



Black Swan Green

By David Mitchell

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By the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Bone Clocks* and *Cloud Atlas* | Longlisted for the Man Booker Prize

Selected by *Time* as One of the Ten Best Books of the Year | A *New York Times* Notable Book | Named One of the Best Books of the Year by *The Washington Post Book World*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Rocky Mountain News*, and *Kirkus Reviews* | A *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize Finalist | Winner of the ALA Alex Award | Finalist for the Costa Novel Award

From award-winning writer David Mitchell comes a sinewy, meditative novel of boyhood on the cusp of adulthood and the old on the cusp of the new.

Black Swan Green tracks a single year in what is, for thirteen-year-old Jason Taylor, the sleepiest village in muddiest Worcestershire in a dying Cold War England, 1982. But the thirteen chapters, each a short story in its own right, create an exquisitely observed world that is anything but sleepy. A world of Kissingeresque realpolitik enacted in boys' games on a frozen lake; of "nightcreeping" through the summer backyards of strangers; of the tabloid-fueled thrills of the Falklands War and its human toll; of the cruel, luscious Dawn Madden and her power-hungry boyfriend, Ross Wilcox; of a certain Madame Eva van Outryve de Crommelynck, an elderly bohemian emigré who is both more and less than she appears; of Jason's search to replace his dead grandfather's irreplaceable smashed watch before the crime is discovered; of first cigarettes, first kisses, first Duran Duran LPs, and first deaths; of Margaret Thatcher's recession; of Gypsies camping in the woods and the hysteria they inspire; and, even closer to home, of a slow-motion divorce in four seasons.

Pointed, funny, profound, left-field, elegiac, and painted with the stuff of life, *Black Swan Green* is David Mitchell's subtlest and most effective achievement to date.

Praise for *Black Swan Green*

"[David Mitchell has created] one of the most endearing, smart, and funny young narrators ever to rise up from the pages of a novel. . . . The always fresh and

brilliant writing will carry readers back to their own childhoods. . . . This enchanting novel makes us remember exactly what it was like.”—*The Boston Globe*

“[David Mitchell is a] prodigiously daring and imaginative young writer. . . . As in the works of Thomas Pynchon and Herman Melville, one feels the roof of the narrative lifted off and oneself in thrall.”—*Time*

“[A] brilliant new novel . . . In Jason, Mitchell creates an evocation yet authentically adolescent voice.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

“Alternately nostalgic, funny and heartbreaking.”—*The Washington Post*

“Great Britain’s *Catcher in the Rye*—and another triumph for one of the present age’s most interesting and accomplished novelists.”—*Kirkus Reviews (starred review)*

“This book is so entertainingly strange, so packed with activity, adventures, and diverting banter, that you only realize as the extraordinary novel concludes that the timid boy has grown before your eyes into a capable young man.”—*Entertainment Weekly*

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. For his fourth novel, two-time Booker Prize finalist Mitchell (*Cloud Atlas*, etc.) turns to material most writers plumb in their first: the semiautobiographical, first-person coming-of-age story. And after three books with notably complex narrative structure, far-flung settings, and multiple viewpoints, he has chosen one narrator, 13-year-old Jason Taylor, to tell the story of one year (1982) in one town, Worcestershire's Black Swan Green. Jason starts with the January day he accidentally smashes his late grandfather's irreplaceable Omega Seamaster DeVille watch and ends with Christmas, which, because of intervening events, becomes the last he spends in this sleepy Midlands hamlet. The gorgeously revealed cast includes Jason's brilliant older sister, sarcastic mother, blustering dad and a spectrum of bullies and mates. Jason's nemesis is an intermittent, fluctuating stammer: some days he must avoid words beginning with N; other days, S. Once he is exposed, the bullies taunt him mercilessly; there is no respite for the weak or disabled in Black Swan Green nor, as the realities of Thatcher's grim reign begin to take their toll, in England writ large. How Jason and his family navigate this year of change is the emotional core of this rich novel, but the virtuoso chapter is "The Bridle Path," wherein Jason, alone for one delicious day, searches for a tunnel fabled to have been dug by the Romans in order to rout the Vikings. What he finds along the way captures the sheer pleasure of being a boy and brings to mind adventures shared by Huck and Tom. (*Apr.*)

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—Thirteen chapters provide a monthly snapshot of Jason Taylor's life in small-town England from January 1982 to January 1983. Whether the 13-year-old narrator is battling his stammer or trying to navigate the social hierarchy of his schoolmates or watching the slow disintegration of his parents' marriage, he relates his story in a voice that is achingly true to life. Each chapter becomes a skillfully drawn creation that can stand on its own, but is subtly interwoven with the others. While readers may not see the connectedness in the first two thirds of the book, the final three sections skillfully bring the threads together. The author does not pull any punches when it comes to the casual cruelty that adolescent boys can inflict on one another, but it is this very brutality that underscores the sweetness of which they are also capable. With its British slang and complex twists and turns, this title is not a selection for reluctant readers, but teens who enjoy multifaceted coming-of-age stories will be richly rewarded. The chapter entitled Rocks, which centers around the British conflict in the Falkland Islands in May 1982, is especially compelling as Jason and his peers deal with the death of one of their own. Mitchell has been hailed as one of the great new authors of the 21st century; with *Black Swan Green*, he shows again how the best books challenge readers' complacency.—Kim Dare, Chantilly Regional Library, Fairfax County, VA

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Critics hailed Mitchell's previous work, including *Ghostwritten* (1999), *Number9Dream* (2001), and *Cloud Atlas* (**** Nov/Dec 2004), as inventive postmodern novels, brilliant stories-within-stories. Admittedly, the semiautobiographical *Black Swan Green* contains fewer literary tricks, a more straightforward narrative, and less flash—but the results are even more dazzling. More accessible and possessing greater emotional heft, Mitchell's newest novel offers a portrait of a boy and an era in 13 chapters that, by turns, produce exhilaration, nostalgia, and heartbreak. Vivid sensory images, pitch-perfect dialogue, and flawless characterizations make *Black Swan Green* Mitchell's best work to date, "a testament of his seemingly bottomless talent" (*Rocky Mountain News*).

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Carlos White:

Nowadays reading books be a little more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading addiction give you lot of advantages. The huge benefits you got of course the knowledge the rest of the information inside the book this improve your knowledge and information. The information you get based on what kind of guide you read, if you want drive more knowledge just go with education and learning books but if you want truly feel happy read one along with theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. Typically the Black Swan Green is kind of book which is giving the reader capricious experience.

Karen Wilson:

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Karen McCarthy:

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