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# Ghost World



## Synopsis

1998 Ignatz Award Winner, Outstanding Graphic Novel: The inspiration for the feature film and one of the most acclaimed graphic novels ever. *Ghost World* has become a cultural and generational touchstone, and continues to enthrall and inspire readers over a decade after its original release as a graphic novel. Originally serialized in the pages of the seminal comic book *Eightball* throughout the mid-1990s, this quasi-autobiographical story (the name of one of the protagonists is famously an anagram of the author's name) follows the adventures of two teenage girls, Enid and Becky, two best friends facing the prospect of growing up, and more importantly, apart. Daniel Clowes is one of the most respected cartoonists of his generation, and *Ghost World* is his magnum opus. Adapted into a major motion picture directed by Terry Zwigoff (director of the acclaimed documentary *Crumb*), which was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. This graphic novel is a must for any self-respecting comics fan's library. Two-color comics throughout

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dan Clowes' graphic novel, "*Ghost World*" tells the story of Enid Coleslaw and her best friend Rebecca during the months between their high school graduation and the following October. The girls curse a lot, obsess over freaks and strange events in their lives and eventually come to realize their childhood friendship may not survive their transition into adulthood. Clowes has an amazing ability to zero in on life's smallest moments and find in them a fragile poetry. He's also not afraid to make his characters fallible, and sometimes, in the manner of callous youth, even cruel. Enid and Rebecca dub a waiter "Weird Al" because of his curly hair, and play a rude prank on a poor boob

whose only crime was to gain their notice by placing a pathetic personal ad. And yet you won't hate the characters. They're vulnerable and honest in a very believable way, and their emotional journey through their final months together accurately depicts longing and unease, their nostalgia for things the way they were, and their need for different lives. For Rebecca, it's to hold onto things as they are, and for Enid, it's to go someplace else not to find herself, but to become someone different. The story's also full of humor and mystery. Enid and Rebecca inhabit a world of strange graffiti, of diners and run-down apartments where things tend to happen just outside the frame, or within windows. And Clowes' two-toned, semi-realistic, sometimes cartoony depiction of the various geeks, pervos and schmoes who inhabit "Ghost World" is dead on... the dopey expressions, the sudden crises, the need to feel something and the fear that accompanies that desire... it's all there in his characters' faces. Reminiscent of Will Eisner's work (and just a touch of Charles Burns'), and with a hip, modern feel, "Ghost World" provides a truly amazing and unique reading experience.

Seeing what was one of 2001's refreshing alternatives to the cinema, i.e. Terry Zwigoff's adaptation of Daniel Clowes' Ghost World, was what prompted me to get the graphic novel that inspired the movie, and I was NOT disappointed, believe you me. Most of the scenarios seen in the movie are in the book. The garage sale, the lame comedian, the "Satanists," the 50's diner with "Weird Al," the prank call leading to the fake date, the note on Josh's door, etc. Two of them involve different characters. Enid's visit to the adult shop has Josh as her unwilling escort, while the recipient of the fake date was an unnamed character. Seymour was the substitute in the movie for both occasions. The interactions between Enid and Rebecca are realistic and human, as the bored duo spend days looking for excitement. Towards the end, their friendship gets frayed, as both have different visions of where they want to be, and the differences between them become pronounced and explored. Rebecca wants to belong somewhere, but Enid isn't sure. The humor here is more human and natural while being profane at times. Certain characters add to the laughs, such as the obnoxious John Ellis, a right-leaning WASP who endorses controversial views and people, such as an ex-priest into child porn. He might as well be a refined Eminem. He constantly taunts Enid whenever they meet. In one conversation, we learn poor Enid's last name--Coleslaw. Enid: "My Dad has his name changed legally!" To which Ellis replies, "From what... three-bean salad?" Now that's funny! Another bit: Enid: "Look how hot we are... How come no boys ask us out on dates?" In the next frame, she says "Maybe we should be lesbos!" to which Rebecca says "Get away from me!" Josh may be awkward and shy, but he is, as Enid tells him, "the last decent person on Earth." Both want to go out with him, but he is put off by Enid's sarcasm and he isn't sure about Rebecca.

When pressed on his political views, he says he endorses "policies opposed to stupidity and violence,... cruelty in any form, censorship..." That makes two of us. I've wondered this since I saw the movie, but does the bus stop where Norman finally gets his bus and where Enid goes, symbolizes hope? There's no interaction with Norman in the book, but it's revealed that the bus line has been reopened, while there's no such information provided in the movie. The novel doesn't change the symbolism of the bus stop. Compare the book to the movie, which is different in some ways, but still explores the themes of alienation and growing up; see how perfect Thora Birch and Scarlet Johansson were in playing Enid and Rebecca. Both are stunning. Truly a rare gem of a comic.

Okay so I admittedly didn't exactly recognize myself in Enid and Rebecca, but who among us didn't know others who did talk and act like this, if not ourselves? Here Clowes displays his uncanny ability to capture the essential young adult. Enid and Rebecca come out of the pages and grab you where you know you recognize them: Memory Lane. Daniel Clowes creates such realistic characters, that I felt quite awed at his ability and artistry in concisely capturing the awkwardness, self-doubt, angst, and plain stupidity/cruelty of the Teen. Yet he doesn't create portraits of these characters that are overly-bleak. There is a yearning you can feel the girls go through, and I don't mean sexual frustration, but a dire longing to go beyond that threshold of childhood into... well, something more than what they've known. It's not an easy or pretty journey to make, but in their own ways they attempt. The outcome includes misunderstandings, hurt feelings, reconciliation, confusion, and then, as naturally as they felt being together, they fall into separate paths. The movie is not the same as the book, but it embodies a similar spirit. It's honest, admittedly gritty, and Clowes captures well the outward decorum as well as the inward struggles of the Teen: great chasm between childhood and adulthood.

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