

FINN: a novel

By Matthew Olshan

BOOK INFO

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Pub. Date

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Category

Young Adult Fiction

Format

6 x 9

Pages

180

Territory

World

Author Resides

Baltimore, MD

A March 2001 Selection of the Book of the Month Club/Teen People Book Club

BOOK SUMMARY: If you can imagine a modern-day retelling of Mark Twain's classic "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," featuring a teenage girl and a pregnant young Mexican woman as the main characters, then you've got the gist of Matthew Olshan's "Finn," a brilliant debut novel due out from Bancroft Press in March 2001. Written primarily for young people, but nuanced enough to interest adult readers, "Finn" is both adventure story and social criticism. "Finn" is an unflinching portrait of modern America; but even more than that, it's a good, old-fashioned, picaresque tale. A fun, fast, and inspiring read, "Finn" aims to hold the attention of every reader, whatever her age.

The book's narrator is Chloë Wilder, a quiet, tough kid, a tomboy and survivor. Rescued from a murderous life with her mother, Chloë is living with her grandparents at the beginning of the story, in the cocoon of a quiet, middle-class neighborhood, attending a fancy private school. After unwittingly forcing Silvia, her grandparents' live-in maid, from the house, Chloë is herself torn from her placid life. Together, Chloë and Silvia take to the road, hoping to reach California before Silvia's baby is born. As they face the wilderness of the streets, and Chloë learns about Silvia's incredible past, a new friendship is forged, and old prejudices begin to fall away. Along the way, Chloë begins to face a personal demon: the long-buried, ungrieved death of her father.

While "Finn" is about the adventures of Silvia and Chloë, it's equally about the social challenges of modern America, which, ironically, parallel those of Mark Twain's time: the corrosive power of racism; violence within the nuclear family; the yawning divide between rich and poor; and the hunger for equal justice. AUTHOR MATTHEW OLSHAN was educated at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and Oxford Universities. He is a freelance writer, screenwriter, and producer, specializing in educational media. He lives in Baltimore, Maryland with his wife and daughter. "Finn" is his first published novel.

MARKETING: Promised placement on *Girls' Life Magazine's* website; review in *Topics Magazine* (May 2001); stories in *Johns Hopkins University Magazine*; *St. Alban's Bulletin (and website)*; and *Harvard Magazine*; among others; entry into YA best book contests; author-maintained website (www.finnanovel.com), with excerpts, Author Q&A, and teacher study guide; distribution of book to leading private schools in U.S.; ads by Book of the Month Club/Teen People (a March 2001 selection); blurbs by two National Book Award finalists, Deb Taylor (probably the nation's most influential YA librarian), YA readers; Baker & Taylor galley mailing to public libraries; representation for movie rights by CAA.

Author Tour: to include Baltimore; Philadelphia; New York; Boston; and Washington, D.C. (including Politics & Prose bookstore appearance)

SALES HANDLES

- Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which has been translated into 65 languages, is the classic American novel, yet still heatedly debated by readers worldwide. In fact, it's the fifth most banned book in America in the 1990s. *Finn: a novel* climbs on its very broad shoulders, plugs women into an 1885 book that practically ignored them, and brings the controversy (treatment of immigrants) up to the minute.
- "Paired with the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, it would make for powerful discussions about values, class, literary influence, and stereotypes." -- RACHEL EISLER, former English Department chairwoman, Bryn Mawr School (Baltimore, MD)

AUDIENCE

- Adolescents (female and male) from 12 and up. "Boys and girls will not be able to tear themselves away from these absorbing pages."-- RUTH F. BOORSTIN, poet, longtime children's newspaper columnist, and editor of numerous books, including *The Daniel J. Boorstin Reader*
- Teachers, librarians, and school administrators
- Anyone who loves a super-fast read with serious themes and a distinguished literary heritage.