

Not just any writer. Nick turned his love of Arsenal Football into a diary of a fan and called the book “Fever Pitch”. The book made him a household name and was made in to a film. Most importantly, his writing represents a generation of young British people. He continues to use his passions and personal life to make funny, sad and very readable books. His latest novel is really a group of essays. What about? Well, songs, of course.

If you love music it can be the soundtrack to your life. There are songs which stand out in time as favourites for many reasons. You might work or play with music in the background. You grew up with music or you associate music with a specific year in your life. Nick writes about that and much, much more in his latest book “31 songs”.

About Nick Hornby’s books and films...

Fever Pitch - An autobiographical account of his love of football turned into a film starring Colin Firth.

High Fidelity – The story about a man who lives his life for music and dreams in lists: his top 5 worst break ups with girlfriends, his top 5 best singles of all time, his top 5 best films. This book became a film starring John Cusack.

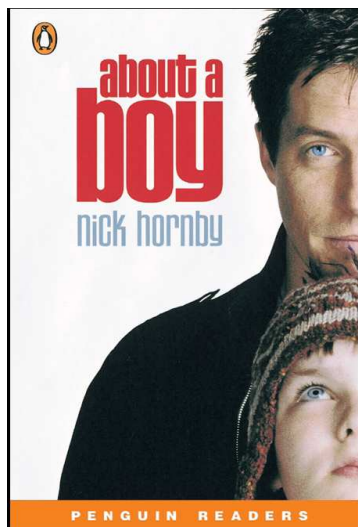
About a Boy - The tale of a single man who lives on inherited money. He meets a young boy and his mother who change his life. The story looks at the relationship between the boy and the man. The film stars Hugh Grant.

Exercise 1:

Answer the following questions.

1. What was Nick’s job before he became famous?
2. How did he use his passions in his job?
3. What did he write about in his first book?
4. What is the main subject of his latest work?

About a Boy



Book summary Will is 36 but behaves like a teenager. He’s single, rich and cool. He has no responsibilities – no parents, no children, no family. Marcus is 12 and behaves like an adult. He has just moved to London with his mum, Fiona. He isn’t much like other kids of his age and he’s having trouble at his new school. Fiona, meanwhile, is heading for a breakdown. Will and Marcus meet by chance on the day that Fiona tries to kill herself. She recovers, but Marcus thinks she will try again and leave him on his own. He realises that Will can teach him how to be a kid and fit in at school. Will doesn’t know how to cope with a suicidal mother, but he does know what trainers to wear and what music to listen to. Marcus and Will change each other’s lives forever. Marcus teaches Will not to walk away from responsibility. Will teaches Marcus how to live in today’s world.

Film outline The film of Nick Hornby’s book *About a Boy* (2002) was a big hit. It stars Hugh Grant as Will and Toni Collette as Fiona. The film is set in north London and remains close to the book until the end. Instead of having the adventure on the way to Cambridge, Marcus enters for a rock concert at school. The act before him is a cool break-dancing act starring Rachel’s son, Ali. Marcus then comes on to stage to sing a famous 1960s ballad. Will knows the kids in the audience will laugh at him, so he comes on stage with Marcus and accompanies him on the electric guitar. He makes an idiot of himself but saves Marcus. The film ends with Christmas at Will’s flat – guests include Rachel, Ali, Marcus, Fiona, Ellie. Not couples, but a big group of people. That’s the way Marcus likes it. Nick Hornby says the revised ending of the film is true to the spirit of the book and makes the film work. He wishes he’d thought of it when he was writing the book.

Quotation:

Will Freeman, from *About a Boy*, speaks on single mothers

“If you picked the right woman, someone who’d been messed around and eventually abandoned by the father of her children, and who hadn’t met anyone since (because the kids stopped you going out and anyway a lot of men didn’t like kids that didn’t belong to them, and they didn’t like the kind of mess that frequently coiled around these kids like a whirlwind) ... if you picked one of these, then she loved you for it. All of a sudden you became better-looking, a better lover, a better person ... Great sex, a lot of ego massage, temporary parenthood without tears and a guilt-free parting - what more could a man want? Single mothers – bright, attractive, available women, thousands of them, all over London – were the best invention Will had ever heard of. His career as a serial nice guy had begun.”

Exercise 2:

Decide if the following statements are true or false

1. Will enjoys complicated relationships with his girlfriends
2. He often spends his days watching TV quiz shows
3. Will never actually said to Rachel that Marcus was his son
4. Rachel tries to commit suicide

CINEMA LEXICON

Exercise 3:

Match the people in A with the things they do in B

A

directors producers film stars co-stars cameramen/women

B

1. They provide the money to make films.
2. They make films. They tell the actors what to do.
3. They control the camera.
4. They are famous actors in films.
5. They are actors in films – but not in the most important parts.

Exercise 4:

Match the types of film below with the titles

thriller horror film cartoon sci-fi film
comedy costume drama western musical

2001: A Space Odyssey _____
Frankenstein the Monster _____
Singing in the Rain _____
Gun Fight at the OK Corral _____
Mickey Mouse and Pluto _____
A Funny Thing Happened _____
Emma: a nineteenth century girl _____
Ten Seconds before you Die _____

Exercise 5:

Read the passage. Complete the gaps with the words below

special effects *popcorn* *showing* *stunts* *screen*
box office *cinema usher* *trailers* *back row*

Last week, we went to see the new James Bond film. It was (1) _____ at the *Odeon* in the city centre. We bought tickets at the (2) _____, and (3) _____ at the cinema shop. The (4) _____ looked at our tickets when we went in. We sat in the (5) _____. There were a lot of advertisements and (6) _____ for other films before the film started. It was an exciting film, with lots of fantastic (7) _____ created by computers, and dangerous (8) _____, like people falling out of buildings. And because the *Odeon* has a very big (9) _____, we felt we were in the film.

Exercise 6:

Which words in the list go with *film*?

_____ director _____ doer _____ festival
_____ maker _____ career _____ speaker
_____ industry _____ star

Exercise 7:

Look at the words in italics. In each sentence, two are correct. Which one is wrong?

1. I would love to *make/shoot/do* a film.
2. Last night, I *watched/saw/looked* a film at the cinema.
3. I enjoy going to the *movies/films/pictures*.
4. Clint Eastwood has *directed/acted/produced* a new film.
5. Tom Hanks is *starring in/playing in/acting in* a new film next month.
6. They have opened a new *movie theatre/film theatre/cinema* near my house.

Exercise 8:

Look at the prepositions in italics. Only one preposition is correct in each sentence. Which one?

1. What's *on/in/off* at the cinema?
2. It's a film *on/about/over* a boy and girl in love.
3. Brad Pitt stars *on/in/at* a new movie.
4. The film was directed *after/on/by* Alfred Hitchcock.
5. The film is set *in/on/at* the south of France.
6. I usually go *on/to/at* the cinema every week.