



# Tale of Two Summers

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You are in L-O-V-E. Notice how I have no hesitation spelling it. At all. Reason? That was just the wildest entry you've posted! Ever....You are so seeing the world through the eyes of L-O-V-E.

A ten-year best friendship is put to the test when Chuck and Hal spend their first summer apart falling for two questionable mates: a sexy Saudi songstress and a smokin' hot French punk. As Chuck heads off to summer theater camp and Hal stays in their hometown, learning how to drive, they keep in touch via blogging, reporting to each other about their suddenly separate lives and often ridiculous romantic entanglements. As both their relationships take some unexpected turns, Hal and Chuck struggle to come to terms with their growing differences while trying to keep their friendship alive.

## Tale of Two Summers Details

Date : Published June 1st 2006 by Simon Schuster Books for Young Readers (first published May 23rd 2006)

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Author : Brian Sloan

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# From Reader Review Tale of Two Summers for online ebook

## Stephen says

An E-pistolary novel?

Book in blog form is an ideal way to tell this story. Two young best friends, one straight, one gay, communicate over the summer and share their feelings and doubts and insights in a blog. While the folks that they meet and the romances are interesting the underlying supportive friendship is clear to see and probably the highlight of the story.

Overall an interesting and engrossing read.

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## Troy says

A lot of fun to read. These two boys (ages 15 and 16) are friends. One is gay, one is straight. They go their separate ways for the summer (though in the same vicinity). They decide to write a private blog that only they can read as a way to stay in touch with each other. I think the author really captures the voice of guys their age. It's at times hilarious and other times you wonder if their friendship is at stake. They both find a love interest and write to each other about that. Overall it's an easy read and you're actually rooting for each one. A nice picture of what true friendship at that age is all about.

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## Craig says

The premise is different, in which two childhood friends who spend their first summer apart, create a blog detailing their time. Chuck is straight and going off to theater camp and Hal has recently come out to Chuck and is stranded at home. As with most of the gay oriented fiction I've read, I find it all rather ordinary and with little to no real plot. I'm also not into reading blogs of people I don't know unless it pertains to something that interests me and their personal lives aren't that interesting. What should have been a quick, simple book to read left me struggling to get through.

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## J.M. says

I really don't understand why so many people like this novel. The main characters were 15-year old boys blogging about their life experiences during their first summer apart.

Frankly, they complained A LOT about insignificant things like typing and relationship troubles. I am sure many of you who liked the book would not stand to hear teenagers talk about their unbelievable problems in real life. Most of you would just turn away and leave without looking back. Teens have the most pointless conversations ever and that's exactly what I encountered in this book.

There were some funny parts but that doesn't automatically make this book a must-read 4 or 5 star rated novel. The plot was sort of pointless, the dialogue was redundant, and the story line was most definitely a

fantasy novel trying desperately to imitate real-life -- their friendship and their sex/drug moments are highly unlikely experiences for most teens across the U.S. Need I remind you they're only FIFTEEN!

I regret reading this book. It's a waste of time.

There are much better LGBTQ Young-Adult novels that have multidimensional characters that include believable plots and story lines and relatable problems. For example, *Someday this Pain will be Useful to You* by Cameron Peter, is a fantastic novel that I highly recommend. It's certainly 100 times better than this incongruent mess of a book.

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### **Bill says**

Two adolescents, gay Hal just 16 and straight Chuck 15, best friends for 10 years, use as blog as a way to keep in touch when they are parted for the 1st time for 6 weeks during a summer in the Maryland suburbs of DC in 2006.

On one level the book is about Hal's sexual coming of age with Henri, a more experienced French diplomat's son. And about Chuck's coming of age as an stage actor, his life's dream. By blogging about their sexual and mundane lives, they reveal the real meaning of the book: what it means to be best friends.

When I started the book, I did not think I would like the blog style. By 2010, I have gotten cynical of blogs, especially personal blogs. But it works. Sloan captured me and I had trouble putting the book down and get to sleep, so I would be awake at work. Recommended for adults and YA.

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### **Ozimandias says**

If I could give a 4.5 I would. My affection for the story sort of grew on me as opposed to love at first sight, but it did grow on me. And as a person who has friends far afield from where I live, it was a very relatable book. The overall message about friendship was nice as well. The blogging entries is a good concept but robs a lot of drama from the proceedings. Dramatic phone conversations between the friends are not part of the blog, and everything that is would be written in past tense. Not so exciting. But, what's there works so well that I can't fault it too much. The potential blog between Hal and Henri sounds like another book. Oddly, the laser focus on just two people makes you feel like you know them and consequently, I am really curious to find out if their love interests pan out, and what happens when Hal tells Val "the truth" (ha). As an older reader who actually teaches kids this age, it does bother me a little that the characters are sexually active, but then again, I have students with more than one child. Reality is reality. Good read.

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### **Holyfool says**

It still makes me laugh just remembering lines from this book. It brought me back good, bad, sexed, funny, sour, confusing memories of my own that now I am looking back at them in a new fresh light.

A different and an updated type of prose that refreshes the readers with fun and creative teen dialogue.

Hilarious intertwined scenes that were so well described and filled with true sentiments of teen angst.

Mr. Sloan did a great and unique job with this coming of age novel. Even though some passages were some how overwhelming and exaggerated, while reading them, you must remember that those are coming from 16 years old teenagers' mind sets, which I have to give Mr. Sloan all the props for writing and recruiting such an incredible format of nowadays slang and recent internet "talk".

I can't wait to re-read this book just to come across new details and to laugh out loud at so many sarcastic point of views from the book's main characters.

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## **Ted says**

Brian Sloan's novel could have been titled "Love the One You're With." It's the summer of 2006 in suburban Washington DC. The form is epistolary (blog posts), the style is "teen speak," and the content includes teen angst, sexual awakening, and the value of enduring friendships. This is a book that any adolescent (or young-at-heart adult) will be able to identify with in some way.

Hal (gay) and Chuck (straight) are two 15yos who've been best buds since elementary school. They're spending their first summer vacation apart. Chuck's playing the lead in a musical some miles away while Hal must stay home to take a Driver's Ed course (piss-and-moan!). To stay in touch, they communicate daily and often hourly on Chuck's Xanga blog about the new people, events, and influences in their lives. Much of their discourse is touching, and often amusing.

These are "good" boys, clever boys, each with his own distinct "voice." They're wise beyond their years (except about sex and relationships) and not overly potty-mouthed. They both have rather advanced vocabularies for 15. Sloan's "teen speak" is authentic most of the time, and there are some wonderful teenisms like:

- "Re the party, that's a big black hole of suckdom"
- "Again, I'm sorry for harshing on you like that."

On the other hand, I doubt whether even a precocious 15yo would say things like:

- "... rediscover your lifelong process of channeling your flinty temper into your acting..."
- "... later I got to meet Henri's storied mother..."
- "... but not in the way you construed it."
- "... I think she just says stuff like that when it fits her skewed worldview."

Hal and Chuck often react to the each other's blog posts with sarcasm and outright bitchiness, especially when one offers the other unsolicited advice. I found this kind of repartee to be somewhat tiresome after a while:

- "I have to say , that is the most pathetic story I've ever heard."
- "Jeeeeeezzzzzz – testy, testy. Give me a break and a half, okay?"
- "It's really not cute to call me a romantic dope during the biggest emotional panic of my whole entire life!"

And both boys like to use parenthetical remarks, a device which I doubt kids this age would use so much:

- “(remember all those birthday parties we went to there?)”
- “(OK – I think I just mixed about five metaphors with that rant!)”
- “(OMG – I’m starting to sound like a parent too!)”

Some keywords for this book:

gay/straight friendship  
 losing one’s virginity  
 friends with benefits  
 drugs  
 Parkour

All in all, though, an interesting premise (the blog format) and a contemporary look into the lives, language, and attitudes of two 18yos – oh, I meant 15yos!

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## **Ryoma Gartre says**

I don't know if i can keep myself interested in a book where the mc's doesn't fall in love with each other =/

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## **Kristen says**

Ugh...I was sort of excited for this one. Two best friends, spending the summer apart, each dealing with teenage drama and summer love...recording it all on a blog? Sign me up!

Unfortunately, instead of cute, witty blog posts, we get long, drawn-out entries with tons of boring and seemingly irrelevant information. I found myself wondering, quite often, if teenage boys would ever go into that kind of detail--best friends or not. There were some funny anecdotes and emotional moments, but slogging through everything else made them not nearly as enjoyable as they could have been.

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## **Mike Puma says**

In my former life, I was responsible for selecting materials (books) that would be made available to classrooms, usually to supplement Reading or English instruction, or to school libraries. As part of that job I got to/had to read a lot of Juvie titles, some much better than others, as well as any number of adult titles that were taught in HS English classrooms—it was grand—but when confronted with “why are you sitting on a plane reading a Judy Blume title and laughing like an idiot?” or “how can you read another in Paulsen’s endless cycle of Brian stories (beginning with Hatchet)?”—I could always just look up, smile, and say: It’s my professional reading.

That’s the long way around to saying, some Juvie titles and some YA titles are just fun—they’re often strongly plot-driven, they’re frequently very funny or, as often, an emotional train wreck, they can speak to a young reader in ways that an adult just can’t (regardless of the author’s age), and some of them, too few it

sometimes seems, are written by authors who really care about the young people they write for and it shows. More power to them.

Brian Sloan's *Tale of Two Summers* is such a novel. Hokey in some ways (e.g. it's an epistolary novel but told using 21st-century media—alternating blog posts replete with LOLs, and OMGs, and WTFs, and the undecoded WURHD [WTF is that?]), an emotional roller-coaster bouncing between hilarious foibles and heart-wrenching moments of young love and loss, and through it all, two friends retain and own their friendship, encourage each other when no one else does, and prod each other toward being better people.

Best friends for 10 of their 16 years, Hal and Chuck face their first extended period apart. Chuck, a straight, budding thespian is off to a summer arts program at a local university, while Hal, his gay buddy, remains in their hometown with only the prospects of a summer driving course and getting his driver's license to look forward to. Chuck sets up a blog for them to share their summer experiences, naming the cite "Tale of Two Summers."

Each have their summer romances, each have their highs and lows, each recognizes and reacts to changes in each other. Plenty of surprises, plenty of risk, moments of embarrassment that they can and do share with each other—they're best summer together spent apart. These are the kinds of friends you'd wish for every kid.

This is the sort of book some school librarians love and hate—love it because it's a good book that can speak to young people without being overly preachy, hate it because it's explicit and a book-challenger's dream come true. You've got to hand it to school librarians; they don't get enough credit for what they do or the crap they have to put up with. This one is def for the more mature readers. Like most gay fiction in schools, it will appeal to girls (No chicks were harmed in the making of this novel) and the handful of gay kids who find their ways to it.

AND: there's even a bonus, a nice little retro finish to the whole thing.

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## **Adam says**

Alright, so I'm not going to analyze this to pieces, because it was a quick fun silly read that I imagine a lot of people would rip to shreds... But seeing as bildungsromans written by 30-something's with hindsight are my favorites, this is up there.

High school best friends, Henry (Hal) and Chuck, spend the summer apart. Chuck is straight and away at a summer arts camp to study theater while Hal is gay and stays home to take drivers ed during summer in the

Washington D.C. area. They keep in touch by creating a blog where they post their daily shenanigans. I read this as if I felt it was a diary and "eavesdropping" on two coming of age boys as they experience with drugs, alcohol, sex, new friendships, and seemingly overbearing parental authority.

Fun and quick beach read for a December day in Chicago

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### **Averin says**

I loved this book. Yes, it took me an extraordinary long time to read for a fairly short book-- I didn't want it to end. And sometimes, I just wanted it to sink in.

Hal is moody, newly out to his peers but not to his family. The first person he came out to is Chuck, his best friend since grade school, and clearly, also, Hal's first love. This epistolary tale is told in blog format as the boys learn how to apart for the first time in their friendship and also about love, sex, drugs, alcohol, driving, even career anxiety. It's funny, touching, then funny again.

Hal and Chuck are such great characters, I wanted them to be real, I want to know that, now, nine years later, that they are still friends.

When Chuck writes, "... I guess it's also the tolerance we have for our differences and the way we're equally amused by them that has probably kept our friendship tight all this time," who wouldn't want that? Because, as Hal says: "it's good to have at least some voice of reason (i.e. Chuck) in your life when your heart is certainly not gonna give it to you straight. So to speak."

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### **Rory says**

I have to admit I think I am madly in love with Brian Sloan. This is his second youth book and was so good I stayed up almost all night reading it. It's an odd yet awesome development in young adult lit to see characters who are smart and savy but still naive and interesting as his two boys in this book.

It seems at first to just be about a blog between two friends Hal and Chuck and how they keep in touch as they spend their first summer apart in ten years but soon turns into a story about first loves, artist passion, what friendship means and how you can take yourself and still be real.

I enjoyed this book as much as his previous book 'A Fine Prom Mess' as well as his first movie 'I Think I Do'. (that movie is one of my favorite movies of all time and is an amazingly well done indie with farce and friendship equally matched. Just greatness.

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### **John says**

While I appreciate the Author's desire to write in a unique way, using the medium of "blogs", as well as putting a gay character in the spotlight, I was disappointed at how poorly put together this book was.

First of all, the entire premise seems strange. Blogs are archetypically used for an individual or group of



individuals to communicate with the world, not for a pair of individuals to communicate privately with each other.

Second of all, as a teenage male, I do not associate at all with the writing. In a way it feels as if Brian Sloan has no idea what teenagers are thinking of at all. I'm almost offended by how sex-fixated he portrays the characters.

While I found this book novel in its concept, it left much to be desired in execution.

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