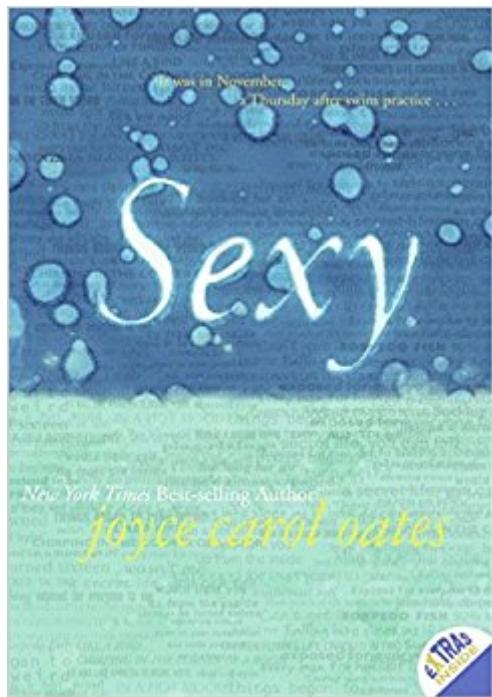


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# Sexy



## **Synopsis**

The most provocative young adult novel yet from New York Times bestâ "selling author Joyce Carol Oates. Darren Flynn is popular, goodâ "looking, and has a spot on the varsity swim team. But after what happened that day in November (did it happen?), life is different for Darren. Now his friends, his family, even the people who are supposed to be in charge are no longer who Darren thought they were. Who can he trust now? In her third novel for young adults, the author of the acclaimed Big Mouth & Ugly Girl leads readers on an internal journey of selfâ "discovery, moral complexity, and sexuality.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book is exquisite and marks another transitional point in Ms. Oates writing style. The book centers around the development of a sexual identity in her protagonist, Darren. Darren is 16 going on 17 in the story, which takes place over about a 1 year time frame. Oates is particularly specific and incisive with her psychological development of the character's sexual identity. In addition, there are several powerful subplots or themes concurrently unfolding in the story. But perhaps the most significant of these is the result of a person being falsely accused of a sexual crime. Despite the fact that this person has passed a lie detector and there is no tangible evidence against him, neither physical nor testimonial; not even enough to show cause to arrest him. Yet this does not stop the entire town from believing precisely the opposite of the truth. In a most profound manner, Joyce illustrates just how the "appearance of impropriety" is just as bad as an actual impropriety. Oates'

writing style is particularly fascinating in this book. It is a conflation of all her previous talents, with elements of Barthelme image fragments and D.H. Lawrence style deep psychological introversion; it also combines her prior writing styles with her Rosamund Smith (her pseudonym) style in its page turning readability. The character of this style is very, very different; and leaves the reader to interpret much more than Oates usually does. Yet it is also gripping and charismatic in the manner in which she uses it. This is one of the finest of her novels so far, and completes the transitional writing style, which seems to have been so prevalent, but developmental in her book "Rape: A Love Story." The book is recommended for almost all readers, it is a thriller, a classic and a mystery rolled all into one. The feelings and empathy she displays here are seriously professional. The book is truly a bit magical.

I decided to give this book a whirl because I have heard wonderful things about Joyce Carol Oates's Young Adult offerings. *Sexy* is quite a compelling and thought-provoking novella. When an English teacher is accused of committing a sexual crime, it is up to young Darren to speak in his favor. But Darren is overwhelmed with confusions regarding his sexuality. Darren is quite a popular sixteen-year-old who is part of the swimming team that one of the boys, out of spite for having been flunked, accuses Mr. Tracy of being a pedophile. Darren struggles with his identity and the reader wonders whether or not he is indeed gay. There are various twists throughout the novel. The novella may seem disjointed at times -- especially toward the end -- but that is because Oates wants you to read between the lines and understand the sort of confusion Darren is going through. The language is remarkable; you feel as though you are having a conversation with the narrator. The language is also quite stark and ambiguous at times, which leaves a lot of room for interpretation. That is the reason why the writing may seem disjointed at times, but this is done on purpose. I was able to feel Darren's loneliness and confusions as though it were my own. His inability to share his insecurities with others spoke volumes. That is what makes *Sexy* an incredible book that all adolescents, male or female, should read. The novella is thought provoking in more ways than one. Once again, Joyce Carol Oates has wowed me with this effort. This isn't her best book -- her short-story collections are much more literary -- but it is one of the best YA books I have read in a long time. I cannot recommend *Sexy* enough.

I really enjoyed *Sexy*. Coming from a teacher point of view and former librarian, I would not have titled it "Sexy". I think the book is so much more than its title but, that is what the parents are going to see and it might inhibit some students from picking up a great book. The book explores so many

aspects of teen turmoil. I loved the ending!!

If I were stuck on a desert island and could only bring one author with me, I would definitely bring something by Joyce Carol Oates. I've probably read about 15 of her books over the last several decades and she never fails to deliver. *Sexy* is part of her young adult series. It is every bit as good as *Big Mouth* and *Ugly Girl*, although frankly, I felt that the endings in both cases left something to be desired. Perhaps Oates believes that adolescents need more cheer than adults and has skewed her endings to be slightly more positive for the teens. At any rate, *Sexy* is about Darren, a 16-year-old pretty boy who is coming to terms with his sexual identity. It discusses ethical issues like loyalty and betrayal and how hard it is for Darren to take the high road and do the right and decent thing when he's placed in a moral dilemma. As always, Joyce Carol Oates writes a character driven novel with incredibly well developed and believable main characters. She also strives to address certain social issues -- for example, homosexuality and false accusations in this book and hysteria regarding school shootings or bomb threats in *Big Mouth* and *Ugly Girl* -- and never sounds preachy while doing so. Highly recommended. *Sigrid Macdonald* Author of *D'Amour Road*

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