



The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

By Junot Díaz



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Winner of:

The Pulitzer Prize

The National Book Critics Circle Award

The Anisfield-Wolf Book Award

The Jon Sargent, Sr. First Novel Prize

A Time Magazine #1 Fiction Book of the Year

One of the best books of 2007 according to: *The New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *New York Magazine*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *The Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *People*, *The Village Voice*, *Time Out New York*, *Salon*, *Baltimore City Paper*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, *New York Public Library*, and many more...

Oscar is a sweet but disastrously overweight ghetto nerd who—from the New Jersey home he shares with his old world mother and rebellious sister—dreams of becoming the Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien and, most of all, finding love. But Oscar may never get what he wants. Blame the fukú—a curse that has haunted Oscar's family for generations, following them on their epic journey from Santo Domingo to the USA. Encapsulating Dominican-American history, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* opens our eyes to an astonishing vision of the contemporary American experience and explores the endless human capacity to persevere—and risk it all—in the name of love.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best of the Month, September 2007: It's been 11 years since Junot Díaz's critically acclaimed story collection, *Drown*, landed on bookshelves and from page one of his debut novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, any worries of a sophomore jinx disappear. The titular Oscar is a 300-pound-plus "lovesick ghetto nerd" with zero game (except for Dungeons & Dragons) who cranks out pages of fantasy fiction with the hopes of becoming a Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien. The book is also the story of a multi-generational family curse that courses through the book, leaving troubles and tragedy in its wake. This was the most dynamic, entertaining, and achingly heartfelt novel I've read in a long time. My head is still buzzing with the memory of dozens of killer passages that I dog-eared throughout the book. The rope-a-dope narrative is funny, hip, tragic, soulful, and bursting with desire. Make some room for *Oscar Wao* on your bookshelf--you won't be disappointed. --Brad Thomas Parsons

From Publishers Weekly

SignatureReviewed by Matthew SharpeA reader might at first be surprised by how many chapters of a book entitled *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* are devoted not to its sci fi--and--fantasy-gobbling nerd-hero but to his sister, his mother and his grandfather. However, Junot Díaz's dark and exuberant first novel makes a compelling case for the multiperspectival view of a life, wherein an individual cannot be known or understood in isolation from the history of his family and his nation. Oscar being a first-generation Dominican-American, the nation in question is really two nations. And Dominicans in this novel being explicitly of mixed Taíno, African and Spanish descent, the very ideas of nationhood and nationality are thoughtfully, subtly complicated. The various nationalities and generations are subtended by the recurring motif of *fukú*, the Curse and Doom of the New World, whose midwife and... victim was a historical personage Díaz will only call the Admiral, in deference to the belief that uttering his name brings bad luck (hint: he arrived in the New World in 1492 and his initials are CC). By the prologue's end, it's clear that this story of one poor guy's cursed life will also be the story of how 500 years of historical and familial bad luck shape the destiny of its fat, sad, smart, lovable and short-lived protagonist. The book's pervasive sense of doom is offset by a rich and playful prose that embodies its theme of multiple nations, cultures and languages, often shifting in a single sentence from English to Spanish, from Victorian formality to Negropolitan vernacular, from Homeric epithet to dirty bilingual insult. Even the presumed reader shape-shifts in the estimation of its in-your-face narrator, who addresses us variously as folks, you folks, conspiracy-minded-fools, Negro, Nigger and plataneros. So while Díaz assumes in his reader the same considerable degree of multicultural erudition he himself possesses—offering no gloss on his many unitalicized Spanish words and expressions (thus beautifully dramatizing how linguistic borders, like national ones, are porous), or on his plethora of genre and canonical literary allusions—he does helpfully footnote aspects of Dominican history, especially those concerning the bloody 30-year reign of President Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. The later Oscar chapters lack the linguistic brio of the others, and there are exposition-clogged passages that read like summaries of a longer narrative, but mostly this fierce, funny, tragic book is just what a reader would have hoped for in a novel by Junot Díaz. Matthew Sharpe is the author of the novels *Jamestown* and *The Sleeping Father*. He teaches at Wesleyan University.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Reviewers agree that Junot Díaz's first novel was well worth the 11-year wait. Díaz established his reputation with *Drown* (1996), a collection of short stories that drew widespread praise. With *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Díaz has cemented his place in the literary stratosphere. He garners admiration

for the "slangy and kinetic energy of his prose" (*New York Times*), as well as for the way he hops between high- and lowbrow culture and ties together Dominican and American history (and the problems therein). Some critics cite a distracting (mysterious) narrator, too many digressions, and a difficult narrative structure. Despite these minor flaws, fans of literary fiction should dive right in.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jon Gomes:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Sure, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open as well as read a book titled *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*? Maybe it is to be best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have other opinion?

Joseph Moody:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or go to the outside with them loved ones or their friend. Do you realize? Many a lot of people spent these people free time just watching TV, or maybe playing video games all day long. If you would like try to find a new activity honestly, that is look different you can read a new book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book that you just read you can spent the entire day to reading a guide. The book *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* it is rather good to read. There are a lot of individuals who recommended this book. These folks were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space to develop this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can more easily to read this book from the smart phone. The price is not very costly but this book has high quality.

Ilene Bixler:

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April Harry:

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