

a visit from the goon squad characters

****Exploring the Depths of "A Visit from the Goon Squad" Characters****

a visit from the goon squad characters are central to understanding Jennifer Egan's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, **A Visit from the Goon Squad**. This groundbreaking book captivated readers with its interwoven stories and richly drawn characters spanning different times and perspectives. If you've ever wondered what makes these characters so compelling or how their lives reflect broader themes of time, identity, and change, you're in the right place.

In this article, we'll dive deep into the major and minor figures populating Egan's narrative, explore their connections, and uncover what makes each character stand out. Along the way, we'll highlight key themes and provide insights into how these personas contribute to the novel's enduring impact.

Understanding the Core Cast of A Visit from the Goon Squad Characters

At the heart of **A Visit from the Goon Squad** is a vibrant tapestry of characters whose lives intersect in unexpected ways. The novel's structure is non-linear, jumping across time and viewpoints, but several key characters act as anchors, giving readers familiar touchpoints.

Bennie Salazar: The Aging Music Producer

Bennie Salazar is arguably the central figure tying the stories together. Once a successful punk rock band manager and music producer, Bennie embodies the theme of time's unrelenting passage. His character arc explores the rise and fall of fame, the evolution of the music industry, and the personal cost of chasing success.

What makes Bennie compelling is his complexity. He's flawed yet sympathetic—grappling with regrets, family struggles, and his fading relevance. Through Bennie, Egan probes questions about aging, nostalgia, and reinvention.

Sasha: The Ambitious Assistant Turned Rockstar

Sasha begins as Bennie's assistant, a young woman with dreams and a fierce determination to succeed. Her trajectory from behind-the-scenes helper to front-stage performer contrasts with Bennie's decline, illustrating shifting power dynamics and generational change.

Sasha's story is especially poignant because it highlights ambition's double-edged nature. She wrestles with loyalty, identity, and the cost of fame—mirroring and diverging from Bennie's experiences. Her character offers a fresh perspective on the music industry's evolving landscape.

Other Noteworthy Characters

While Bennie and Sasha are central, the novel's richness comes from its ensemble cast:

- **Alex**: Bennie's stepson, whose troubled youth and search for purpose add emotional depth.
- **Dolly**: A former band member whose life intersects with several characters, shedding light on the sacrifices behind artistic success.
- **Lou**: A music journalist whose narrative explores themes of truth and memory.

These characters, among others, help paint a multifaceted picture of interconnected lives shaped by ambition, loss, and the passage of time.

Character Development and Themes in the Novel

The brilliance of *A Visit from the Goon Squad* lies not only in its characters but in how Egan uses them to explore larger themes. The characters' development is intricately tied to motifs like time, identity, and technology.

The Passage of Time and Its Impact on Characters

Time acts almost as a character itself in the novel. Each story segment jumps forward or backward, showing the same characters at different life stages. This technique allows readers to witness the consequences of choices and the inevitability of change.

For example, Bennie's youthful ambition contrasts with his later years filled with regret and reflection. Sasha's rising star is set against Bennie's decline, emphasizing the cyclical nature of life and careers. These shifts underscore how time shapes identity and destiny.

Identity and Reinvention

Many characters wrestle with reinventing themselves. Sasha's transformation from assistant to musician, Bennie's attempts to reclaim relevance, and Alex's struggle to find his path illustrate the fluidity of identity.

This theme resonates deeply in today's fast-paced, technology-driven world where change is constant. The characters' journeys encourage readers to reflect on their own lives and the potential for growth despite setbacks.

Technology and Cultural Change

Egan subtly weaves in the impact of technology on the music industry and personal relationships. The characters' interactions with evolving media—from CDs to digital downloads—highlight shifting

cultural landscapes.

The novel also anticipates how technology affects memory and storytelling, mirrored in its innovative narrative style. Characters grapple with adapting to new realities, making the story feel incredibly relevant even years after its publication.

Tips for Readers: Getting the Most from A Visit from the Goon Squad Characters

If you're diving into *A Visit from the Goon Squad* for the first time, understanding its characters is key to appreciating the novel's depth. Here are some tips to enhance your reading experience:

- **Pay attention to timelines:** The non-linear storytelling can be initially confusing. Keeping track of when each chapter takes place helps clarify characters' growth.
- **Note character connections:** Many stories intersect in subtle ways. Recognizing these links enriches your understanding of the narrative web.
- **Reflect on themes:** As you read, consider how characters embody themes like aging, technology, and identity.
- **Appreciate the narrative style:** Egan experiments with form, including a chapter written as a PowerPoint presentation. These choices enhance character insights.

Why A Visit from the Goon Squad Characters Resonate with Readers

One reason the characters continue to resonate is their authenticity. Despite the novel's experimental style, the characters feel real—flawed, hopeful, and relatable. They embody universal struggles that transcend the music industry backdrop.

The novel's exploration of time also taps into a shared human experience: how our past shapes us and how we cope with change. Readers find themselves empathizing with Bennie's regrets or Sasha's ambitions because these emotions are universal.

Moreover, the diversity of perspectives—from different ages and backgrounds—offers a panoramic view of life's complexity. This inclusivity broadens the novel's appeal, making it a rich study of human nature.

The Lasting Influence of Jennifer Egan's Character Craft

Jennifer Egan's character creation in *A Visit from the Goon Squad* has influenced contemporary literature by demonstrating that characters can be both experimental and deeply relatable. Her ability to weave multiple voices and timelines without losing emotional resonance sets a high standard.

Writers and readers alike praise the novel for its inventive structure and memorable characters, proving that innovative storytelling can still prioritize character depth. Egan's work encourages ongoing discussion about how stories can be told and experienced.

Exploring *a visit from the goon squad characters* reveals not only the intricacies of each individual but also the larger themes that make the novel a modern classic. Whether you're captivated by Bennie's reflective nature or Sasha's drive, these characters invite us to ponder time and transformation in our own lives. Their stories linger long after the last page, reminding us that every life is a complex composition of moments, choices, and connections.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who are the main characters in 'A Visit from the Goon Squad'?

The main characters include Bennie Salazar, a music producer; Sasha, his assistant; and a range of interconnected characters such as Scotty, Jules, and Alex, whose lives intertwine throughout the novel.

What role does Bennie Salazar play in 'A Visit from the Goon Squad'?

Bennie Salazar is a central character, a once-successful music producer whose career and personal life are explored across different timelines in the book.

How is Sasha portrayed in 'A Visit from the Goon Squad'?

Sasha is Bennie's assistant, a young woman struggling with her past and seeking direction in her life, serving as a key figure connecting various storylines.

Are the characters in 'A Visit from the Goon Squad' connected?

Yes, the characters are interrelated, with their stories intersecting across different chapters, revealing how their lives impact each other over time.

Does 'A Visit from the Goon Squad' focus on character development?

Absolutely, the novel deeply explores the growth, struggles, and transformations of its characters as they face themes of aging, loss, and redemption.

Is there a character named Scotty in 'A Visit from the Goon Squad'?

Yes, Scotty is one of the significant characters; he is Bennie's childhood friend whose life and challenges are detailed in the narrative.

Additional Resources

A Visit from the Goon Squad Characters: An Analytical Exploration

a visit from the goon squad characters serve as the intricate backbone of Jennifer Egan's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, **A Visit from the Goon Squad**. This collection of interconnected stories revolves around a diverse cast whose lives intersect over a span of several decades, revealing themes of time, memory, and the elusive nature of selfhood. The novel's structure and character development invite a nuanced examination for readers and critics alike, making an exploration of these characters crucial for understanding the narrative's depth and thematic resonance.

Understanding the Core Characters in A Visit from the Goon Squad

At its heart, **A Visit from the Goon Squad** revolves around the lives of Bennie Salazar and his assistant, Sasha. Bennie, a former punk rocker turned music producer, embodies the passage of time within the music industry and personal identity shifts. Sasha, his assistant, represents youth and the challenges of navigating a fast-changing world. The dynamic between these two anchors much of the storyline, but the richness of the novel emerges through its expansive supporting cast.

Bennie Salazar: The Aging Music Producer

Bennie is a complex figure whose life story spans from the 1970s punk scene to the digital age of music production. His character illustrates the tension between past glory and present relevance. Through Bennie, Egan critiques the music industry's evolution and the broader cultural shifts that accompany technological advancements. His struggles with aging and obsolescence reflect a universal human condition, making him a relatable yet deeply flawed protagonist.

Sasha: The Disconnected Youth

Sasha serves as a counterpoint to Bennie, embodying the uncertainties and anxieties of contemporary youth. Her erratic behavior, including substance abuse and self-destructive tendencies, underscores themes of alienation and the search for identity. Sasha's narrative arcs provide insight into generational contrasts within the novel, highlighting how time affects perspectives and opportunities differently.

Supporting Characters and Their Narrative Significance

Beyond Bennie and Sasha, **A Visit from the Goon Squad** introduces a web of characters whose stories intersect in unexpected ways. Notable among these are:

- **Robo:** Bennie's childhood friend and bandmate, whose own trajectory reflects the consequences of choices made in youth.
- **Alex:** Sasha's friend who represents the digital generation's immersion in technology and identity fragmentation.
- **Lou:** A record company executive who embodies the corporate side of the music industry.

Each character offers a different lens on the central themes of time, loss, and reinvention, contributing to a mosaic-like narrative structure.

Character Development and Narrative Techniques

Jennifer Egan employs innovative narrative techniques to depict the characters in **A Visit from the Goon Squad**. The novel's non-linear timeline and shifting perspectives allow readers to experience characters at various life stages, enhancing the thematic focus on time's impact.

Non-Linear Storytelling

The novel's episodic structure, where chapters jump back and forth across decades, creates a layered understanding of characters. For instance, readers see Bennie as a young musician and later as a middle-aged producer, while Sasha's future self appears in a chapter set years ahead. This temporal fluidity challenges traditional character arcs, emphasizing the fragmentation and fluidity of identity.

Varied Narrative Voices

Egan experiments with narrative voices, including a chapter written as a PowerPoint presentation, which offers a unique perspective on a minor character's life. This stylistic choice not only enriches character portrayal but also reflects the novel's engagement with contemporary communication forms and the digital age's influence on storytelling.

Comparative Perspectives: A Visit from the Goon Squad Characters vs. Contemporary Fiction

When compared to characters in other contemporary literary works, the characters of **A Visit from the Goon Squad** stand out for their complexity and the novel's structural innovation. Unlike traditional linear character development seen in many novels, Egan's characters are presented in fragments, inviting readers to piece together their stories like a puzzle.

In contrast to the more archetypal figures in popular fiction, these characters embody ambiguity and moral complexity. This approach aligns with modernist and postmodernist traditions, focusing on internal conflict and the instability of identity over time.

Strengths and Limitations of Character Portrayal

- **Strengths:** The multifaceted portrayal of characters allows deep psychological insight and reflects real-life complexities. The use of diverse narrative styles enhances engagement.
- **Limitations:** Some readers may find the fragmented storytelling challenging, potentially leading to difficulty in maintaining emotional attachment to characters. The frequent shifts can disrupt narrative flow.

Keywords and Themes Interwoven with Characters

The characters in **A Visit from the Goon Squad** are deeply intertwined with key themes such as aging, memory, and cultural change. Keywords like "time," "music industry," "identity," "technology," and "generational conflict" are recurrent throughout the novel and are critical when analyzing the characters' development.

For instance, the motif of the "goon squad" itself symbolizes the relentless passage of time and inevitable decay, affecting each character differently. This metaphorical framing enriches the narrative by connecting individual experiences with broader existential questions.

Impact of Time on Character Evolution

Time's passage is not merely a backdrop but an active force shaping the characters. Bennie's nostalgia contrasts with Sasha's impulsiveness, highlighting different responses to temporal challenges. Characters' interactions often reveal how past decisions reverberate into the future, influencing identity and relationships.

Exploration of Memory and Trauma

Memory plays a pivotal role in the characters' journeys. The novel delves into how memories, both reliable and distorted, affect self-perception and interpersonal dynamics. Traumatic experiences, such as Sasha's struggles with addiction and Robo's regrets, are portrayed with nuance, inviting reflection on healing and reconciliation.

Conclusion: The Enduring Appeal of A Visit from the Goon Squad Characters

The characters of *A Visit from the Goon Squad* offer a compelling study in complexity and narrative innovation. Through their interwoven stories, Jennifer Egan provides a profound meditation on time's effects on identity, culture, and relationships. For readers and scholars, exploring these characters reveals much about contemporary literature's evolving approaches to storytelling and character development. The novel's characters remain relevant and resonant, reflecting the fragmented, fast-paced world in which they—and we—live.

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a visit from the goon squad characters: A Visit from the Goon Squad Reread Ivan Kreilkamp, 2021-02-02 Jennifer Egan described her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *A Visit from the Goon Squad* as a combination of Proust and *The Sopranos*. In rereading the book, Ivan Kreilkamp takes Egan up on her comparison, showing how it blends a concern with the status of the novel in the twenty-first century with an elegiac meditation on how we experience the passage of time. Kreilkamp, a former music critic, examines how Egan's characters turn to rock and especially punk in search of community and meaning. He considers what the novel's portrayal of music says about the role of art in contemporary culture as digitization makes older technologies obsolete. Combining personal and critical reflection, he reveals how *A Visit from the Goon Squad* articulates and responds to the sense of loss many feel as cherished physical objects are replaced with immaterial

data. For Kreilkamp, Egan's novel compellingly combines the psychological realism of the nineteenth-century novel with more recent and transient forms such as the celebrity magazine profile or a PowerPoint presentation to provide a self-reflective diagnosis of the decay and endurance of literature. Arranged like Egan's novel into A and B sides, this book highlights not only how *A Visit from the Goon Squad* speaks to our mass-media and digital present but also its page-turning pleasure.

a visit from the goon squad characters: *A Visit from the Goon Squad* Jennifer Egan, 2010-06-08 NATIONAL BESTSELLER • NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE WINNER • With music pulsing on every page, this startling, exhilarating novel of self-destruction and redemption "features characters about whom you come to care deeply as you watch them doing things they shouldn't, acting gloriously, infuriatingly human" (The Chicago Tribune). One of the New York Times's 100 Best Books of the 21st Century • One of The Atlantic's Great American Novels of the Past 100 Years • A Kirkus Reviews Best Fiction Book of the Century • A Los Angeles Times Best Fiction Book of the Last 30 Years Bennie is an aging former punk rocker and record executive. Sasha is the passionate, troubled young woman he employs. Here Jennifer Egan brilliantly reveals their pasts, along with the inner lives of a host of other characters whose paths intersect with theirs. "Pitch perfect . . . Darkly, rippingly funny . . . Egan possesses a satirist's eye and a romance novelist's heart."—The New York Times Book Review

a visit from the goon squad characters: Writing the Intimate Character Jordan Rosenfeld, 2016-10-04 Craft Vibrant Characters and an Intimate Reading Experience The key to excellent fiction lies in its characters: the unforgettable protagonists, antagonists, and secondary characters who populate the world of your story. Understanding and effectively using point of view allows you to write a powerful narrative that draws readers in and engages them with characters in a meaningful way. Through a blend of practical instruction, useful examples, and helpful exercises, *Writing the Intimate Character* shows you how to create the experience of living through a character rather than just reading about one. Inside, you'll learn: • The functions and benefits of first-person, third-person intimate, omniscient, and second-person points of view. • How to apply character cues--specific behaviors, sensory perceptions, dialogue, and visual imagery--to develop a realistic protagonist and secondary cast. • The surface and subset feelings that get to the root of your character's emotions. • How different viewpoints affect the story you want to tell. *Writing the Intimate Character* helps you craft a novel in which readers can experience your characters' senses, dive inside their minds, and truly feel their emotions. *Writing the Intimate Character*, the latest engaging guide by Jordan Rosenfeld, is a rich resource we'll all be learning from for the rest of our lives. 'Does the term point of view seem too dull and dry?' she asks. 'Try intimacy instead.' And then she shows us how, with diverse examples and wise observation. Now that I have Jordan's take on how to create a character from the inside out, I'm eager to get to it. You, too, will find this book that inspiring. --Rebecca Lawton, author of *Sacrament: Homage to a River* and other books *Writing the Intimate Character* provides insights, examples, and exercises that will be useful not only to those who are new to writing fiction but to those, like myself, who are coming back to it after a break. Jordan Rosenfeld's explanation of how narrative voice works with point of view and other literary elements to create characters that readers care deeply about is clear and revelatory. The book can be worked through methodically or dipped into as needed. It's a useful tool for getting the gears of imagination working or for jump-starting and fine-tuning a work in process. --Zoe Zolbrod, author of the novel *Currency* and the memoir *The Telling* Jordan Rosenfeld has a keen insight into how to construct characters who are truly lived-in. With intelligence and wit, she walks you through every element of powerful characterization, from selecting your POV to demonstrating character growth throughout your story. Whether you're new to fiction or a more experienced writer, put your trust in Jordan Rosenfeld; she'll help you tell a better story. --Laura Bogart, freelance writer and novelist

a visit from the goon squad characters: The Candy House Jennifer Egan, 2023-03-07 The *Candy House* opens with the staggeringly brilliant Bix Bouton, whose company, Mandala, is so successful that he is one of those tech demi-gods with whom we're all on a first name basis. Bix is

40, with four kids, restless, desperate for a new idea, when he stumbles into a conversation group, mostly Columbia professors, one of whom is experimenting with downloading or externalizing memory. It's 2010. Within a decade, Bix's new technology, Own Your Unconscious-that allows you access to every memory you've ever had, and to share every memory in exchange for access to the memories of others-has seduced multitudes. But not everyone. In spellbinding interlocking narratives, Egan spins out the consequences of Own Your Unconscious through the lives of multiple characters whose paths intersect over several decades. Intellectually dazzling, *The Candy House* is also extraordinarily moving, a testament to the tenacity and transcendence of human longing for real connection, love, family, privacy and redemption. In the world of Egan's spectacular imagination, there are counters who track and exploit desires and there are eluders, those who understand the price of taking a bite of the Candy House. Egan introduces these characters in an astonishing array of narrative styles-from omniscient to first person plural to a duet of voices, an epistolary chapter and a chapter of tweets. If Goon Squad was organized like a concept album, *The Candy House* incorporates Electronic Dance Music's more disjunctive approach. The parts are titled: Build, Break, Drop. With an emphasis on gaming, portals, and alternate worlds, its structure also suggests the experience of moving among dimensions in a role-playing game. *The Candy House* is a bold, brilliant imagining of a world that is moments away. Egan takes to stunning new heights her deeply intuitive forays into the darker aspects of our technology-driven, image-saturated culture (*Vogue*). *The Candy House* delivers an absolutely extraordinary combination of fierce, exhilarating intelligence and heart--

a visit from the goon squad characters: Cool Characters Lee Konstantinou, 2016-03-07 Lee Konstantinou examines irony in American literary and political life, showing how it migrated from the countercultural margins of the 1950s to the 1980s mainstream. Along the way, irony was absorbed into postmodern theory and ultimately became a target of recent writers who have moved beyond its limitations with a practice of "postirony."

a visit from the goon squad characters: The Mobile Story Jason Farman, 2013-09-11 What happens when stories meet mobile media? In this cutting-edge collection, contributors explore digital storytelling in ways that look beyond the desktop to consider how stories can be told through mobile, locative, and pervasive technologies. This book offers dynamic insights about the new nature of narrative in the age of mobile media, studying digital stories that are site-specific, context-aware, and involve the reader in fascinating ways. Addressing important topics for scholars, students, and designers alike, this collection investigates the crucial questions for this emerging area of storytelling and electronic literature. Topics covered include the histories of site-specific narratives, issues in design and practice, space and mapping, mobile games, narrative interfaces, and the interplay between memory, history, and community.

a visit from the goon squad characters: American Literature in Transition, 2000-2010 Rachel Greenwald Smith, 2017-12-28 *American Literature in Transition, 2000-2010* illuminates the dynamic transformations that occurred in American literary culture during the first decade of the twenty-first century. The volume is the first major critical collection to address the literature of the 2000s, a decade that saw dramatic changes in digital technology, economics, world affairs, and environmental awareness. Beginning with an introduction that takes stock of the period's major historical, cultural, and literary movements, the volume features accessible essays on a wide range of topics, including genre fiction, the treatment of social networking in literature, climate change fiction, the ascendancy of Amazon and online booksellers, 9/11 literature, finance and literature, and the rise of prestige television. Mapping the literary culture of a decade of promise and threat, *American Literature in Transition, 2000-2010* provides an invaluable resource on twenty-first century American literature for general readers, students, and scholars alike.

a visit from the goon squad characters: The Art of Character David Corbett, 2013-01-29 Former private investigator and New York Times notable author David Corbett offers a unique and indispensable toolkit for creating characters that come vividly to life on the page and linger in memory. Corbett provides an inventive, inspiring, and vastly entertaining blueprint to all the

elements of characterization—from initial inspiration to realization—with special insights into the power of secrets and contradictions, the embodiment of roles, managing the tyranny of motive, and mastering crucial techniques required for memorable dialogue and unforgettable scenes. This is a how-to guide for both aspiring and accomplished writers that renders all other books of its kind obsolete.

a visit from the goon squad characters: Bystanders Tara Laskowski, 2016-05-01 Legacies of violence and tragedy haunt these thirteen stunning stories from Tara Laskowski, author of *Modern Manners for Your Inner Demons*. A woman becomes obsessed with her co-worker's murderer; an investigative reporter with a nose for scandal finds his own life suddenly unraveling; eerie sights in a video baby monitor haunt a new mother. When the unexpected happens, these bystanders—who are not always innocent—come face to face with their own choices and fates. Bound together by danger, fear, paranoia, and the bumps we all hear in the night, these potent stories illuminate the darker side of the human condition. From a vicious newspaper strike that rocks a small Pennsylvania community to an unpredictable road trip in the vast desert of the American West, *Bystanders* explores the ways in which terror and uncertainty both consume and invigorate us—and yet reveal our strengths, hopes, and passions. Selected as the Grand Prize Winner for the SFWP Literary Awards Program, 2010, by Pulitzer Prize-winner Robert Olen Butler.

a visit from the goon squad characters: Essays on Polarity Dee Wilson, 2024-03-20 Essays in *Polarity: Big Bang to Human Character* advances the idea that the creative universe's organizing principle is polarity in both natural and social phenomena, and that the cosmos is an experiment, an adventure and an entertainment in polarity. Furthermore, the book argues that the main dimensions of polarity were “announced” in the first instant of the Big Bang and have been reiterated in the biological evolution of mind, in early human social development and in human psychology, including in the perception of beauty. This theme is explored in chapters on early ideas regarding the sacred, and in reviews of books on World War 1 and the war in Indochina, and on cultural polarities and in an essay, “Why Is The World Beautiful”

a visit from the goon squad characters: Time in Twenty-First-Century British and American Literature Sonia Front, 2025-06-20 This book investigates representations of time in twenty-first-century Anglo-American literature. In the digital era, characterized by a new regime of time, fiction offers revisions of prevalent, oppressive notions of time that can serve as productive political strategies to reclaim the agency of the subject. This book discusses literary texts that craft innovative temporal structures out of sync with the new time logic: suspended temporality (Chapter 1); time as a conflation of phenomenological experience and cosmological laws (Chapter 2); previewing the future (Chapter 3); and networked memory (Chapter 4). The proposed politically productive temporalities, such as deep presence or resonance, compatibilism, contingency, and the use of narrative as a chronologizing strategy, ground a vision of change and suggest a way out of the crisis of time. Identifying new timeframes in twenty-first-century fiction by an array of writers, this book demonstrates that literature remains a valid medium for theorizing and representing time.

a visit from the goon squad characters: A History of American Literature Linda Wagner-Martin, 2015-07-20 A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE 1950 TO THE PRESENT Featuring works from notable authors as varied as Salinger and the Beats to Vonnegut, Capote, Morrison, Rich, Walker, Eggers, and DeLillo, *A History of American Literature: 1950 to the Present* offers a comprehensive analysis of the wide range of literary works produced in the United States over the last six decades and a fascinating survey of the dramatic changes during America's transition from the innocence of the fifties to the harsh realities of the first decade of the new millennium. Author Linda Wagner-Martin - a highly acclaimed authority on all facets of modern American literature - covers major works of drama, poetry, fiction, non-fiction, memoirs, and popular genres such as science fiction and detective novels. Viewing works produced during this fertile literary period from a wide-ranging perspective, Wagner-Martin considers literature in relation to such issues as the politics of civil rights, feminism, sexual preferences, and race- and gender-based marketing. She also places a special emphasis on works produced during the

twenty-first century, and writings influenced by recent historic events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina, and the global financial crisis. With its careful balance of scholarly precision and accessibility, *A History of American Literature: 1950 to the Present* provides readers of all levels with rich and revealing insights into the diversity of literary forms and influences that characterize postmodern America. "A monumental distillation of an enormous range of material, Wagner-Martin's rich book should be required reading for anyone grappling with making sense of the prolific, broad-spectrum, and diverse writing in the US since 1950." Thadious M. Davis, University of Pennsylvania "Linda Wagner-Martin's history impressively and judiciously surveys all fields of American writing over the past sixty years, taking full account of significant cultural and historical contexts and the major critical commentaries that have helped shape our understanding of developments in the second half of the last century and the dozen years following the millennium. Balanced, informative, and always highly readable there is much here for general readers, students, and specialists alike." Christopher MacGowan, the College of William and Mary

a visit from the goon squad characters: Understanding Jennifer Egan Alexander Moran, 2021-09-03 *Understanding Jennifer Egan* is the first book-length study of the novelist, short-story writer, and journalist best known for the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. Alexander Moran examines each of Egan's varied published works, analyzes how her journalism informs her fiction, excavates her literary and intellectual influences, and considers her place in contemporary fiction. Moran argues that because Egan's fiction is not easily categorized many of her novels have been underappreciated. He proposes a framework for understanding her writing centered on what it means to have, and to write, an authentic experience. In *Emerald City*, Egan explores the authenticity of touristic experience; in *The Invisible Circus*, her focus shifts to the authenticity of historical memory; in *Look at Me*, *The Keep*, and *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, she explores the effects of digital technology on how we understand authentic experience. In the concluding chapter, Moran discusses Egan's 2017 novel *Manhattan Beach* as a text that explores the authenticity of history and genre while resonating with the instability of the present.

a visit from the goon squad characters: The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction Daniel O'Gorman, Robert Eaglestone, 2019-01-15 The study of contemporary fiction is a fascinating yet challenging one. Contemporary fiction has immediate relevance to popular culture, the news, scholarly organizations, and education – where it is found on the syllabus in schools and universities – but it also offers challenges. What is 'contemporary'? How do we track cultural shifts and changes? The *Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction* takes on this challenge, mapping key literary trends from the year 2000 onwards, as the landscape of our century continues to take shape around us. A significant and central intervention into contemporary literature, this Companion offers essential coverage of writers who have risen to prominence since then, such as Hari Kunzru, Jennifer Egan, David Mitchell, Jonathan Lethem, Ali Smith, A. L. Kennedy, Hilary Mantel, Marilynne Robinson, and Colson Whitehead. Thirty-eight essays by leading and emerging international scholars cover topics such as: • Identity, including race, sexuality, class, and religion in the twenty-first century; • The impact of technology, terrorism, activism, and the global economy on the modern world and modern literature; • The form and format of twenty-first century literary fiction, including analysis of established genres such as the pastoral, graphic novels, and comedic writing, and how these have been adapted in recent years. Accessible to experts, students, and general readers, *The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction* provides a map of the critical issues central to the discipline, as well as uncovering new perspectives and new directions for the development of the field. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the past, present, and future of contemporary literature.

a visit from the goon squad characters: Minor Characters Have Their Day Jeremy Rosen, 2016-10-04 How do genres develop? In what ways do they reflect changing political and cultural trends? What do they tell us about the motivations of publishers and readers? Combining close readings and formal analysis with a sociology of literary institutions and markets, *Minor Characters Have Their Day* offers a compelling new approach to genre study and contemporary fiction. Focusing

on the booming genre of books that transform minor characters from canonical literary texts into the protagonists of new works, Jeremy Rosen makes broader claims about the state of contemporary fiction, the strategies of the publishing industry over recent decades, and the function of literary characters. Rosen traces the recent surge in minor-character elaboration to the late 1960s and works such as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. These early examples often recover the voices of marginalized individuals and groups. As the genre has exploded between the 1980s and the present, with novels about Ahab's wife, Huck Finn's father, and Mr. Dalloway, it has begun to embody the neoliberal commitments of subjective experience, individual expression, and agency. Eventually, large-scale publishers capitalized on the genre as a way to appeal to educated audiences aware of the prestige of the classics and to draw in identity-based niche markets. Rosen's conclusion ties the understudied evolution of minor-character elaboration to the theory of literary character.

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to digital media. Authors like Jennifer Egan, Dave Eggers, Sheila Heti, Jonathan Lethem, Gary Shteyngart, Colson Whitehead, Mark Amerika, Ellen Ullman, and Danica Novgorodoff and films such as *The Social Network* and *Catfish* critique and reveal the ways in which digital labor isolates the individual; how the work of programming has become an operation of power; and the continuation of the "Californian ideology," which has folded the radical into the rote and the imaginary into the mundane. The works of these writers and artists, Dinnen argues, also offer ways of resisting the more troubling aspects of the effects of new technologies, as well as timely methods for seeing the digital banal as a politics of suppression. Bridging the gap between literary studies and media studies, *The Digital Banal* recovers the shrouded disturbances that can help us recognize and antagonize our media environment.

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