

The narrator is an academic who writes historical novels. His wife, Utch, was born in Austria soon before the Soviet Union marched in at the end of WW2. Severin, also born in Austria, teaches German and coaches wrestling at the same university as the narrator. His wife, Edith, is an aspiring novelist.

The two couples decide to become a foursome'. By mutual agreement Severin spends occasional nights sleeping with Utch, whilst Edith and the narrator sleep together. It is an arrangement that appears to be working, but from the beginning of the book I suspected that things turn sour. It is clear from the outset that the narrator is wary of Severin, but the reverse is not true. Severin turns out to be a colourful character full of mystery, some of which is gradually revealed as the tale unfolds. Inevitably, things end badly, but I will not reveal any details.

Compared to A Son Of The Circus, The 158-Pound Marriage is colourless and dull. It was only a refusal to give up, that kept me going until the last page. However, I have not been put-off reading John Irving, and plan to tackle some of his better-known novels in the future. ...more

The 158 Lb Marriage

I love John Irving. I really, really love him. I was very curious to read this because it is one of his early novels and I was told it was bad and very mean spirited. I think it is still better than most novels and only mildly mean spirited. Irving demonstrates his usual (brilliant) humor, his fascination with physical deformity and physical fitness, and his delightfully complex characters. That being said, I found the transitions from scene to scene vague and quick. Several times in this novel I don't know where I am in time and place. The narrative voice is first person, weaving in memory after memory-- it gets confusing. Irving often dances around being a misogynist asshole and in this novel he just IS one...but I forgive him...because I a forgive him his sins. If I were to meet John I would ask him why he is so into wrestling...I must say it baffles me but the more I read his books the more I want to watch a wrestling match. ...more

I can't seem to get sick of Irving. This is one of his shortest novels I've read and that threw me off a bit because I've been reading a lot of Irving lately and all his novels are thick. I picked this book up because I heard that it was similar to the world according to Garp (which I loved). This book was about two married couples that enter into a foursome. At first it was a bit unclear how this foursome started and Irving was a bit vague about that but once you get deeper into the story it starts to unfold and each of the four character story is told and you love some and hate the others. Though there are four people in the foursome its told from the perspective of one of the husbands who isn't talking about himself but narrating the life of the other husband and how the three are living in his world. I don't want to give the ending away but this novel was enjoyable to read. One thing thats different from this novel from the other works of Irving I've read is that its not a crazy twist or plot involved, yes its a odd topic but its simple and Irvings prose as always is fantastic and on point. ...more

John Irving The 158 Pound Marriage

As a fan of John Irvin, I was deeply disappointed in this book. I'm bitter due to past relationships, but not bitter enough to appreciate the resentment and anger that overshadowed the storyline.

I LOVED The Hotel New Hampshire, The World According to Garp, and A Prayer for Owen Meany, and really liked A Widow for One Year. I read this even though it didn't look that good because I have a three-month-old and no time or attention span for reading anything anymore but John Irving is always pretty quick-moving and this book looked short.

If I didn't already love John Irving I would have hated this book. The characters were pretty unconvincing and if I had been convinced then I wouldn't have I LOVED The Hotel New Hampshire, The World According to Garp, and A Prayer for Owen Meany, and really liked A Widow for One Year. I read this even though it didn't look that good because I have a three-month-old and no time or attention span for reading anything anymore but John Irving is always pretty quick-moving and this book looked short.

If I didn't already love John Irving I would have hated this book. The characters were pretty unconvincing and if I had been convinced then I wouldn't have liked them. The story was banal and told with such heavy-handedness as to make the banality even more irritating. But, I do already love John Irving, and this book, written early in his career, had enough of the stuff he would later turn into those genius books that I adore, that I enjoyed it anyway. It was like, even though I didn't like THIS book, it reminded me enough of the ones that I DO like that I was able to enjoy reading it.

Two stars for being the first real book I've been able to read since having a baby (and the second since getting pregnant). And in related news, I've been wearing all my pants with the stretchy band to hold them together during and after pregnancy, but I just went to the bathroom and thought, Why not give it a go? and MY PANTS FIT!!! First book and first time closing my pants in a long time. Things are getting back to normal. ...more