

A NOVELIZATION BY IRVING SHULMAN

# WEST SIDE STORY



A novelization of the Broadway musical "West Side Story"

BASED ON A CONCEPTION OF JEROME ROBBINS

Book by Arthur Laurents • Music by Leonard Bernstein •

Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim • Entire original production

directed and choreographed by Jerome Robbins

## West Side Story

*Irving Shulman*

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**West Side Story** Irving Shulman

**From the silver screen to the Great White Way—one of the greatest stories of all time.**

They came together through love but violence threatened to tear them apart. Maria was young and innocent and had never known love—until Tony. And he, who had been seeking something beyond the savagery of the streets, discovered it with her.

But Maria's brother was leader of the Sharks and Tony had once led the rival Jets. Now both gangs were claiming the same turf. Tony promised Maria that he would stay out of it. Would he be able to keep his word? Or would their newfound love be destroyed by sudden death?

## West Side Story Details

Date : Published April 15th 1990 by Pocket Books (first published 1961)

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Author : Irving Shulman

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## From Reader Review West Side Story for online ebook

### Arte says

THIS. I have no words. This was absolutely the worst piece of trash I have ever had to read for school.

My main problem is that this is a complete rip-off of *Romeo and Juliet*. Now I know that this is supposed to be a "modernized version," but the way they pulled it off was terrible. I'm all for modernizing classics, but if you're going to attempt that, please, at least do it well. *West Side Story* reads like a mix of R&J and *The Outsiders*, and if you've read both books, you can probably imagine how horrible that sounds.

I think this book had potential; I was thinking it would at least be better than *Romeo and Juliet*, but I was severely disappointed. The way the author pulled it off made me feel like I wasted my time. And don't even get me started on the ending. It was just... there. It was like "Blah, let's get this over with and add some [spoilers removed] to make it angsty or something."

Good grief. I'm glad the book was so short. Now, I realize this was based off a play/movie, but this book completely got rid of what little interest I had left in watching it. I'll probably only watch it if my teacher shows it to the class (since I'll be forced to).

Now I'm gonna go change my *Romeo and Juliet* rating to a three star, and get it off the "cruptastic" shelf, because *this* book really made me feel like I took R&J for granted. I swear, I didn't think it could get any worse.

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### Kathy says

This book is wonderful ! So basicly this book is about a group of people from Puerto Rico who Immigrate to America. They move to this crazy part America. The American's do not want the Puerto Ricans in Their town. So they both Hatee eachother and both created groups called: Jets(Americans) And Sharks(Puerto Ricans). The main idea Is that thee 2 leader of the jets named Tony Falls in love with this young girl from the sharks named Maria. Can they stick out with their love, Like Romeo And Juliet, Or will it Just fade away?

I rate This book 5 starss because I can acutally Relate to the characters in the book. You can feel how the characters are feeling when they are mad, Sad, Or unhappy.

I racomend this book to people who LOVE romance ! This book is full of romance scenes where Tony and maria fight for their love !

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### Flossmoor Public Library (IL) says

5 stars

- Ms. Jenn

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### **Courtney Harbin says**

As a fan of the film I picked up this book thinking it would just be a fun little rehash of the story, something small to carry in my bag and read on breaks at work. I was initially impressed with all the details and insight the author gave to each character. I enjoyed seeing these characters in a new light. However, this book is too rushed. The first half fleshed out a lot of moments before Maria and Tony met, but the second half hardly had time to let the characters think about what happens. The ending was so rushed I didn't even have time to feel sorrow for the star-crossed lovers. If this had been stretched out into a longer book and the second half of the book fleshed out like the first half I might have enjoyed it more.

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### **Marili says**

Not the best production quality on this audio book so just beware. Love the story though...

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### **Alexis Torres says**

West side story is about two rival gangs from New York; the Jets who are whites and lead by Riff, and the Sharks who are Puerto Rican and lead by Bernardo. They have a showdown against each other and Tony Riff's best friend shows up. Bernardo's sister goes too, who just arrived from Puerto Rico is working with Anita, Bernardo's girlfriend. Maria and Tony fall in love at first sight. Riff proposes a battle without weapons and Bernardo accepts it. Tony goes to Maria's apartment and the love each other. She finds out about the battle and tell Tony to stop it. At his intent to stop it Bernardo shoves Tony and Riff comes out to defend him, the heat goes up and Bernardo stabs Riff to death and Tony kills Bernardo in revenge. Maria finds out but she forgives Tony, and tells him to run with her, he agrees. Anita finds out that Chino has plans to kill Tony. Maria is undergoing questions about the murder while Anita goes to the drugstore to make Tony wait for Maria, but the Jets showed up first and insult Anita; she tells them that Chino has killed Maria. When Tony finds out he is devastated and want revenge so he goes find Chino. Chino shoots Tony and as he catches sight of Maria and realizes she is still alive. Tony's death incited a fight between the two gangs, Maria tell them to stop because this is their fault. The two gangs carries Tony's body away. We can tell this story is like Romeo and Juliet from this century. I like the story even though it is like a typical romance story but with a different ending because everyone ends up death.

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### **Samantha says**

"West Side Story" has been a play that I have been wanting to read for quite a long time. I have seen the movie of this play numerous times and am extremely anxious to see the new revival on Broadway. Whenever I see a movie or stage production of a play, I am always interested to read the actual book to have a different perspective on the characters and overall plot. "West Side Story" is a tragic love story set in New York City in the mid-1950's on the west side of the city. This area is full of gangs and this story features the clash between two gangs, the Sharks and the Jets. The two lovers are Tony and Maria, Tony being an ex-member of the Jets and Maria being the sister of the leader of the Sharks, Bernardo. Tony and Maria see each other at

dance where both gangs happen to be at and their eyes meet and an instantaneous love connection is made. They must keep their love a secret because of their rival gangs but unfortunately, their love suddenly ends in a grim and somber way. This play is almost like a more modern adaptation of Romeo and Juliet and therefore, there are many parallels. The themes of love, secrecy, violence and tragedy are very apparent in this story and shine through the dialogue and words of music. While reading this play, I really enjoyed seeing each line of dialogue and how the music was incorporated by the book's author and the creator of the music and lyrics. Also, in the past when watching the movie, I viewed each gang as a whole and after reading the lines of each member of each gang, I found a new appreciation for the individual characters in the Sharks and in the Jets. In addition, I liked how the connection between Tony and Maria deepened from page to page and the mixing of the two ethnicities: the Caucasian Jets and the Spanish Sharks. I would recommend this play to anyone who has seen the movie or stage production of "West Side Story" or for anyone who wants to read a tragic love story.

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### **Ivy Catherine says**

Don't get me wrong, I love the musical. I'm just not a fan of the novelization... The broadway was inspired after Romeo and Juliet and what makes it unique from the play was it's music. Novelizing it lost it's uniqueness.

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### **bluerose says**

An undeniable classic but it's just not the same without the music. And this really shows its age!

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### **Nicki says**

I really enjoyed this book. It's easier to split up my review however, so I will.

#### **Likes**

I really, really liked the depth added to the characters. In the movie, all of the characters, even Tony and Maria, felt a little distant. However, in the novel, I could feel and relate to them. I loved knowing what was going through their heads, and seeing certain scenes through the eyes of the characters. I also liked reading it without the songs (don't get me wrong, I LOVE the songs). It made the story so much more realistic for me.

#### **Dislikes**

I didn't like the Jets. I hated them. I know there's hate on both sides, but honestly, I feel like they started. The Puerto Ricans didn't come hating anyone; the Jets started it. The fight scene between Bernardo (soooo attractive by the way) and Tony was with fists, until Riff, the leader of the Jets, decided to bring knives into the mix. In the movie, I felt more sad for both sides. However, in the novel, I turned more against the Jets. Like I stated above, the book gave a more emotional connection.

I also disliked how quickly the plot moved. I wish the author had turned the movie into a proper novel, not a short 200 page book. The spontaneous falling in love made a lot more sense in the movie, but made no sense in the novel. Everything just moved so fast.

The rest isn't really a criticism of the novel, but of the plot itself, which stems from the movie and the musical. The prose and the adaptation was excellent, hence the five stars. One thing that annoyed me about the *plot* was (view spoiler)

All in all though, I loved the book, and I love the movie. Definitely recommended.

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### **Carolina Dickens says**

A pair of star-crossed lovers takes on a whole new meaning in this modern day adaptation of Romeo and Juliet. New York City, the upper west side split in two by the nastiest rivals this side of the GWB. The jets, a group of 'american' boys who think they run the town. The Sharks, a gang of Puerto Rican immigrants who also think they run the town. When the two groups meet up at a dance to discuss a rumble, a pair finds themselves falling harder than they ever have before. Maria, the sister of the Shark's leader Bernardo, and Tony, the 'right hand man' to the leader of the Jets. As their love manifests, the hatred between their respective gangs grows like a cancer. With the rumble approaching, Maria is terrified of what might happen to her Tony. When the rumble starts, things begin to escalate quickly, with Tony's friend and Jet leader Riff is killed. In a surge of anger, Tony does the unimaginable. He kills Maria's brother, Bernardo. Distraught by the news, Maria is heartbroken at the thought of her love becoming a murderer. But, she soon forgives Tony, not knowing that their time together is drawing to a close. When Chino, Bernardo's friend, is seen looking for Tony with a gun, the Jets are warned of this threat. When they find Tony, they congregate at Doc's, a department store which is the perfect place for the gang to hang out. When Maria's friend Anita goes to find Tony to tell him that Maria wants to run away with him, she is confronted by the Jets, who taunt her. In anger, she yells out that Maria is dead. Tony becomes so distraught with the news of Maria's 'death' that he runs out into the street yelling for Chino to kill him. When he catches a glimpse of Maria, who is looking for him, he is exstatic. But, Chino shoots him before he can do anything. The gangs unite over Tony's death.

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### **Zoe Mckendrick says**

The greatest American musical. Doesn't hurt that the story is ripped off from Shakespeare but hey, that's dead, what does he care? Kind of silly to read it when you can watch the movie though. Best thing about the movie: the dancing. Worst thing: Natalie what'shername's ridiculous accent. Seriously she sounds like she's from Transylvania and has the worst spray tan you've ever seen. She'd be pretty otherwise, but then I found out she didn't even do the singing! So dumb. Rita Morena is amazing and it's no accident she's the only person to ever win a Tony, an Emmy, an Oscar and a Grammy. If Hollywood wasn't so racist she'd have been in a lot more movies, that's for sure. She didn't need a spray tan!

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### **Philip Swank says**

I was good.

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### **Joel BriGa says**

Confused...

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### **Mike says**

Terrible novelization. TERRIBLE. I'm not even going to review it, it was so terrible - it doesn't deserve one yottasecond of my time and energy.

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### **Amanda-Has-A-Bookcase says**

While the words are dated the story is not. I've always loved the movie and the play to West Side Story and now I can add the book as well. I love the lingo used and it was great to get a more in depth feel of the characters and what they were feeling. Solid 4 stars

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### **Lin Spradley says**

One of my favorite childhood books. Love the movie.

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### **Luis Cardenas says**

Siempre he sentido debilidad por esas novelas que ambientan la década de los 60's con sus colores, sus sonidos y todo esa ambientación tan de la época. West Side Story es una obra bastante lograda, una historia de amor del siglo XX que emula los clásicos antiguos de la tragedia pero con el toque moderno que encanta a todos por igual.

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### **Sonia says**

West side story me recuerda a uno de mis libros favoritos, The outsiders, esas historias de bandas que miran más allá, hacia esos niños con alma y corazón, no solo el entorno corrompido en que viven. Y es doloroso tener que aceptar la casi inevitable consecuencia de su inocencia disfrazada de dureza.

Es una historia corta y sencilla, esta con un enfoque más bien romántico pero sin perder de vista la lealtad que caracteriza a los amigos, y se ahonda muy poco en los personajes, pero el autor pudo dar una buena muestra de lo que hay en la mente de cada chico y aunque no se les dedicó grandes párrafos, en los diálogos se nos aporta lo suficiente para conocer lo que se esconde detrás de los actos de cada persona aquí descrita. Es una prueba más de que no se necesitan demasiadas páginas para transmitir un mensaje tan conciso.

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## **Esther Murray says**

Two teenage gangs in the streets of New York City honored the code to hate one another. The Jets are the American boys. Their leader is Riff and their lieutenant is Diesel. Then there are the Sharks. The Sharks are Puerto Rican, but are in New York. Their leader is Bernardo and Maria is Bernardo's sister. Tony used to be part of the Jets but sought a new life by leaving the gang. The Sharks and the Jets both went to a party at the gym one night. That is when the feud between the two gangs, that both thought they "owned" the streets, set flame. They had all been dancing, segregated to each side and gang, when Maria and Tony first met. They danced together, but were pulled away from this star-crossed forbidden love. Maria and Tony continued to meet in private, while the two gangs continued to feud. Finally, the gangs were fed up, so they decided to fight. Riff and Bernardo would bring their gangs and choose one person to fight from each side. Bernardo and Diesel were going to fight, but Tony stepped in, trying to stop the fight. Bernardo then challenged Tony and when he refused to fight, Riff stepped in to fight Bernardo. Bernardo kills Riff with a knife, so Tony stepped up and killed Bernardo. Later, Tony was hiding out because Chino, part of Bernardo's gang, was looking to hurt Tony for revenge, even though Maria had forgiven him. Anita, Bernardo's lover, was still mad, so when she went to see Tony at the drugstore he works at, she falsely told him Chino had killed Maria because he found out about the two of them. Tony then ran out to try to confront Chino, by yelling for him to come out. Maria then unknowingly surprised him by finding him on the streets. Chino then came out and shot Tony. Maria got very upset and took the gun from Chino, threatening to shoot the gangs, for causing Tony's death. She collapsed over Tony's body and the gangs found guilt and sympathy, carrying Tony's body away, after Maria kissed her love goodbye.

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