

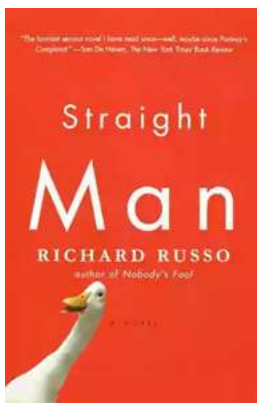
Straight Man: A Vintage Contemporaries Novel - A Hilarious Masterpiece

Imagine a world where bureaucracy runs rampant, university politics are taken way too seriously, and a straight man named William Henry Devereaux Jr. tries to navigate through the chaos with his wry humor intact. Such is the world portrayed in *Straight Man*, a masterpiece of a novel crafted by Richard Russo under the Vintage Contemporaries collection.

Published in 1997, *Straight Man* immediately captivated readers with its sharp and satirical take on academia and the quirks of human behavior. With its distinctive voice and brilliant character development, it continues to delight readers to this day.

The Plot and Setting

Straight Man takes place in the fictional college town of Railton, Pennsylvania. The narrative follows William Henry Devereaux Jr., a middle-aged English professor and interim chairman of the university's English department. As his personal life spirals out of control, he finds himself caught in a series of absurd situations, including a budget crisis, a potential murder investigation, and an ongoing conflict with his department colleagues.



Straight Man: A Novel (Vintage Contemporaries)

by Richard Russo (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 3303 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

X-Ray : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 418 pages



Russo's skill lies in his ability to blend humor with a poignant exploration of life's uncertainties. Through Devereaux's perspective, readers get an inside look at the absurdities and challenges of academia, with its power struggles, office politics, and the constant pressure to publish.

The Captivating Characters

One of the novel's greatest strengths lies in its cast of quirky and endearing characters. Russo masterfully brings them to life, leaving a lasting impression on readers.

William Henry Devereaux Jr., the protagonist, provides a refreshing dose of cynicism and wit. His dry humor and insightful observations about the absurdity of human behavior will have readers laughing out loud. As Devereaux navigates through his professional and personal life, his charm and vulnerability make him an unforgettable character.

Other key players in the story include Devereaux's eccentric colleagues, such as the overly passionate feminist English professor, a pompous department head, and a sly and manipulative department secretary. Each character adds depth and complexity to the story, further enhancing the novel's comedic value.

The Brilliance of Richard Russo

Richard Russo's storytelling ability is on full display in *Straight Man*. He masterfully blends humor and wit, providing a delightful reading experience. Russo's writing is sharp, clever, and filled with richly detailed descriptions.

The author's keen understanding of the human psyche allows him to create relatable characters who struggle with their own insecurities and desires. Russo's brilliance lies in his ability to balance comedy and depth, effortlessly weaving heart-wrenching and hilarious moments together.

The Legacy and Impact

Since its publication, *Straight Man* has garnered critical acclaim and a dedicated following. It resonates with readers not only for its entertainment value but also for its thought-provoking themes. Russo's exploration of the flaws and absurdities of academia sheds light on the human condition and our constant striving for meaning in a chaotic world.

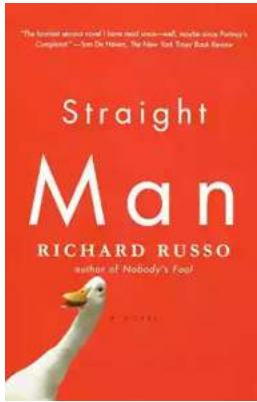
The Vintage Contemporaries imprint, under which *Straight Man* was published, is known for its commitment to publishing innovative and influential contemporary literature. This novel perfectly embodies the imprint's dedication to showcasing unique and unforgettable voices.

Straight Man is a timeless masterpiece that deserves a special place on every bookshelf. Russo's captivating storytelling, sharp humor, and rich character development make this Vintage Contemporaries novel a must-read. Its exploration of academia, human folly, and the quirks of life will leave readers both entertained and deeply moved.

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Hilarious and true-to-life, witty, compassionate, and impossible to put down, *Straight Man* follows Hank Devereaux through one very bad week in this novel from Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Russo.

William Henry Devereaux, Jr., is the reluctant chairman of the English department of a badly underfunded college in the Pennsylvania rust belt. Devereaux's reluctance is partly rooted in his character--he is a born anarchist--and partly in the fact that his department is more savagely divided than the Balkans.

In the course of a single week, Devereaux will have his nose mangled by an angry colleague, imagine his wife is having an affair with his dean, wonder if a curvaceous adjunct is trying to seduce him with peach pits, and threaten to execute a goose on local television. All this while coming to terms with his philandering father, the dereliction of his youthful promise, and the ominous failure of certain vital body functions. In short, *Straight Man* is classic Russo—side-splitting, poignant, compassionate, and unforgettable.



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