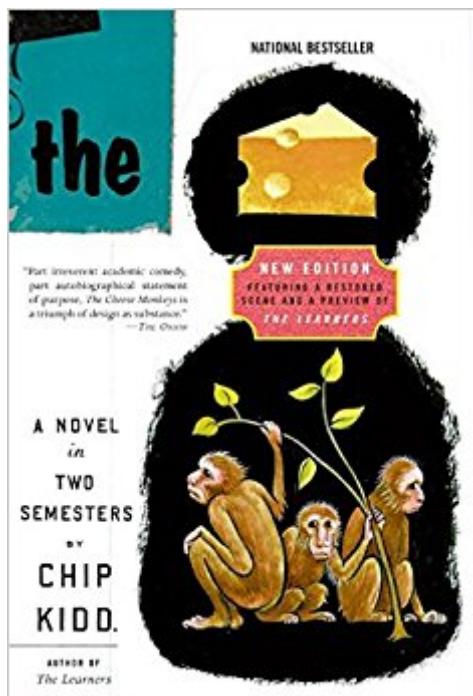


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# The Cheese Monkeys: A Novel In Two Semesters



## **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' 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**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A sharp, fast-paced, and well-packaged academic satire, along the lines of James Hyne's *The Lecturer's Tale* (LJ 12/00), this is a coming-of-age story from the point of view of the paying victim (a.k.a. the student). A na?ve fellow finds himself in the hallowed, cinderblock halls of his state art school in the 1950s where, try as he might, he can't quite capture in pencil the essence of a decapitated waterfowl, an old shoe, and a detumescent pomegranate. No wonder he becomes enthralled by the charms of one Himilsy Dodd, a free spirit and the only other enrollee in the still-life course who seems to know the meaning of "detumescent." The following semester, the duo find themselves in Art 127: Introduction to Commercial Art, and the novel shifts typeface and turns into a syllabus for what might be the ultimate graphic design class. Winter Sorbeck challenges his

students and himself perhaps beyond what today's law allows, but the results are all recorded in indelible ink on their Permanent Academic Records, though the novel's painful conclusion does find Sorbeck out job hunting. Kidd is an award-winning graphic artist responsible for the memorable book jackets for such titles as Jurassic Park and Love in the Time of Cholera. That should assure his first novel a healthy amount of publicity with attendant demand. For all larger public libraries and for art schools everywhere. Bob Lunn, Kansas City P.L., MO Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kidd is a pioneer in book cover art, but this novel marks his first attempt to write the words between his magnificent covers. It tells the story of one boy's discovery of graphic design in college and his talented and cruel professor. The "novel in two semesters" follows our narrator through his first year at the ubiquitous "State U." In the first semester, he meets Himilsy Dodd, a precociously brilliant fellow art major with a great disdain for art, and takes "Introduction to Drawing," which includes such inane exercises as drawing a still life of a large, brown, and dead bird named Renaldo. Then they take graphic design with the enigmatic William Sorbeck, and life changes forever. Sorbeck shines in three dimensions on the page, a living representation of the larger-than-life professor that luckier college students have a chance to know. This is a fascinating, funny, and wonderfully written novel of graphic design that manages to deepen the reader's appreciation for the artistry and wonder of design without a single drawing. John GreenCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Good. Weird. Really weird. One part seemed really, really unnecessary and overly graphic, but it was good overall and pretty damn funny at times.

Some funny parts. The protagonist student and antagonist art professor are entertaining, but the bohemian girlfriend is over the top to the point of being tiresome. The writing is good, but the storyline is fractured.

Fantastic. New original, creative, keeps you going yet at the same time is a light enough read that you can enjoy it while camping/in the car/on the bus to and from wherever you're going. Kidd's writing is beautiful. It flows in such a natural current, a hypnotic joining of letters and punctuation that just saying the sentences out loud turns novel to poetry. Great characters, interesting plot, and something excitingly new and inventive in a world that is leaning towards rehashing the same plot

over and over and over.

The Cheese Monkeys is a rare kind of novel--completely off the wall, yet completely accessible, completely readable. It's the story of a freshman at a huge state college who decides to major in art because he knows it will be mishandled in some mediocre way and for his first semester, it is. He takes drawing from a woman whose artistic expertise and tastes even this 18 year old disdains. The class, however, still has its merits. He manages to befriend two diametrically opposed women who take his second semester art class--commercial (or maybe its graphic) arts. The professor is borderline insane, as are many of the assignments. Kidd does an excellent job of evoking the weirdness and the fun of college. The ending of the novel is a little bizarre, and Kidd does manage to fill the book with much of what appears to be his own philosophy of art (its not forced, which is refreshing). The novel is funny and clever and I really enjoyed it. Well done.

The book kept me turning the pages. It was shocking, it was revolting, it was funny, it was lovely. Yes, some people may say the ending wasn't great or call it a "cop-out", but I love the ending. Not every ending can end with a kiss and a sticker. Sometimes it ends with the grill of a diesel truck smacking into you at 75mph. And those endings are the ones we remember.

I read this book back in 2003, before my graphic design professor put this on our reading list. It captured me. I love Chip Kidd. He has a great writing style and I love the design of this book. Thats what makes this personal. He take a book and recreates it using an imagination like no other. Touche!

You have to hold the hardcover version of this book in your hands to truly appreciate it. Little delights are everywhere. Thank you messages run around the cover's edge. Hidden slogans lurk in plain view. Even the normally-boilerplate copyright statement seduces the eye. The fact that the enclosed story proves every bit as diverting is almost a bonus.

But Kidd needs to work on character development. Cheese Monkeys has the standard key players in this kind of scenario - Naive Young Narrator, Shocking Misfit Who Dresses Oddly, Southern Transplant, Egotistical Professor Who Teaches Through Fear, etc. No idea who these people really are or how they became the sketches of personality we are presented. Kidd also needs to work on better endings. Read Donna Tartt's Secret History instead.

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