

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

*John
Updike*

rabbit at rest



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Winner of the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. In John Updike's fourth and final novel about ex-basketball player Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom, the hero has acquired heart trouble, a Florida condo, and a second grandchild. His son and daughter-in-law are acting erratically, his wife Janice wants to work, and Rabbit is searching his soul, looking for reasons to live.

Rabbit at Rest Details

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From Reader Review Rabbit at Rest for online ebook

Nood-Lesse says

– Che cosa vedi? – Una specie di vermicattolo agitato, che non si ferma mai. – È la vita, –

Se hai già letto i primi tre libri della saga di Coniglio (*1), Updike sembra sussurrarti: “rilassati ci penso io”. Tu sai che puoi fidarti, non devi aver fretta, devi invece controllare bene nelle pieghe delle sue frasi più amare, perché lì son nascoste le verità che molti cercano e che poi non son disposti ad accettare.

Updike gode dell’apprezzamento di buona parte dei suoi colleghi scrittori, è in grado di riprodurre il flusso dei pensieri del suo personaggio come se usasse una GoPro mentale. La descrizione giunge ad un livello più elevato e diventa simbolo interiore, associazione di pensieri. Avviene con naturalezza e in modo ricorrente, viene spontaneo pensare a quegli scrittori che per una veronica riuscita si applaudono da soli, qui siamo al cospetto di uno scrittore che non tiene conto del concetto di straordinario.

Il punto del romanzo che ho apprezzato maggiormente è stato intorno a pag. 250, dopo una tornitura magistrale ho immaginato Updike alzarsi soddisfatto dalla sedia come se l’esperienza descritta l’avesse vissuta davvero. Lui non racconta di un uomo che invecchia, lui è quell’uomo è dentro quel personaggio e ormai, alla fine della saga, vi ha trascinato anche me. Il finale della seconda parte del libro è un po’ strascicato, la terza ha il torto di avere un titolo che è uno spoiler inammissibile (il titolo corretto sarebbe stato Pennsylvania/Florida), nonostante ciò, conduce ad un punto di svolta inaspettato.

(Così nei miei appunti)

Sono all’80% c’è stata una svolta, purtroppo il titolo della terza parte è troppo esplicativo, è un’anticipazione imperdonabile: non mi lasciare vecchio bastardo, tienimi compagnia almeno fin quando non tornerò a lavoro, ma anche i giorni successivi, quando mi sveglierò presto, o andrò a letto senza riuscire a prendere sonno. Coniglio sei un irresponsabile, un traditore, un sessuomane, hai fallito come genitore, come marito, come amante.. ma cazzo, chi ti ha inventato era un grande scrittore.

Questo e il libro precedente sono i migliori della saga, non posso garantire che vi piaceranno, posso solo dirvi che sarei felice di non averli ancora letti, di poterli leggere io al posto di chiunque non li apprezzerà.

Per quanti non temono lo spoiler, qui ci sono le impressioni di Julian Barnes
<http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubbli...>

Colonna sonora:

Vaya Con Dios - (1952 cover) - Les Paul and Mary Ford
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJkMV...>

Louis Prima Just A Gigolo I Ain't Got Nobody
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kkrb4...>

(*1)

Rabbit, Run (Corri, Coniglio, 1960)

Rabbit Redux (Il ritorno di Coniglio, 1971)

Rabbit is Rich (Sei ricco, Coniglio, 1981)
<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Rabbit At Rest (Riposa Coniglio, 1990)

Michael Finocchiaro says

This last book in the Harry Angstrom cycle by Updike looks at the end of Rabbit's life and disillusionment at the end of the 80s. It is worthy of the Pulitzer it garnered (Updike's second after the equally superb Rabbit is Rich). Suffice it to say that there is the same set of characters which we know from the previous books and a nice circular return at the very end. An essential read for understanding America on the eve of the 90s.

It is an excellent book which explores the themes of aging and death as well as fatherhood in that intimate prose which only Updike knew how to write.

brian says

we believe that with time comes wisdom, that by the time we're older we'll have acquired a natural sense of life and other people and our own self and how to live -- how to cast aside the pettiness and do away with the small things that mean nothing more than cancerous nibblings at our gut. but no. it doesn't just happen. we don't leave that stuff behind unless we make a serious effort to do so. and it's hard work. we don't wanna turn into one of those morons that's always happy and even (y'know the old 'let fury have the hour, anger can be power' business is something i firmly stand behind), but we can't be one of those people that goes home and lays in bed all night stewing about george bush or how their parents fucked them up or what they should have said to that rude dmv worker or cocky bookfacer or self-obsessed friend etc...

the Rabbit books so perfectly lay down exactly what i've spent so much of my life fighting against. and against becoming. how all those forces – the time in which one lives, nature, nurture, genes, parents, bad luck, tragic events, bad people and/or circumstances etc – all work to turn us into a petty and unhappy person. and that hate turns outward against other people and against society and you continue the legacy of unhappiness and impotence and pettiness in the form of a son/daughter who's gotta spend his/her time in the same demented struggle.

fuck that. i'm stunned by how many of my contemporaries still, in their 30s, blame who they are on their parents – there's truth in it, of course, but how personally damaging to continue to blame who you are on anything other than to realize that by a certain point who you are is who you decide to be? particularly given the privileged life even the worst off of us have in america in 2008.

so i give the individual books four stars, but i list the single volume collection with five stars. yeah, they really are more than the sum of their parts. and it's not a flawless single volume or up there with *Moby Dick* or *Don Quixote* or *War and Peace*... and i don't think they even match the majesty of Dos Passos's or Roth's USA trilogies in detailing american life and history over the first and second half, respectively, of

america in the 20th century. it's simply that the compounded power of 1500 pages of a single life over thirty years is overwhelming. and not all that much even happens. and i love this. many of the threads contained therein have false starts, other seemingly minor ones grow in significance, others are buried and lost under the weight of the pages of life, others are forgotten until a chance encounter... and as with most american lives after the third decade, it's a steady plateauing off.

i'm turning 35 next month and I can already feel it. the slowing down. i'm tired more than i ever was. i require and relish sleep more than i ever did. i don't feel as large a need for human socialization. i like things the way i like them. and i know i gotta fight this shit and be curious and surprised and sad and strange and perpetually seek out the new and reinvent myself and dig deeper and deeper and live! live! live! ...or else I wake up in the morning look in the mirror and see Rabbit.

Dorothy says

Updike's Rabbit series is, quite simply, some of the best literature I have ever read, and this last book in the series is the best yet.

Throughout, Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom has been a pretty reprehensible character and he still maintains those chops in this book. He is the unchallenged all-time champion of jerks, but here, even Rabbit sinks to new lows. The things he does are enough to make the reader thoroughly despise him. And yet...

He is so completely and utterly human. It wasn't his ambition to be a jerk. He wanted to be the hero of his life story, but his selfish and needy personality wouldn't let him. He was a user from beginning to end. He used others - especially women - to prop up his self esteem. To ease his pain.

And yet, what is the source of all this pain? A dead daughter? A truly awful mother? The loss of the only thing he truly loved - basketball? It is hard to be specific. Throughout the books, the losses mount up as the people in his life tend to die early or else find a way to escape the maelstrom that is Harry. Meantime, Harry sinks further and further into despair, dragging all those around him with him.

The latter parts of this book where Harry is alone and in interior conversation with himself remind me of nothing so much as the last luminous chapter of "Ulysses," Molly's soliloquy. Rabbit's soliloquy is more rambling, but no less heart-felt. "Heart, felt" being the operative words here.

I feel that I've spent all this time with a character that I didn't really like and yet, at the end, I felt empathy for him. I thought of all the mistakes I have made in my life, all the people I've hurt and disappointed, and I thought, "Who am I to judge Rabbit? For in so many ways, I am Rabbit."

Carole says

I read this at a suggestion from a book group. I had earlier in my life been unable to get through RABBIT, RUN, but thought maybe added maturity would help me appreciate Updike's writing more. I was wrong.

Even his gift with words (the reason for the second star in the rating) wasn't enough to make up for the thoroughly unlikable characters and depressing picture of several wasted lives. Even the style of writing I often found difficult, making the reading of this novel a slow and painful experience.

I did, however, mark a few phrases I liked:

..."the Dalai Lama can no more resign godhood than Harry (the protagonist) can resign selfhood."

..."a body eating enough at one meal to feed three Ethiopians for a day, a shameless consumer of gasoline, electricity, newspapers, hydrocarbons, carbohydrates." (the protagonist)

"He even turns off the radio, he feels so battered by pellets of experience." ("Rabbit, again.)

Rabbit invoked in me no sympathy at all--only aversion. And I don't think the author showed any reason for the evolution of this selfish character. I wonder what Updike could have done if he'd chosen to portray any positives, either in characters or in society in general?

Alex says

"What's a life supposed to be?" asks Rabbit's daughter-in-law. "They don't give you another for comparison." But at its best, that's what Updike has done with the Rabbit books. He's given us another, and it's this terrific shambling asshat of an everyman, a former athlete who goes exactly to seed right before our eyes.

Updike's ability to inhabit such a normal person with sympathy and honesty puts these books, taken together, in the Great American Novel pantheon. He's now covered Rabbit from his awful youth through his midlife crisis and into retirement. Rabbit has gained some wisdom along the way, but not a lot of it. He remains 'til the end self-absorbed, self-pitying, selfish. It feels as much like a real life as anything I've ever read does.

What's worked less well is Updike's insistence on sending Rabbit, Forrest Gump-style, stumbling through the headlines of each decade. In the 60s Rabbit encountered free love and civil rights, which utterly sank Rabbit Redux. In Rabbit is Rich's 70s he explored wife swapping, which worked out surprisingly well even though I'm 100% sure key parties are made up. (But if you'd like to play **Literary Key Party**, here are the rules.) Here in the 80s, Rabbit deals with - what else? - coke and AIDS. It feels forced and superficial. Updike gets the details right - a kindly comedian named Cosby, a flamboyant loudmouth named Trump - but Rabbit shoehorns in awkwardly.

Rabbit at Rest isn't a puzzling disaster like Rabbit Redux, but it's not great. The coke-and-AIDS bits are dumb. A parade where Rabbit is dressed as Uncle Sam is too on-the-nose. And there's a fucking lot of talk about golf, which is literally the least interesting thing in the world.

And Updike's sex can be brilliant, a way to actually move the plot forward, but he can also just type one-handed while masturbating, and that's what happens here: I found the major sex scene unbelievable no matter how desperate his partner was. ((view spoiler)) Updike is trying to wind the clock backwards: the series ends as it begins. Rabbit runs; Rabbit plays ball. He needs one last betrayal as well. But it feels dubious.

But we're also dealing with mortality, and when Updike just relaxes and gets into Rabbit's head, it's

insightful. Rabbit has reached the phase of life where friends start to die. His own suffocating heart makes him all too aware of his own fragility - "the terror of being trapped inside his perishing body, like being in a prison cell with a madman who might decide to kill him at any moment."

As a describer of America, Updike is flawed. As a describer of the human soul, he's magnificent. "For one flash," after Rabbit in full grandpa mode accidentally eats parrot food, "he sees his life as a silly thing it will be a relief to discard." It *is* a silly thing, Rabbit's life, and Updike's gotten it all on paper. My life is also fairly silly, all things considered, and it makes me feel more human to have this one to compare it to.

Julie says

While the average person may have been conducting online searches for holiday recipes this week, I was doing my own Google search. . .*which type of cigarettes did John Updike smoke?* (My poor, poor children. No Waldorf salad or candied yams for you).

That query provided me with information that I already knew, that Mr. Updike died from lung cancer, as a result of his nasty smoking habit, but my actual question wasn't answered.

Which kind of cigarettes did he smoke??

Do you know?

I don't. But I want to know. And I think about it. . . an unnatural amount. Almost every photo ever taken of John Updike features a burning cigarette drooping casually from his mouth or held loosely between his two fingers.

And, though I *loathe* cigarette smoking, I find myself thinking of that mischievous smile and that stupid cigarette hanging from his mouth, and the next thing you know, I'm Olivia Newton-John in *Grease*, pulling that damn thing slowly from his mouth, throwing it to the ground to crush under my black heel, and whispering (real close like to his face), "Tell me about it, stud." What follows from there is none of your damn business.

WHAT KIND OF A REVIEW IS THIS???

This is my kind of review. My way of informing you that I've read more John Updike than, say, 98% of the population, and, though I am not an "Updike expert," I've gone so far as to having elaborate couch fantasies with him as well.

And, having inappropriately written all of *that*, I want you to know that you can trust me when I suggest to you that you ABSOLUTELY SHOULD read the Rabbit series (his most famous work), but just quit at Rabbit #3, **Rabbit is Rich** and call it a day.

Despite what Rabbit himself advises his grandson, Roy, in this book, when little Roy explains that he left the movie theatre early because the *Dumbo* movie had upset him: "If you don't stay to the end the sadness sticks with you," I respectfully disagree. It wasn't worth it to stay to the end. The ended sucked. This novel was an overly wordy, overly written, tiresome slog. Rabbit *and* John should have both quit while they were ahead.

But, don't worry, John. This one may not have worked for me, but I've got a bad case of the feels for you. I've got a hard stack of your work, hovering close to my bed, waiting for my attention.

Was it Pall Malls? Marlboros?

Pd says

My favorite of the tetralogy. Probably because this asshole finally dies.

Lawyer says

John Updike closes out his quartet of Rabbit novels with what can only be described as a masterpiece. He won his second Pulitzer for "Rabbit at Rest." Only Booth Tarkington and William Faulkner had previously won the Pulitzer more than once.

Rabbit is semi-retired. He has a condo on the Gulf side of Florida. He maintains his historic Pennsylvania home. But things are falling apart, literally and figuratively. HIV has become an epidemic. A jet disintegrates over Lockerbie, Scotland. Cocaine is a pervasive substance striking Rabbit close to home. Nelson, Rabbit's son, now in charge of Springer Motors, has the habit. The sales statistics just don't look quite right.

And Rabbit, at only 56, is feeling his age. That tingling in the chest is worrisome. Sometimes it burns right down to his fingertips. However, Rabbit loves his salty snacks. What's a few more macadamias? And those cashews are dry roasted--his favorite.

"Rabbit at Rest" can end in only one way. Don't consider this a spoiler. Updike has taken us through three decades of Rabbit's life. This is a book about mortality, the nagging sensation of it, the fond remembrances of life when the body was leaner, the hair thicker, and the inevitable recognition of the loss of youthful invincibility.

Cashews--sounds good. Ah, yes, plenty of salt. Just the way I like them.

Stephen says

Just as the first hundred pages of RABBIT, RUN were written in a breathless pace to match their manic tone, the last hundred pages of RABBIT AT REST, which mirror the beginning moments of the series, linger on in a depressingly meaningless manner. Highway billboards, trite pop tunes from past decades, and trivial news headlines about baseball players blur with the names and minutiae of a history book, the snapshot memories of Harry's somewhat uneventful life, and the chronic ups and downs of his erratic family life. Insipid, self-destructive meal follows unhealthy meal, and the sitcoms in getaway Florida are the same idiotic mindlessness that shows on the televisions in Pennsylvania. Rabbit tries, in the last moments of his life, to find a reason for all that living, and it's not so easy to say that he does. As he staggers through bland smalltalk with a Holocaust survivor who's been reduced to a decrepit buffet patron and tries to pack a punch

in awkward conversations with his distant grandchildren, one realizes that if life does have some driving purpose, Rabbit Angstrom has never tapped into it. Even the most cherished moment of his last year on earth, a spontaneous and rather scandalous sexual encounter, is reduced to psychological rationalization and neurotic impulses by his frustratingly forgiving family, who whittle even his sex drive down to a few taboo missteps.

RABBIT AT REST is a bleakly beautiful book, with razor-sharp prose that begs to be reread and read out loud. One might expect a novel about an intimately familiar protagonist to contain some epiphanies, some poetic truths, or at least some tender moments, yet throughout the series Updike never surrendered to cliches or melodrama and nor does he here. RABBIT AT REST is a slice of reality, and sometimes reality ends in unresolved regrets and pitiful, self-defeating attempts at impossible reconciliations.

Updike is also an American historian, an ethnographer of the middle American malaise, and in RABBIT AT REST, just as with previous decades in the previous books, he captures life in the late eighties as though from some well-informed future vantage point. Debt, computers, racism, the wasteland of American industry--Updike envisions and eviscerates all of society's ills with an acuteness that leaves me wishing I could pick up something like RABBIT IN RECESSION, a 2010 novel that could maybe help us all figure out where our troublesome future might lie.

RABBIT AT REST is a splendid novel, maybe not quite as powerful and moving as RABBIT, RUN, but then again--to paraphrase Harry--when you get older it gets harder to muster the same enthusiasm you once held for everything.

Tim Frederick says

This 1991 Pulitzer Prize winning book was the last in the 4 part series written by John Updike about the life of Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom. I enjoyed this final book the most of this series maybe because the main character was the same age as me. Updike did great job continuing this series over 3 decades. I give this book 4 stars.

Robin says

According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2017 was year of the Rooster, but for ME, it was year of Rabbit. This year, I discovered with great glee, the brilliance of John Updike, and I've hopped through the four books he wrote about the guy we all love to hate (or hate to love), Rabbit Angstrom.

I'm bidding goodbye to this flawed horndog, with misty eyes. Somehow, from the beginning, despite his reprehensible, often misogynistic ways (and his overuse of the "C" word), I *liked* the bastard. From his family-fleeing 50's, his communal 60's, his swinging 70's, to now... Rabbit in the 80's.

We're in 1989 - the end of the Reagan era, when Bill Cosby is still a role model to many, Cabbage Patch kids are the rage, Melanie Griffiths stars in *Working Girl*, women have shoulder pads in every article of clothing, you get the picture. Oh, and there's AIDS and piles of cocaine too.

He's 56 going on 90. He's got a bum ticker, and for the whole book, we are painfully aware of each

constriction, each suffocating breath. It's clear this guy's claim on life is tenuous. I for one was begging him to stop, for the love of god, eating dry-roasted cashews, but he wouldn't listen. You wouldn't think that with plaque-filled ventricles he'd be able to misbehave as he has in other books. But, don't worry, he does as never before.

He's spending half the year in Florida with Janice, chasing the perfect golf swing. Meanwhile, Nelson (the most dislikable, annoying character I can remember reading, EVER) is growing his rat-tail and sniffing up the profits at Springer Motors like a good son.

Rabbit is comfortable, but only medium-happy at best. With age, it is hard to say that he has acquired wisdom, though his internal monologues still boast his insightful commentary and observations.

I loved being back in the Angstrom family's world, as dysfunctional as it is. This book, focusing on mortality, has many excellent parts, my favourite being a perilous scene on the ocean with Rabbit and his granddaughter. However, I felt that many parts were really rambling and repetitive. I could have done without much of the roadside commentary every single time he got in a car, or the very, very detailed recollections of Brewer in its hey day.

The other thing that has stuck in my craw is the unbelievability of one of the main plot points in this book, which I'll have to discuss under a spoiler tag for obvious reasons. (view spoiler)

The book and series end in a heartbreakingly perfect denouement, our hero coming full circle. I am so sad to witness Rabbit's never-ending human struggle. I want him to succeed; I want him to be happy; I want him to figure it all out; I want him to have great sex. I want him to find the same freedom as he did on the basketball court in high school, so that he doesn't have to look back so far to find a time where he felt optimism. Though, it's through the everyday tragedy of Rabbit's life that we can see our own, and maybe that's where the redemption lies.

We are each of us like our little blue planet, hung in black space, upheld by nothing but our mutual reassurances, our loving lies.

Manny says

Eat a balanced diet. Exercise regularly. Avoid excessive drinking. Don't fuck your daughter-in-law. Lot of good life-style advice in this book...

Fabian says

Q: Where oh where will Rabbit go to rest? Where will it all--all four decades worth of this, an all American life--culminate-- and how?

A: In Florida; and boringly.

This is a tremendously slow trek through Harry Angstrom's last year and we see the guy eat himself to death and burn bridges with family and friends. (Eh... what's new?) The sick sad life of the American Male: the

fourth novel is overkill; while it's perfectly nice to revisit some of Rabbit's highlights and (mostly) low-lights, how o how can a life be reduced to American history merged so neatly with a deep and personal human experience? It doesn't work, this attempt to encapsulate life, to show how America is as much a part of it as family is...

I have only one idea as to why the tetralogy is so lauded today (and when each individual novel was first published): DAMN GOOD prose.

Priyanka says

This one is all about death. A little bit about the other stupid things Rabbit does when he turns 56. But mostly about death.

Taken together, the four books are complex character studies of three main people - Harry, Janice and their son Nelson. Observing such richly detailed characters over four decades of mutual history is a treat. But Updike doesn't make it easy. Rabbit is the WORST HUMAN BEING EVER by a very long distance, but even Janice and Nelson aren't always easy to empathize with. Updike's writing is sublime. He shows that sympathy and disgust for a character need not be mutually exclusive, that one feeling doesn't preclude the other. Even if the books become tough to read at times (because Rabbit can be extremely disgusting), they are compulsively readable, save for a flabby stretch in the middle of book 2.

This book doesn't reach the heights of *Rabbit is Rich*, with the latter's poignant musings on middle-age and the meaning (or lack thereof) of life. But it is a close second in my order. Rabbit fades away, made redundant at home by Janice's new-found independence and at work by Nelson's taking over. But he is still the same, making the same mistakes, being just as much self-absorbed and becoming self-destructive at this late age, besides being intent on destroying others. That hole in his life never got filled and he clearly has run out of time.

The smell of good advice always makes Rabbit want to run the other way.

The penultimate scene is a throwback to the first scene of the first book, nicely rounding up the quartet of books. I'll miss these characters, their frailties, desperation and bad choices. Plus all the humour, because I might have failed to mention how funny these books are.

Linda says

Perfect ending. I got choked up and I loved it.

After 1500+ pages of Rabbit, even with all his flaws I'm going to miss him. Living through four decades along with all his unfiltered thoughts was a roller coaster ride.

Rabbit, Run was a good introduction to this, at many times, unlikable character.

Rabbit Redux was the least enjoyable of the four books and, frankly, hard to stomach in a lot of parts. Finally, Rabbit Is Rich a Rabbit at Rest were the best of the four books and ended the tetralogy nicely.

Frank says

I didn't expect to be sad at the end of this. But after four novels, each gradually getting deeper into the character, moving from about 300 pages in the first to almost 500 by the last, I've logged in a lot of time with Harry Angstrom. And so when this one brought his story around to the end, I got a little sad.

It's an accomplishment to write a character essentially from birth to death. And so much of Rabbit's story involves all of the mundane details of small-town life -- watching TV, knowing the same people your whole life, never really venturing outside of your circuit. So, I mean, Rabbit was kind of a jerk to the very end. And that's what got me. Updike does a beautiful job in this one, slowly closing the book on this guy.

In this one he finally runs and almost gets away. But like in the first book, he never really knew where to go.

There were so many emotions in this one. Some parts really made me laugh out loud, while others made me anxious. Rabbit is still difficult to empathize with, but at least a lot of that is put into context. There are also plenty of the usual cringe-worthy moments -- seriously, the Japanese character has to speak like a Krusty the Clown bit -- but I feel like there was a lot of wisdom imparted by these books.

And that is -- don't be like these people.

Drew says

As this is the book I'm reading at the moment I thought I'd use this space to underline how ridiculous I find the idea of the Reading challenge. Books aren't like chilies and I can't see the point in trying to consume as many as possible within the year, as if this was some kind of idiotic competition. In fact it seems to trivialise and undermine the whole point of reading, especially the kind of deep reading that is only possible in books as opposed to the surface skimming which we dedicate to the Internet or other types of screen-based reading. Take Rabbit at Rest as an example. It's actually the weakest of the Rabbit books it seems to me, a coda that sings the sad hymn of decline, and witnesses the collapse of tough man America from the perspective of the skittish, jumpy Harry. despite that, it's an absorbing read and I intend to keep going at it as slowly and for as long as possible, savouring each plodding scene on the golf course, each devastatingly honest examination of Janice's shortcomings, each deeply offensive rumination on anything from AIDS to women to homosexuality or the particular abilities of Mediterranean immigrants. instead of reading challenges we need more of the mindset that inspired the slow food movement.

Mark Juric says

I dreaded reading this book and I have to admit that it took me two weeks to get through the last 50 pages. I miss Harry Angstrom not as if a dear friend has died, but as if I have died myself and yet somehow remain around to mourn my own loss. What's odd is that I didn't really like Rabbit. I did understand him though, in a way that I've never understood anyone aside from myself. That, to me, is Updike's true gift: chipping away to an unvarnished life to expose the raw emotion and thought upon which we pile layer after layer of the every day. I'm having a difficult time not going back and re-reading the Rabbit series again. Right now. the only

thing that stops me is the hope that I'll find another book that will touch me as deeply.

Jeffrey says

In spite of my protestations that I don't like Rabbit or Updike's writing, I have read all 4 of the Rabbit Angstrom books. This time, however, Rabbit has been less annoying and a more sympathetic character, perhaps because he is more introspective, perhaps because he is more subdued in his usual reactivity. Until the end, that is, when he reverts back to the old Rabbit we knew and disliked.

In this Pulitzer winning novel, Updike really shows off his skills. His command of the time and the places he is writing about, the late 80's in Pennsylvania and Florida, is breathtaking. His stream of consciousness wanderings cover every imaginable topic of the times, including sports, culture, history, politics, TV shows, movies, and current events of the times like the Pan Am 103 crash over Lockerbie, Scotland with a group of Syracuse University students on board. His description of a golf foursome with Rabbit and 3 friends is right on. Cardiac catheterization from the point of view of the subject on the table feels claustrophobic and real. A pick up basketball game, a sailing excursion on a Sunfish, or just driving around town are brought to life with realistic detail. His lyrical descriptions of locations from Pennsylvania in the fall to Florida during the winter are beautiful and evocative. As Donald Trump would say, "He has really good words."

In the end, while Updike continues his masterful command of the language and the world, Rabbit returns to his stubborn, reactive and egocentric behavior. He does finally get some rest, however, and I got the satisfaction of finishing this quartet of stories.
