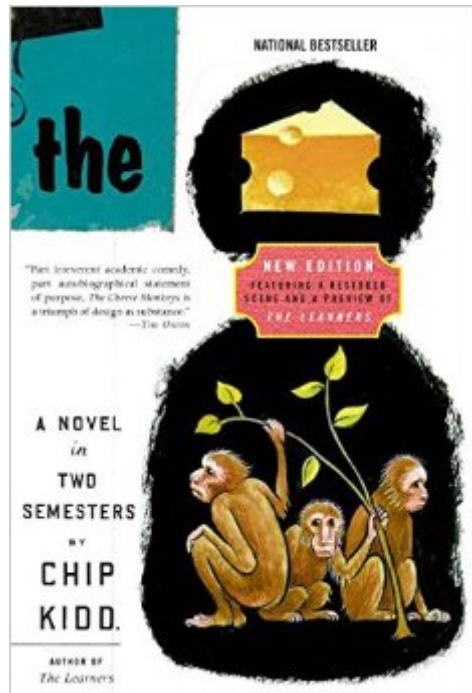


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The Cheese Monkeys: A Novel In Two Semesters



Synopsis

After 15 years of designing more than 1,500 book jackets at Knopf for such authors as Anne Rice and Michael Chrichton, Kidd has crafted an affecting and entertaining novel set at a state university in the late 1950s that is both slap-happily funny and heartbreakingly sad. *The Cheese Monkeys* is a college novel that takes place over a tightly written two semesters. The book is set in the late 1950s at State U, where the young narrator, has decided to major in art, much to his parents's dismay. It is an autobiographical, coming-of-age novel which tells universally appealing stories of maturity, finding a calling in life, and being inspired by a loving, demanding, and highly eccentric teacher.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars See all reviews (96 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Though Chip Kidd is best known as a "graphic designer" for book covers (as opposed to "commercial artist," a distinction he makes in the book), his talent as a writer could propel him into a whole new field--and this book into cult icon status. With a clarity of vision perhaps brought on by hindsight, he lays bare the emotional and intellectual confusion of a naïve, first year art student at a state university, a character who must find himself in an atmosphere which requires him to evaluate all the ideas and values he's uncritically absorbed to date. The character, who feels autobiographical, is lively, funny, and, I thought, totally believable, and I suspect that any reader who has ever taken an art course will empathize, if not identify, with him in some way. As the speaker lives through this "novel in two semesters," he is profoundly affected by an off-the-wall female upperclassman, Himilysy Dodd, a free-spirited, hard-drinking woman of strong opinions,

willing to challenge everyone and everything. Opposing hypocrisy wherever she finds it (virtually everywhere), Himillsy serves as a quirky mentor during the speaker's first two art classes, the second of which is with Winter Sorbeck, a never-to-be-forgotten instructor who turns his students' thinking inside-out, viciously critiquing not only of their work but also their personalities. As "Happy" deals with Sorbeck, Himillsy, the usual freshman tensions, fraternity parties, exams, critiques, and all-nighters, the reader shares his anxieties and feels his growth. The amusing cover of the book resembles a doodled-on freshman text, with a magic marker message written on the binding and side of the closed book, bleeding into the pages themselves.

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