



The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry: A Novel

By Rachel Joyce

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • LONGLISTED FOR THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE • NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY *THE WASHINGTON POST*

“[Rachel] Joyce’s beguiling debut is [a] modest-seeming story of ‘ordinary’ English lives that enthralls and moves you as it unfolds.”—*People* (four stars)

Meet Harold Fry, recently retired. He lives in a small English village with his wife, Maureen, who seems irritated by almost everything he does. Little differentiates one day from the next. Then one morning a letter arrives, addressed to Harold in a shaky scrawl, from a woman he hasn’t heard from in twenty years. Queenie Hennessy is in hospice and is writing to say goodbye. But before Harold mails off a quick reply, a chance encounter convinces him that he absolutely must deliver his message to Queenie in person. In his yachting shoes and light coat, Harold Fry embarks on an urgent quest. Determined to walk six hundred miles to the hospice, Harold believes that as long as he walks, Queenie will live. A novel of charm, humor, and profound insight into the thoughts and feelings we all bury deep within our hearts, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* introduces Rachel Joyce as a wise—and utterly irresistible—storyteller.

Praise for *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*

“[A] gorgeously poignant novel of hope and transformation.”—*O: The Oprah Magazine*

“A cause for celebration . . . [Joyce] has a lovely sense of the possibilities of redemption. In this bravely unpretentious and unsentimental take, she’s cleared space where miracles are still possible.”—Ron Charles, *The Washington Post*

“*The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* is not just a book about lost love. It is about all the wonderful everyday things Harold discovers through the mere process of putting one foot in front of the other.”—Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*

Look for special features inside. Join the Random House Reader's Circle for author chats and more.

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The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry: A Novel By Rachel Joyce Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #9835 in Books
- Brand: Random House Trade Paperbacks
- Published on: 2013-03-26
- Released on: 2013-03-26
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.10" h x .80" w x 5.20" l, .61 pounds
- Binding: Paperback

- 384 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, July 2012: Harold Fry--retired sales rep, beleaguered husband, passive observer of his own life--decides one morning to walk 600 miles across England to save an old friend. It might not work, mind you, but that's hardly the point. In playwright Rachel Joyce's pitch-perfect first novel, Harold wins us over with his classic antiheroism. Setting off on the long journey, he wears the wrong jacket, doesn't have a toothbrush, and leaves his phone at home--in short, he is wholly, endearingly unprepared. But as he travels, Harold finally has time to reflect on his failings as a husband, father, and friend, and this helps him become someone we (and, more important, his wife Maureen) can respect. After walking for a while in Harold Fry's very human shoes, you might find that your own fit a bit better. --*Mia Lipman*

Review

Praise for *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*

“[A] **gorgeously poignant** novel of hope and transformation.”—*O: The Oprah Magazine*

“You have to love Harold Fry, a man who set out one morning to mail a letter and then just kept going. . . . Like Christian in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Harold becomes Everyman in the eyes of those who encounter him. . . . Harold's journey, which parallels Christian's nicely but not overly neatly, takes him to the edge of death and back again. **It will stick with you, this story of faith, fidelity and redemption.**”—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“For all of us perfectly responsible, stoop-shouldered suburbanites wearing a path in the living-room carpet, **Harold's ridiculous journey is a cause for celebration.** This is Walter Mitty skydiving. This is J. Alfred Prufrock not just eating that peach, but throwing the pit out the window, rolling up his trousers and whistling to those hot mermaids. Released from the cage of his own passivity, Harold feels transformed, though he keeps his tie on. . . . In this bravely unpretentious and unsentimental tale, she's cleared space where miracles are still possible.”—*Washington Post*

“**[R]emarkable.** . . . I can't think of a better recommendation for summer reading. And take your time, just as Harold does.”—*USA Today*, four out of four stars review

[A] story of present-day courage. . . . about how easily a mousy, domesticated man can get lost and how joyously he can be refound.”—**Janet Maslin, *New York Times***

“From its charming beginning to its startling and cathartic denouement, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* is **a comic and tragic joy.**”—**Cleveland Plain Dealer**

“When it seems almost too late, Harold Fry opens his battered heart and lets the world rush in. This **funny, poignant** story about an ordinary man on an extraordinary journey moved and inspired me.”—**Nancy Horan, author of *Loving Frank***

“There's **tremendous heart in this debut** novel by Rachel Joyce, as she probes questions that are as simple as they are profound: Can we begin to live again, and live truly, as ourselves, even in middle age, when all

seems ruined? Can we believe in hope when hope seems to have abandoned us? I found myself laughing through tears, rooting for Harold at every step of his journey. I'm still rooting for him."—**Paula McLain, author of *The Paris Wife***

"**Marvelous!** I held my breath at his every blister and cramp, and felt as if by turning the pages, I might help his impossible quest succeed."—**Helen Simonson, author of *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand***

"Harold's journey is ordinary and extraordinary; it is a journey through the self, through modern society, through time and landscape. It is a funny book, a wise book, a charming book—but never cloying. It's a book with a savage twist—and yet never seems manipulative. Perhaps because Harold himself is just wonderful. . . . I'm telling you now: **I love this book.**"—**Erica Wagner, *The Times* (UK)**

"The odyssey of a simple man . . . **original, subtle and touching.**"—**Claire Tomalin, author of *Charles Dickens: A Life***

"*The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* takes the most ordinary and unassuming of men and turns him into a hero for us all. **To go on this journey with Harold will not only break your heart, it might just also heal it.**"—**Tiffany Baker, author of *The Little Giant of Aberdeen County***

"A gentle and genteel charmer, brimming with British quirkiness yet quietly haunting in its poignant and wise examination of love and devotion. **Sure to become a book-club favorite.**"—***Booklist***

About the Author

Rachel Joyce is an award-winning writer of more than twenty plays for BBC Radio 4. She started writing after a twenty-year acting career, in which she performed leading roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and won multiple awards. Rachel Joyce lives in Gloucestershire on a farm with her family and is at work on her second novel.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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