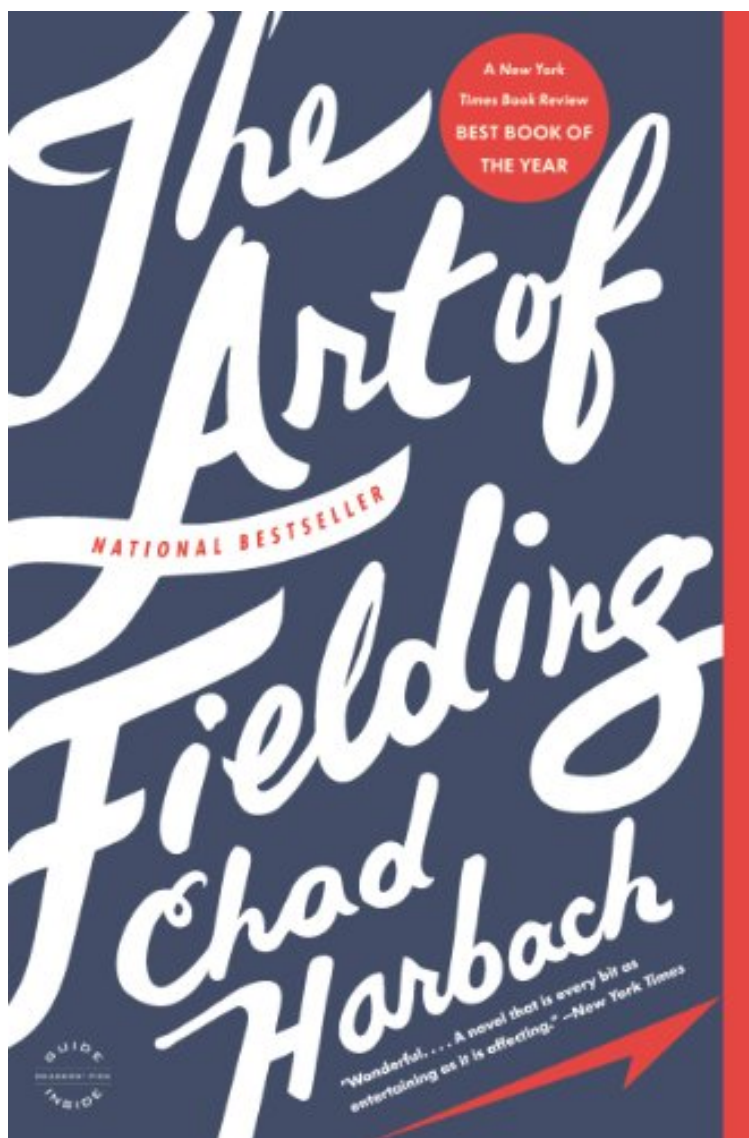


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# The Art of Fielding: A Novel (English Edition)



Par Chad Harbach

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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAt Westish College, a small school on the shore of Lake Michigan, baseball star Henry Skrimshander seems destined for big league stardom. But when a routine throw goes disastrously off course, the fates of five people are upended.Henry's fight against self-doubt threatens to ruin his future. College president Guert Affenlight, a longtime bachelor, has fallen unexpectedly and helplessly in love. Owen Dunne, Henry's gay roommate and teammate, becomes caught up in a dangerous affair. Mike Schwartz, the Harpooners' team captain and Henry's best friend, realizes he has guided Henry's career at the expense of his own. And Pella Affenlight, Guert's daughter, returns to Westish after escaping an ill-fated marriage, determined to start a new life.As the season counts down to its climactic final game, these five are forced to confront their deepest hopes, anxieties, and secrets. In the process they forge new bonds, and help one

another find their true paths. Written with boundless intelligence and filled with the tenderness of youth, *The Art of Fielding* is an expansive, warmhearted novel about ambition and its limits, about family and

friendship and love, and about commitment--to oneself and to others. *Revue de presse* "Reading *The Art of Fielding* is like watching a hugely gifted young shortstop: you keep waiting for the errors, but there are no errors. First novels this complete and consuming come along very, very seldom." Jonathan Franzen, author of *Freedom* "Chad Harbach's *The Art of Fielding* is one of those rare novels--like Michael Chabon's *Mysteries of Pittsburgh* or John Irving's *The World According to Garp*--that seems to appear out of nowhere and then dazzles and bewitches and inspires until you nearly lose your breath from the enjoyment and satisfaction, as well as the unexpected news-blast that the novel is very much alive and well." James Patterson "An intricate, poised, tingling debut. Harbach's muscular prose breathes new life into the American past-time, recasts the personal worlds that orbit around it, and leaves you longing, lingering, and a baseball convert long after the

last page." Ta Obrecht, author of *The Tiger's Wife* "Chad Harbach has hit a game-ender with *The Art of Fielding*. It's pure fun, easy to read, as if the other *Fielding* had a hand in it - as if Tom Jones were about baseball and college life." John Irving "That baseball rewards languid virtuosos and frothing monomaniacs about equally is one of the game's weird fascinations. That *Academe* does the same would not be useful information in the hands of a hack. But *The Art of Fielding* marries the national pastime to the life of the mind, takes off running, and never flags. Chad Harbach's pen shatters stereotypes like fastballs shatter bats. His sentence-making keeps things fluid and tense as a September pennant race. When the best shortstop alive sounds believably like a Tibetan lama, and when a thrown ball striking a shovel head at dawn leaves your own head ringing with certainty that truth and friendship have triumphed, you know you're in the hands of a writer you can trust." David James Duncan, author of *The Brothers K* and *The River Why* "Spectacular!

*The Art of Fielding* is a wise, warm-hearted, self-assured, and fiercely readable debut, which heralds the coming of a young American writer to watch. Harbach's characters live and breathe, yearn, ache, and in the end, make you love them for their flaws. You won't want this book to end." Jonathan Evison, author of *All About Lulu and West of Here* "Here is that rarest of pleasures, a baseball novel by someone who really knows baseball. The beautiful part is that *The Art of Fielding* is mere baseball fiction the way *Moby Dick* is just a fish story. I read this vividly written, powerfully imagined story of a group of young ballplayers and the small-college world they inhabit in a single weekend--read it when I was supposed to be going to the park, making lunch, seeing a movie. Chad Harbach is that kind of writer, so affecting, subtle, funny and true that he gets in the way of your plans and makes everything better." Nicholas Dawidoff author of *The Catcher Was A Spy* and editor of *Baseball: A Literary Anthology* "Not being a huge fan of the national pastime, I

found it easy to resist the urge to pick up this novel, but once I did I gave myself over completely and scarcely paused for meals. Like all successful works of literature *The Art of Fielding* is an autonomous universe, much like the one we inhabit although somehow more vivid." Jay McInerney, author of *Bright Lights, Big City* and *How It Ended* "Easily one of the best books of the year, *The Art of Fielding* is a triumph in every way, from glittering storytelling talent to an emotional depth of the rarest kind. I savored every page and plot line, and hated to see it end. Comparisons will abound--everything from *The Natural* to *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* to *Infinite Jest*--but they need not be offered, because this one will stand on its own for years to come." Michael Koryta, author of *The Ridge* "Beautifully made, surpassingly human, and quietly subversive, *The Art of Fielding* restores one's faith in the national pastime--i.e., reading and writing novels." Benjamin Kunkel, author of *Indecision* "The *Art of Fielding* is terrific. It is a baseball novel the way

*Bang the Drum Slowly* is a baseball novel--it is about much, much more. The plot builds and builds, the characters are spirals of fault and goodness, the descriptions of action are precise and shining." John Casey, author of *Compass Rose* "It's left a little hole in my life the way a really good book will, after making room in my days for reading it--which is also what a really good book will do." Jonathan Franzen, *TIME* "Astonishingly assured yet seemingly effortless...Sport is the metaphor here, but it is only that; [*The Art of Fielding*] is a wonderful tale of youth, ambition, love, and a little, unpredictable thing called life. In other words, it's a whole other ballpark." Sara Nelson, *O, The Oprah Magazine* "Chad Harbach can make anything mesmerizing: a potato cube in a bowl of clam chowder, a college baseball player's batting average, the antics of teenagers, the antics of grownups, the consequences of falling in love, the consequences of falling from grace. What a beautiful book this is, a feast to gulp and savor." Joanna Scott "An immediately accessible narrative reminiscent of John Irving, Harbach...draws readers into the lives of his characters, plumbing their psyches with remarkable psychological acuity, and exploring the transformative effect that love and friendship can have on troubled souls. And, yes, it's a hell of a baseball story, too, no matter who

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wins."Bill Ott, Booklist (starred review)"[The Art of Fielding] emerges fully formed, a world unto itself. Harbach writes with a tender, egoless virtuosity...There's just something so easy and riveting about the way this book's layers unfold; not since Lonesome Dove have I been so sorry to let a group of characters go."Andres Corsello, GQ"A debut swinging for the fences...You don't have to like baseball to savor Chad Harbach's sumptuous debut novel, a wise and tender story of love and friendship, ambition and the cruelty of dashed dreams, featuring an appealing cast of characters.... Harbach demonstrates an impressive gift for balancing his exploration of these fragile entanglements with an absorbing, well-plotted story, so we're rooting as hard for the small company of troubled souls as we are for the ragtag Westish nine. There aren't many books of 500 pages that feel too short. But like a true fan enjoying a game of baseball as it scrolls its leisurely signature across a summer afternoon, there are moments when you will find yourself wishing The Art of Fielding would never end. It's that good."Harvey Freedenberg, BookPage"Written with wit and grace and the true fan's eye and ear for the subtleties of the game. With The Art of Fielding, Harbach turns a double play that would make Skrimshander and Roth proud: The book will knock out baseball and literature fans alike."Sports Illustrated"Witty, intellectual and big-hearted."Angie Drobnic Holan, The St. Petersburg Times"Harbach spins this simple premise into a wide-ranging book about desire and loss, friendship and loneliness....A rich, engrossing story."Rob Brunner, Entertainment Weekly"[The Art of Fielding] is not only a wonderful baseball novel--it zooms immediately into the pantheon of classics, alongside The Natural by Bernard Malamud and The Southpaw by Mark Harris--but it's also a magical, melancholy story about friendship and the coming of age that marks the debut of an immensely talented writer...Mr. Harbach has the rare abilities to write with earnest, deeply felt emotion without ever veering into sentimentality, and to create quirky, vulnerable and fully imagined characters who instantly take up residence in our hearts and minds. He also manages to re-work the well-worn, much-allegorized subject of baseball and make us see it afresh, taking tired tropes about the game (as a metaphor for life's dreams, disappointments and hopes of redemption) and interjecting them with new energy. In doing so he has written a novel that is every bit as entertaining as it is affecting....You don't need to be a baseball fan to fall under this novel's spell, but THE ART OF FIELDING possesses all the pleasures that an aficionado cherishes in a great, classic game: odd and strangely satisfying symmetries, unforeseen swerves of fortune, and intimations of the delicate balance between individual will and destiny that play out on the field."Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times"His first time at bat, Harbach wins. Confident and deliberate, Art imitates baseball...The Art of Fielding is an old-fashioned novel in the very best way--unhurried, engrossing, a universe unto itself...It's that rare, big social novel with the quiet confidence not to overreach for grand statements on the times, and a debut that never feels like it's straining to impress. There's just quiet confidence in honest storytelling--Harbach is all Derek Jeter, not Alex Rodriguez....Harbach's images are so lively and surprising, his characters so intoxicatingly engaging, that The Art of Fielding becomes something special and unique, a complete and satisfying fictional universe....Harbach, in his first time at bat, has made the near-impossible act of writing a very good American novel feel almost effortless."David Daley, USA Today"[A] triumphant first novel...Like a great baseball game, the novel manages to feel traditional and contemporary all at once."Sam Sacks, The Wall Street Journal"Harbach is witty, wise...engaging...Harbach excels in writing about baseball and those who play it...Harbach's hand is sure.... echoes of the 19th-century greats lend unexpected richness to a book that ends up high in the standings."Dennis Drabelle, The Washington Post"Chad Harbach does not merely echo Moby Dick. In at least one respect, he goes Mr. Melville one better. Whereas Ishmael alone symbolically dies and then bobs to the surface in Melville's novel, Harbach puts the nogginns of two of his major characters in the paths of potentially lethal pitches. Both young men are feared dead. Each rises to play again. So The Art of Fielding is ambitious, and Harbach's reach is not limited... Though there's plenty of baseball in The Art of Fielding, Harbach's novel is no more about the game than Moby Dick is about whaling. Both books examine determination and striving, which can ennoble one or drive one mad... The invocations of Melville's ambition and achievement are lightened by the fun Harbach has with his characters."Bill Littlefield, Boston Sunday Globe"Charming...Watchers of Friday Night Lights will be at home in Harbach's generously told novel...But there's also much more here to interest readers of the contemporary literary novel, a genre that's clearly a preoccupation of Harbach's....The main order of business here is to entertain, and in this Harbach succeeds. His prose, furthermore, is uncommonly resourceful...Such torches are more than surface felicities. They serve a larger purpose in a story that is, after all, about virtuosity and promise--about a young man whose future is incandescently bright, until he becomes too aware of its fragility....The dream of perfection deferred allows Harbach to tell a story about our national pastime that manages, as well, to be about our

historical present--in other words, a story about fallibility."Wyatt Mason, The New Yorker"Harbach takes plenty of cues from other great baseball novels, like Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* and Philip Roth's *The Great American Novel*, but more so from Melville, in a display of cleverness that wraps around Westish life.... *The Art Of Fielding* captures the bright, big sense of purpose Henry and the other Harpooners feel as they step onto the field... Henry's attachment to baseball and his new home delivers a satisfying wallop of meaning that ultimately links his friends' fates with his."Ellen Wernecke, *The Onion A.V. Club*"Sharp-witted... *The Art of Fielding*...is an affecting portrait of the seductive powers of athletic talent and society's eagerness to indulge its possessors. It also transcends baseball.... As the novel expands into a meditation on young love and male bonds, Harbach's prose remains as exacting as, say, firing a leather sphere at an awaiting glove."Mike Peed, *Men's Journal*"*The Art of Fielding* is a long, generous and deeply absorbing story that more than lives up to all the pre-publication anticipation....Harbach writes in precise, intelligent, yet very accessible language, and he seems to understand what makes college students tick.... Harbach is wise enough to understand what baseball really represents -- the folly of pursuing perfection; the challenge of bringing mind and body into perfect union -- and he explores these themes with exceptional grace on and off the field, through the perspectives of a half-dozen beautifully drawn characters.... Over the course of two baseball seasons and 500-plus pages, we become immersed in these people's lives in the way that we only can in an epic novel; the closer the book draws to its conclusion, the slower we begin to read, for fear that we'll have to bid adieu to this beautifully conjured universe too soon. Indeed, Harbach works wonders in painting an expansive portrait of this college... The sport doesn't matter as much as the emotions and anxieties that it evokes in us: the fear that we won't be as good today as we were yesterday or the day before; the doubt that plagues even the most confident souls....[a] stirring, singular novel -- the best new work of American fiction that I've read this year."Christopher Kelly, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*"A debut novelist delivers his assured pitch right into our strike zone.... *The Art of Fielding* lives up to the hype.... Harbach's prose is considered, clean and pastoral, and he makes it easy to root for each of his characters. *The Art of Fielding* is a decidedly American story, impeccably told. Skrimshander's pride, his struggle to regain his confidence and his dreams of a second act will resonate with baseball fans, readers of Franzen-style family dramas and anyone drawn to smart, funny, engaging writing.... this novel came right down the middle of my strike zone. But as *The Art of Fielding* is such a rich and occasionally heartbreaking experience, others will not only realize where their strike zone is, but they'll let Harbach paint the corners for them."Corban Goble, *The Awl*"Large-hearted... Harbach writes about the Harpooners with touching intimacy (and an impressive knowledge of baseball).... expansive, thought-provoking and ambitious... This is a big book in every way... If *The Art of Fielding* begins as a baseball story, so it ends as one, too--poignantly, beautifully, and improbably."David Goodwillie, *The Daily Beast*"[A] brilliant, intensely readable first novel...Harbach, whose knowledge of baseball is encyclopaedic but never ponderous, resists the temptation to which many other baseball writers...have succumbed: to write not a novel but a version of the core baseball myth, the game as a pastoral vision of America, in which the heroes and villains, the fictional stand-ins for the Babe and the Say-Hey Kid and Shoeless Joe, enact predestined roles. Instead, Harbach finds analogies in other literary genres: the epic, the picaresque, the coming-of-age story, the self-scrutinizing memoir.... In an endearingly traditional way, he subordinates the ironic commentaries and the mirroring influences to the tender, funny, poignant story of Henry's travails and their unexpected resolution."Richard Horwich, *Newsday*"Chad Harbach makes the case for baseball, thrillingly, in his slow, precious and altogether excellent first novel.... It seems a stretch for a baseball novel to hold truth and beauty and the entire human condition in its mitt, well *THE ART OF FIELDING* isn't really a baseball novel at all, or not only. It's also a campus novel and a bromance (and for that matter a full-fledged gay romance), a comedy of manners and a tragicomedy of errors...Welcome to the big leagues, kid. Now get out there and play."Gregory Cowles, *The New York Times Book* "[A] delightful debut...Erudite enough to reference Herman Melville, Homer and T.S. Eliot, yet sufficiently geeky to pay homage to the epic struggles of ill-fated ball-players such as Steve Blass, Steve Sax and Mackey Sasser... a showcase for...Harbach's mad skills, his humor and above all, the humanity with which the author infuses each of his characters...The author's observations about baseball can be both pithy and witty... wonderfully insightful. And the writing throughout, as Walt Whitman once said of the game itself, is glorious...a natural talent, one who has the potential to become a Hall of Famer."Adam Langer, *San Francisco Chronicle*"Dazzling debut....*The Art of Fielding* might be the best book you'll read this year....Harbach's debut novel has a succulent heft to it--a growing weight of love and devotion that is comprised of Harbach's deft and boundlessly emotive writing. The remarkable sincerity with which he

develops characters renders their conflicts and complexities so authentic it's impossible not to care about them. The Art of Fielding is youthful, invigorating and fiercely intelligent writing....[It] is not really a book about baseball. Westish College sports are a backdrop as life's more prevalent struggles--doubt, romance, grief and determination--collide and merge marvellously....This is a book about love, family and dedication...A nearly flawless construction of dazzlingly clear sentences...The most enjoyable aspect of The Art of Fielding is the true-to-life humanity Harbach's characters are infused with. Their heartache, loss and yearning are palpable. The Art of Fielding brims with its author's extraordinary talents. It's going to be hard waiting to see what Harbach does next."Alex Lemon, The Dallas Morning News"Inspiring...Ambitious in a refreshing way."Jim Higgins, The Milwaukee Sunday Journal-Sentinel"Debut novel hits a grand slam...

Resplendent... Ambitious and accomplished... Harbach's characters are well developed and eminently realistic. The rich portrayals of their psychological struggles and interactions add a warmth and depth to the already colorful narrative....Harbach's novel is mature, compelling, graced with both charm and humor, and shaped as much by his expressive prose as by its memorable and substantive characterizations. Harbach is a gifted storyteller and his debut novel may well herald a fresh, new talent in the realm of contemporary American fiction. The Art of Fielding, like baseball itself, is beautiful in its simplicity, yet made great by the effortless subtlety of its many nuanced intricacies."Jeremy Barber, The Sunday Oregonian"Harbach writes with the self-assurance of a seasoned novelist. He exercises a masterful precision over the language and pacing of his narrative, and in some 500 pages there's rarely a word that feels out of place.... The Art of Fielding is somehow both confident and intimate, simple yet deeply moving. Harbach has penned one of the year's finest works of fiction."Kevin Nguyen, Louisville Courier-Journal"Fast on its way to becoming a classic of the genre."San Francisco Chronicle"Can the book possibly live up to this advance billing? In a word, yes....Harbach has pulled it off...thanks to the sheer mastery of his writing. It doesn't hurt that the baseball details are so realistic they seem stolen from an actual small college somewhere in the American heartland.... The real magic is in the way Harbach strings words together, the inventive descriptors that liven every page."James Bailey, Baseball America"An early contender for book of the year... critics have called this an entrant in the 'Great American Novel' sweepstakes.... One of the best baseball books in memory."David Swanson, Maxim"[An] endearing first novel... Harbach opens his formidable lens beyond pitch-perfect male bonding...That all its characters are crafted with an ardour equal to any ninth-inning at-bat makes THE ART OF FIELDING a marvel...Many first novels swing for the fence; Harbach's novel is the fence. Baseball fan or no, you should read it."Scott Muskin, Minneapolis Star-Tribune"A lightness of tone and style...has persisted into the published version of the book. To my mind, that pervasive lightness is one of the novel's virtues...Ultimately, I think THE ART OF FIELDING is a work of escapism--a work of escapism about the perils of escaping.... the writers who came to mind most often for me were John Irving and Mark Helprin, authors of sprawling, plot-driven, reader-friendly (but still literate) novels that are often woven with the texture of fable.... This lack of darkness and Harbach's unerring ability to imbue almost every scene with warmth and humor keeps the reader focussed on the plot, which moves quickly... The Art of Fielding has often been referred to as a baseball novel, but I think it is more truly a campus comedy, as much in the tradition of Lucky Jim and Straight Man as it is of The Natural... What Harbach accomplishes in The Art of Fielding is to create for the reader (or this reader, at any rate) a space as safe and blissful as the baseball diamond was for Henry before his errant throw. He has created that space with words. During the days that I was reading the novel, I was always delighted to escape from my own 'non-baseball world' of jobs and friends and worries and live instead in Westish, Wisconsin. I was sorry to leave when it ended, but, as the book poignantly illustrates, eventually everyone has to face reality."Jon Michaud, The New Yorker "Book Bench" Blog"[The Art of Fielding is] all in all the most delightful and serious first book of fiction that I have read in a while.... Baseball matters desperately in this novel. But so does physical affection and, whether felt by a freshman or a college president, the unquenchable desire to know another human being in a deep and important way before the end of things. In this regard, the novel takes its place among a few charmed works of art that deal with the national pastime in the context of human yearning - books by superb writers such as Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth and Mark Harris. It also stands among the best school novels we have, from This Side of Paradise to A Separate Peace."Alan Cheuse, The Chicago Tribune"It's hard to figure who wouldn't take to this captivating, breezy debut...It has it all: love, the search for identity, redemption, a superbly drawn setting, engaging characters...and baseball."John Barron, The Chicago Sunday Sun-Times"The novel feels intimate, bound up in the details of its characters' everyday lives, which Harbach relates with tenderness and observational humor, and as with any 'literary' baseball novel, the players'

personal struggles also take on a larger resonance. "Mike Doherty, Salon"[The Art of Fielding] is really about forming and nurturing relationships... Mr. Harbach practices all of the techniques of the classic literary novel, from drawing well-realized characters to developing a suspenseful plot that pulls us through." Bob Hoover, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Présentation de l'auteur

At Westish College, a small school on the shore of Lake Michigan, baseball star Henry Skrimshander seems destined for big league stardom. But when a routine throw goes disastrously off course, the fates of five people are upended. Henry's fight against self-doubt threatens to ruin his future. College president Guert Affenlight, a longtime bachelor, has fallen unexpectedly and helplessly in love. Owen Dunne, Henry's gay roommate and teammate, becomes caught up in a dangerous affair. Mike Schwartz, the Harpooners' team captain and Henry's best friend, realizes he has guided Henry's career at the expense of his own. And Pella Affenlight, Guert's daughter, returns to Westish after escaping an ill-fated marriage, determined to start a new life. As the season counts down to its climactic final game, these five are forced to confront their deepest hopes, anxieties, and secrets. In the process they forge new bonds, and help one another find their true paths. Written with boundless intelligence and filled with the tenderness of youth, *The Art of Fielding* is an expansive, warmhearted novel about ambition and its limits, about family and friendship and love, and about commitment--to oneself and to others.