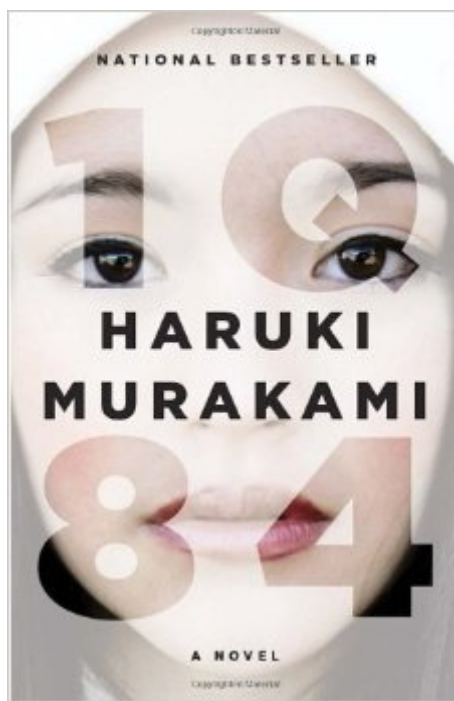


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1Q84 (Vintage International)



Synopsis

Haruki Murakami is like a magician who explains what he's doing as he performs the trick and still makes you believe he has supernatural powers . . . But while anyone can tell a story that resembles a dream, it's the rare artist, like this one, who can make us feel that we are dreaming it ourselves. • "The New York Times Book Review" The year is 1984 and the city is Tokyo. A young woman named Aomame follows a taxi driver's enigmatic suggestion and begins to notice puzzling discrepancies in the world around her. She has entered, she realizes, a parallel existence, which she calls 1Q84 — "1Q84 is for a question mark." A world that bears a question. • Meanwhile, an aspiring writer named Tengo takes on a suspect ghostwriting project. He becomes so wrapped up with the work and its unusual author that, soon, his previously placid life begins to come unraveled. As Aomame's and Tengo's narratives converge over the course of this single year, we learn of the profound and tangled connections that bind them ever closer: a beautiful, dyslexic teenage girl with a unique vision; a mysterious religious cult that instigated a shoot-out with the metropolitan police; a reclusive, wealthy dowager who runs a shelter for abused women; a hideously ugly private investigator; a mild-mannered yet ruthlessly efficient bodyguard; and a peculiarly insistent television-fee collector. A love story, a mystery, a fantasy, a novel of self-discovery, a dystopia to rival George Orwell's — "1Q84 is Haruki Murakami's most ambitious undertaking yet: an instant best seller in his native Japan, and a tremendous feat of imagination from one of our most revered contemporary writers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am rushing this review to warn other Murakami fans (fanatics?) that this one starts out surprisingly slow. It wasn't until Part 2 that the pace started approaching a typical Murakami. I am also warning those who have never read Murakami before that that is NOT the novel to start with. As always with his novels, it is of little value to attempt a plot summary. *Cults and Little People and two moons?* Yep, sounds like Murakami. In fact you can open the book to any section and after a few minutes know that you can be reading no author other than Murakami. It is a highly unusual voice, and comes through as distinctively in this as in his other books. There are two main characters, a man and a woman who knew each other as children. Both had typically Murakami odd lonely childhoods, and though they haven't seen each other since they were young, both continue to remember the other with a particular intensity. In alternating chapters we follow the lives of these two, and soon we figure out that their stories are slowly (oh so slowly) leading towards each other. As always, I am immensely enjoying reading this book. But I do have reservations. The book is too long, maybe 1/3rd too long. A typical feature in his books is to present an idea, an object, a reference from one perspective, and then repeat it, often multiple times, from other perspectives. Only through these repeated narrow views does the reader begin to piece together the true import of what is being presented. This layering of perspectives, added to the unusual nature of what is being seen, is core to the world Murakami unveils to us in his fiction. The problem in this book is that the perspectives are over-layered and at some point lose their power.

Imagine everything you love about your favorite cocktail; the way the ingredients intermingle, often with hints of flavors that, while unbearable on their own, blend magnificently with others to create a mixed concoction to stimulate even the most nether regions of the human tongue. Now dump your glass into a gallon jug. Fill the jug to the 3/4 mark with water. Then add clam juice, tabasco sauce, maple syrup, nutmeg, and vanilla extract til you get to the top. Voila! You've got 1Q84. Drink it down, consumers. I'm currently 720 pages in and have resorted to skipping whole paragraphs. Why I feel the need to continue despite a blossoming blase could perhaps best be explained by my previous Murakami experience- I first read all of his books within a span of 10 days using a flood light outside of my hotel in Singapore. Despite this I just can't see the point of 1Q84 (other than length, of course). Put simply, 1Q84 is a meandering odyssey to nowhere in particular. Reading 1Q84, you'll find that many of Murakami's "trademarks" are present: the contrast of an ultra-sentimental/nostalgic (*natsukashii* -_-) love story to its surreal sci-fiesque backdrop; minute details of each character's appearance and daily routine to make up for an otherwise flat individual;

allusions to Western artists galore. What 1Q84 fails to provide is something to tie everything together into a neat little package to make me care what happens. The two main characters are eternally and subliminally united by troubled youths, voided personalities, and a single hand grab decades prior to the events of the story.

I have also read all of Murakami's books, including the short story collections, Pinball, and his book on running. As I read through all of his previous books, I was mesmerized, unable to put the book(s) down, often reading or re-reading them in a single day. Frequently, I have had the rather strange experience of feeling like my mind was being opened, not merely creatively, but physically, even feeling like I was losing my grip on this world - and no, that isn't a normal experience for me. However, almost immediately, as I began 1Q84, I was disappointed. The beginning of the book hardly even seemed like Murakami and I had the distinct feeling that he was pushing himself to write rather than being internally driven to expression as in all of his prior books. Instead of the book flowering creatively and dynamically from some unconscious well into a new world, this one seemed crafted logically, and philosophers (Camus excepted) are rarely great fiction writers. Because of this predetermined path that Murakami seems to have for this novel, he apparently failed to realize some rather silly mistakes, particularly in places where he was attempting to move the plot forward, using artificial means to get to where he wanted the plot to be. The initial conversation with Fuka-Eri's guardian is a great example. The guardian is talking about how concerned he was for Fuka-Eri's parents who had seemingly disappeared within the religious cult of Sakigake and how he was attempting to find out more about them but hitting a brick wall. The problem is those parents had apparently abandoned their 10 year old daughter, and the parents last known whereabouts are within Sakigake, as founding members.

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