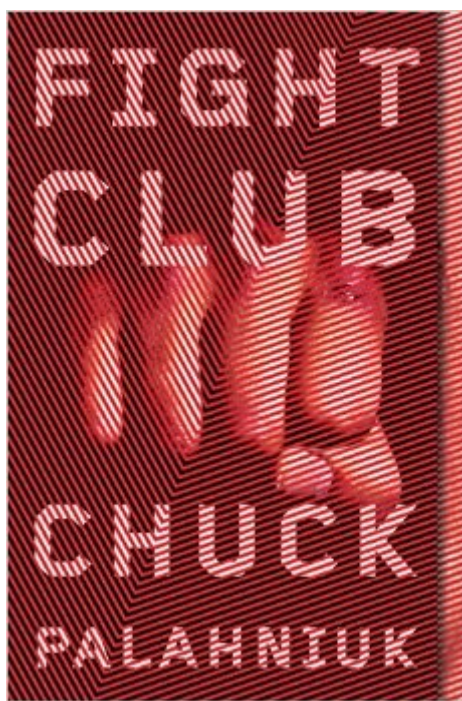


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Fight Club: A Novel



Synopsis

The first rule about fight club is you don't talk about fight club. In his debut novel, Chuck Palahniuk showed himself to be his generation's most visionary satirist. Fight Club's estranged narrator leaves his lackluster job when he comes under the thrall of Tyler Durden, an enigmatic young man who holds secret boxing matches in the basement of bars. These two men fight "as long as they have to." A gloriously original work that exposes what is at the core of our modern world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Usually great books are either turned into mediocre films or else great films are made from mediocre books (and we won't even get into the sordid details of the novelizations). Fight Club is one of the rare instances where a great film was made from a great book. It is perhaps unfair to mention the film version while discussing the book as they are actually two very different animals. (And animal is the right word -- perhaps uniquely amongst contemporary novelists, Chuck Palahniuk writes novels that seem to live in the reader's hands, often threatening at any minute to lunge for the throat.) While most of the film's incidents are in the book and much of the razor-sharp dialogue is reproduced directly from the page, the book actually has a far greater satiric edge than the film. Whereas the film used the story as a celebration of nihilism, the book is far too self-aware to allow itself to truly celebrate anything. As such, it becomes less a call to action and more a devastatingly real portrait of a society that has become so commercialized and codified that even the once primal act of revolution becomes just another submission to pop culture. Fight Club is the story of an unnamed narrator, an insomniac yuppie who spends his days helping insurance companies get out

of having to pay their claims. He wanders through a meaningless life until he discovers the emotional release of attending therapy groups for people suffering from various deadly (and rather embarrassing) diseases -- all of which the narrator pretends to have. When the arrival of another "faker" (the wonderfully dark Marla Singer, whose role is far less central in the book than in the film), the narrator finds even the shallow comfort of testicular cancer self-help groups has been taken away from him. Luckily for him, he happens to meet Tyler Durden around this time. And it is Tyler who introduces him to the concept of fighting. What starts as a few rounds in a bar parking lot soon transforms into the nationwide movement known as Fight Club. Every night, yuppies gather together and proceed to beat each other up and get in touch with the pure destructive instinct that society has forced them to suppress. From this violent but relatively benign concept, Tyler sets out to build up an even more extreme movement and our narrator finds his own life suddenly spiraling out of control. To go into any greater details would be unfair to those who have seen neither the film nor the book. All that need be said is that the story never goes where you expect it too and the final twists -- while seeming a bit outlandish at first -- ultimately make a great deal of somewhat sickening sense. As complex as the plot eventually becomes, Palahnuik handles it all with a sparse, deceptively calm style that makes this book the literal epitome of a "page turner" -- once you start reading, you are hooked and it is truly impossible to exit the hauntingly and humorously dark world he's created until you reach the end. Palahnuik proves himself to be an admirably subtle humorist and perhaps the funniest parts of the book comes from the reader's sudden realization that Fight Club has eventually become not so much a group of guerilla freedom fighters in the culture wars but instead simply a twisted mirror image of the weepy self-help groups that it seems to stand against. While the film's final twist remains the same in the book, the end results are far more different. While I personally favor the film's ending, both book and film build up to a strong conclusion that will stick with the reader long after completion. Both the film and the book are truly original works of American Art and to see or read one without the other is to miss out on two exhilarating, similar but ultimately quite different experiences.

If you're coming to the book after seeing the film-it's ok to raise your hand here as your reviewer did also-you'll see the screenwriter pretty much took the book's contents verbatim. What's missing are a few funny moments like Marla's unwitting part in the soap-making process and some disturbing details of her's and Tyler's sex life. Plus a different and more satisfying ending (c'mon, you didn't think the narrator and Marla were really in love did you?)Palahniuk's jump-cut, stream-of-consciousness style take a little getting used to, but this is a clever black comedy that

leaves you with more to think about than the punchlines when it's over. It's about a culture of numbness, where Huxley, not Orwell, was right and the only way to feel is to drive yourself to the limits of physical pain or destroy something beautiful. You've probably seen the movie and giving away plot details would just detract from the experience. Just read it!

Chuck Palahniuk's debut novel, "Fight Club," is one of the greatest, provocative, and enlightening books written for our generation. It's a must-read, with a brilliant story, a writing style wonderfully crafted to depict the real world for as disgusting as it is, and a mischievous character who goes by the name of Tyler Durden, who's out to change the grotesque problems of modern-day society, for good.--And great brain food. There are some issues and statements given in this book that really make you think especially about how we're defining "progress" for humanity. How do we define success and progress, but by how big of a house we have, or how much we have in the bank, or how pretty our wives look? In this book, the anti-society society "Fight Club" determines success by how little you have."Only until we lose everything, are we free to do anything."Tyler Durden, Fight Club--the movieModern-day consumer-driven cultures have begun to press down on people to the breaking point, and now Tyler Durden has started his own therapy group that is growing rapidly in number by each session. It's a therapy group, unlike most of the others, and instead of giving you guided spiritual meditation and opening your chakras, it promotes violence, pain, and self-destruction. It's a group where aggressive males are sporting organized fight sessions to empower themselves by hitting rock bottom. Its called "Fight Club," and it's rapidly spreading in bars all over the United States.But I've probably said too much already. "First rule of fight club is you cannot talk about fight club, and the second rule of fight club is you cannot talk about fight club."It's one of the fastest books I've ever read, and it left me completely hooked, all the way until the end. The only thing I didn't like was all the room for expansion. Palahniuk really could have exploded on some of his ideas and perspectives a whole lot more, but it was still a great book and very reader worthy.Another dissapointment was the cost for this book. After 20th Century Fox made the snazzy cover art for the book, they also jacked up the price to 13 bucks a copy, which is very ironic, especially when Fight Club's motto was to screw perfection and neatness. But that's show-bizz.My recommendation: Watch the movie first, get blown away, then read the book and get more in-depth with the story."Fight Club" is an inspiring and completely awesome story. Watch the movie. Read the book. Both are great, and after you've been as enlightened as much as possible, start your own Fight Club. :)

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