Every neighborhood has that house: The one with the broken down cars in the front yard; the one where the father is always out of work and starting fights with other dads; the one no one wants to go near. Twelve-year-old Jack Witcher lives in that house. And that’s just where his problems begin.

It is 1967 and Jack’s father has lost his job, yet again. The war in Vietnam is perpetually on the news, and Jack is in love with a girl named Myra. But Myra’s family is the opposite of Jack’s. Her father is well dressed and well spoken. Her brother is the town’s golden boy. Jack schemes to win Myra’s love with the only person in town who will deign to be his friend, the town jeweler and sole Jew. But when Myra’s brother goes missing, Jack’s pot-smoking older brother becomes suspect number one...

Reviews of the If Jack's in Love by Stephen Wetta

Akir

A powerful story of a bright, Southern 13-year-old boy dealing with the burdens of being a member of the pariah family in a middle-class Virginian town in the late 1960s. The story is well written, although a little slow in pacing, as young Jack pines over a girl who’s a member of one of the upper-crust families, while having to deal with both his unemployed dad, who wants to rob the jewelry...
store of a man who's befriended Jack and with his violent older brother, who abuses and threatens
the older brother of young Jack's crush. Jack pines over Myra, who returns his affection because he
is the only one in their class at school who is as smart as she is, and that connection enables her to
look past his family's lower social standing. But when her older brother, Gaylord, goes missing, the
whole town suspects if was Jack's brother who did something to him, and that dooms young Jack's
relationship. The novel offers a wonderful portrait of the dilemmas of being an outcast and the perils
of feeling threatened by one's own family members. If you enjoyed this book, I strongly recommend
Dallas Hudgens' Drive Like Hell: A Novel, which offers a similar portrait of a young teenage boy
coping with the challenges of being in a white trash family, although in a more comic vein.

This book comes closest to evoking the small-town world atmosphere as told through a child's eyes
in as successful a way as Harper Lee's classic, "To Kill a Mockingbird." Both books take place in the
southern part of the US, this one in the 1960s. Race plays a more minor role here, but the author,
Stephen Wetta, puts an emphasis on how more-affluent people might look down upon less well-off
people.

Jack is a twelve (soon to be 13) year old who is an outlier in his family; he's actually kind and
intelligent, but the rest of his male relatives are neither kind nor particularly smart. His family
becomes the epicenter of a town scandal when a rich boy goes missing and Jack's older brother is
the number-one suspect in his disappearance. This is a sweet novel, and there are great small-town
characters. You'll keep reading it until you're done, and won't want your real life to interrupt your
stay in Jack's imaginary one.

Really good crisp writing and pacing in this book, its the story of honor roll student Stan Witcher out
of place in a surrounding middle class suburb as he navigates through the shoals of his dysfunctional
family. Its hard enough being a teenager when your brother is not the primary suspect in the
disappearance of your first love's brother. A great group of supporting characters include a black
janitor blues man, Jewish jewelry store owner and KKK country club member in the segregated
1960's. Stan has a lot to teach all of us about love. It's a clever concept of a book, with the title
drawn from a Benjamin Franklin quote "If Jack's in love, he's no judge of Jill's beauty."

It started out good but ultimately disappointing. You get the idea of a good kid living in poor
circumstances but with at least one parent with good values. You want to cheer the underdog
throughout the story but the story never really unfolds. There is no twist, no surprises...what you
learn in the beginning of the story, IS the story.

When I picked up If Jack's in Love, I really didn't know what to expect. Two hundred pages later, I
looked up and noticed that I was laughing way too loud on the subway. Fellow New Yorkers were
giving me the evil eye. In short, If Jack's in Love is a fantastic book and I offer it my strongest
recommendation.

Wetta captures the voice and troubles of the book's twelve year old protagonist in an extraordinary
way. The book breathes with his dreams and fears and longing. We desperately want Jack to succeed
in his courtship of Myrna, a girl whose family is about a thousand rungs above Jack's in the town's
social hierarchy.

There is so much to love in this novel. We want Jack's mother, who is the ugliest woman in town, to
be loved right. You can feel what a tough son of a bitch his father is and are scared yourself that he'll
kick your ass if you step out of line. Each character in this novel jumps off the page and makes you
worry when they’re having a tough time and celebrate when they succeed.

What's more, Stephen Wetta paints a place that you inhabit. The town where Jack lives is rendered so perfectly, I could easily make my way around the place if I were dropped there right now.

This is one of those rare novels that manages to both explore the darkness in our souls, and make us laugh out loud at the ridiculousness of life.

Get this book. You're gonna love it.

VAZGINO

It was off to a great start, but ultimately, this book disappointed me. My favorite part of it was the author biography.

Bottom line: it reads like a first novel. Like the author hasn't quite matured yet (and I believe it is his first). Worth a read for the story, though.

Zeli

Beautiful story about tragedy within a family and how the members of that family deal with those life choices. I absolutely loved this book and cannot wait to pick it up again (after my long list of other books!). This novel will have you laughing and feeling sad for Jack all at once.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and can't wait to read the next one by this author. I put it down about a week ago, and the characters have stuck with me. Yes, it is a coming of age book for adults, but it is something more. I enjoyed the way the characters lives were patched together with the realities of the 1960's in the South. Typical challenges feel fresh and not rehashed. Anyone can relate to Jack, struggling to just live his life and be accepted as himself. The story was simple, but in the way Whetta tells it all the complexities are left for the reader to process. Jack's voice is so unique. This is a great book club choice, so many different characters and situations to discuss! Loved it!

Related PDF to If Jack's in Love by Stephen Wetta

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