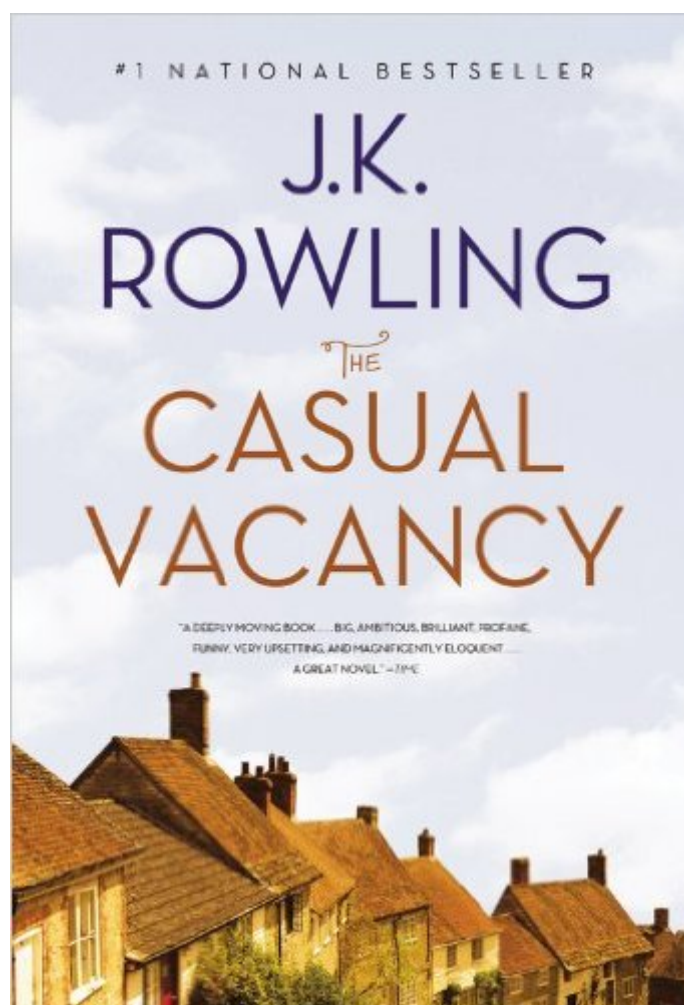


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# The Casual Vacancy



## Synopsis

A big novel about a small town...When Barry Fairbrother dies in his early forties, the town of Pagford is left in shock. Pagford is, seemingly, an English idyll, with a cobbled market square and an ancient abbey, but what lies behind the pretty façade is a town at war. Rich at war with poor, teenagers at war with their parents, wives at war with their husbands, teachers at war with their pupils...Pagford is not what it first seems. And the empty seat left by Barry on the parish council soon becomes the catalyst for the biggest war the town has yet seen. Who will triumph in an election fraught with passion, duplicity, and unexpected revelations? A big novel about a small town, *The Casual Vacancy* is J.K. Rowling's first novel for adults. It is the work of a storyteller like no other.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Having read some of the more negative views, I have to say this: Would you have ranked "1984", "The Bluest Eye", "The Grapes of Wrath", or "Great Expectations" so badly? Guess what, some of the best stories aren't fun-filled light reading! Some of the best works are disturbing, even sad. So, if your view of literature is that a book can only be worthwhile if you can breeze through it having a fun adventure, then don't bother with this book. This is something else entirely. That said, "The Casual Vacancy" is a disturbing character study. It is written in third-person omniscient point of view. It does require some effort to handle a story with some 18 or so viewpoint characters, so this book will be at too high a reading level for some. I normally don't like the omniscient POV, but this story had to be told that way and Rowling handles it with expertise. So, what is this book about? It is about pain and cruelty and why people become cruel. There are no traditional protagonists or antagonists, just

people going through life. Rowling explores the various ways that people become cruel, angry, or jaded with each main character showing a different form of cruelty and a different reason for it. And, this book is about the people that get hurt by other people's pain and anger. This isn't an easy book to read, probably the reason so many have reviewed it negatively. But, this is a brilliantly written book, just not for everyone. This novel is written with a seldom-seen narrative structure. In this structure the story begins with a simple, perhaps commonplace, connection between a group of people (in this case, someone dies, which has some effect on each of these characters).

I am an avid reader, however I never make reviews of the books I read on , this is the first one I am posting. I felt that I needed to do something to try and fight back against all these unwarranted 1 star reviews (which I have read through, and find their points appalling). The first thing is that even when people are saying that they are not comparing this novel to Harry Potter, they clearly are. Harry Potter is a fantasy series that is heavily plot driven and was originally targeted at children. The Casual Vacancy is a book based on several months in one setting focusing on the lives of a group of people. So my first piece of advice is read the blurb. J. K. Rowling clearly defined what this book was about from the very beginning; so if you are not someone who will enjoy this genre of novel, even if you do love Rowling, don't read it. It is not comparable in anyway to Harry Potter, so why are people who obviously do not like books dealing with current issues and want to read about some hero overcoming evil bothering to read it at all. Secondly I have read a lot of people complaining about the characters because they are not likeable. I, however, found them very entertaining and am sad to have parted with them. They are not likeable in the sense that I approve of their actions and I think they are good people, but they are extremely vivid characters that you feel like you know and can envisage perfectly. The characters are all quite self-centred and fail to think about anything other than their own betterment. Why is everyone whining about this? Am I the only person who has had any experience with people in the real world? Many, many people are like this.

Throwing in my two cents as one of the few people on the planet who hasn't read the HP series. (My kids were the perfect age as the books came out: young enough to love them, old enough to read for themselves.) I pre-ordered THE CASUAL VACANCY and inhaled it the minute it hit my Kindle mainly (I will admit) because it's a remarkable moment of publishing history, but I was quickly drawn into the story. The characters are people I already know, because they are the people we all already know. In the end, I liked this book on its own merits. And I liked it a lot. Rowling is a terrifically strong writer; you can't fault her on craft, and I like that she doesn't feel the need to do

any acrobatics or post a billboard - THIS WAY TO THE BRILLIANT WRITER - on every page, as is the irritating case in a lot of literary fiction. If you're able to set aside the JK ROWLING of it all, you'll love or hate this book on the strength of what it says about people. Folks. Relationships that are the opposite of magic. Politics that are petty. The youthful compulsion to crusade - at any age - and the crusty compulsion to squash the crusading of others. Early on, it's noted that Samantha "enjoyed [Miles'] pomposity with precisely the same spirit as she liked, on formal occasions, to wear a hat," and Rowling is able to enjoy the faults of these characters the same way. These are the characters Franzen would write if he had more tenderness and less literary dyspepsia. Observations about resonant, everyday dynamics - conversational currency, backhanded charity, the lie of self-sacrifice - are made with more wry than sly and not a whiff of self-righteousness. This is a quiet book; some will say cozy, but I think there's enough edge to prevent that. I loved the dry Britcom humor.

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