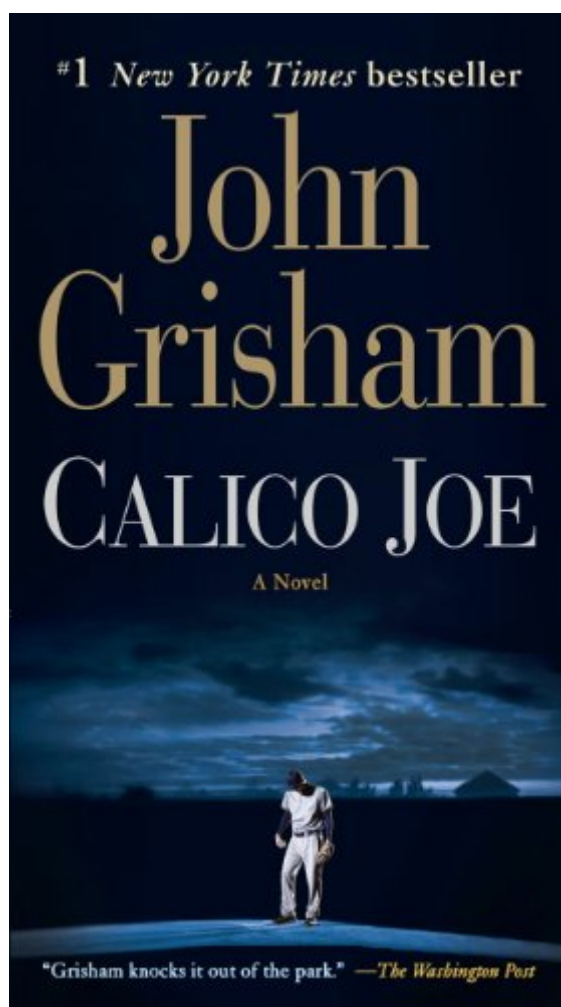


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Calico Joe: A Novel



Synopsis

“Grisham knocks it out of the park.” *The Washington Post* “It’s the summer of 1973, and Joe Castle is the boy wonder of baseball, the greatest rookie anyone has ever seen. The kid from Calico Rock, Arkansas, dazzles Chicago Cubs fans as he hits home run after home run, politely tipping his hat to the crowd as he shatters all rookie records. Calico Joe quickly becomes the idol of every baseball fan in America, including Paul Tracey, the young son of a hard-partying and hard-throwing New York Mets pitcher. On the day that Warren Tracey finally faces Calico Joe, Paul is in the stands, rooting for his idol but also for his dad. Then Warren throws a fastball that will change their lives forever. #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER “An enjoyable, heartwarming read that’s not just for baseball fans.” *USA Today* “Grisham has hit a home run. . . . Calico Joe is a great read, a lyrical ode to baseball, small-town America, youthful innocence and a young boy’s search for heroes.” *The Buffalo News* “[A] pleasure . . . Suffice to say [Grisham] knows his way around the ballpark as well as he does a courtroom.” *The Washington Times* Includes an excerpt of John Grisham’s *The Racketeer*

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Customer Reviews

This was really 4 1/2 stars for me. I love baseball and John Grisham's books, so I was not surprised at my response to this book. Often, young athletes take plenty of sideline coaching from their Dads, and it is not always positive. Paul Tracey had it harder than most as his dad was Warren Tracey, a major league pitcher. When Warren was playing for the Mets, one play involving a rookie will ruin their careers with one pitch; and not just any rookie, but one that was breaking records from his first at bat in the major leagues, Joe Castle aka Calico Joe. That one play ruined both careers and this is the story of what happened when the spotlight dimmed. 30 years later, Paul Tracey attempts to re-unite the two players. Will both parties agree to meet? Will the truth be told after all these years? Will forgiveness be withheld or given? Will a father and son finally come to terms with their relationship? To find out you will have to read this memorable story filled with wonderfully developed characters and love, hate, forgiveness, and redemption. It is not just a baseball story.

"What if a pitcher intentionally hit a batter, a young star? What if both careers were ruined? And what if they met years later to try to come to grips with what happened in a split second?" These are some of the opening words of John Grisham to the reader explaining his rationale for writing this book. I must say, I began this book very conflicted. First off, I am not a big baseball fan, AT ALL! The sport has always bored me and I have had no interest in it whatsoever. However, John Grisham is one of my absolute favorite authors. So here was the dilemma I was in: My favorite author writing on one of my least favorite topics. How would it go? After finishing the book, I was not conflicted at all! I absolutely loved the book. While the book definitely centers around baseball as the skeleton for its storyline, it moves in the same rapid and gripping style that one would expect from a Grisham book. Your emotions are stirred to love Joe Castle and hate Warren Tracey, but just when you think you have it all figured out, you begin to have just a little bit of compassion for Tracey and are conflicted in your emotions. I think that Grisham found the perfect harmony between length and in-depth details in this work. There is enough baseball jargon to engage the avid fan, but not enough to turn away someone like myself. Go buy the book and enjoy this short, but excellently written piece of American fiction. Grisham has hit one out of the park in this one (pun intended). In accordance with FTC regulations, I would like to thank Doubleday Publishing for providing me with a review copy in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Calico Joe---John Grisham One of America's best storytellers, Grisham departs from his usual tales of crime and trials to write a baseball story. This book tells the story of a small town Arkansas boy who bursts on the sports world in 1973 to become an instant sensation. Alas, his career is to be

very short. But the reason for that is for the telling. Grisham alternates between the 1973 story and the modern day and flows easily between the two. His baseball knowledge is extensive but, unlike what often happens in baseball, he does not allow the book to become mired in minutia and statistics. He gives just enough baseball information as needed to move the storyline. Baseball fans will certainly appreciate that he blends real players from 1973, from multiple teams, with fictitious ones. Non-baseball fans will enjoy the book as well because it has well developed characters and a moving story. Grisham has another hit with this new book. It is good to see an extremely successful writer willing to use his talent to write a story that veers from his usual courtroom/crime formula.

I hadn't read a Grisham novel in a while and picked this one up on a whim. As others have noted, it is a very quick read - something I enjoyed about other Grisham books. It's also a good story. Is it an incredibly well-developed plot line with complex characters? As many reviewers have noted: no. But that doesn't make it a bad story or not worth reading. Most people don't pick up John Grisham's books looking for a deep read that brings to light new insights into human character. They likely pick up his books looking instead for a captivating story that keeps them interested from page to page, chapter to chapter. For me, this book did just that. The story was interesting and the way Grisham bounced between the 1973 season when Paul Tracey was an 11-year old kid and the present as he sought to bring some closure to what happened during that season was well done. I think it's a bit of a stretch to say that the characters, while rather simple, are one-dimensional. Some real emotions are dealt with: grief, bitterness, grudges, and forgiveness. In all, it's a story about family, relationships, growing up, and reconciliation. And it's a story that is worth the little bit of time it takes to read.

John Grisham can be a great writer. He's written chapters where there is excitement around someone using a copier. Calico Joe though is a very weak story. The only positive aspect was its' length...it's very short. Frankly, this should have been a short story. This just seemed like a half-hearted effort. As for the actual story...The character development is weak...and the ending is rather predictable yet unsatisfying. Perhaps Mr. Grisham should leave the baseball books to others and stick to writing thrillers.

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