



# Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic

By Alison Bechdel

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## Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic By Alison Bechdel

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Distant and exacting, Bruce Bechdel was an English teacher and director of the town funeral home, which Alison and her family referred to as the "Fun Home." It was not until college that Alison, who had recently come out as a lesbian, discovered that her father was also gay. A few weeks after this revelation, he was dead, leaving a legacy of mystery for his daughter to resolve.

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## **Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic** By Alison Bechdel Bibliography

- Rank: #31919 in eBooks
- Published on: 2007-06-05
- Released on: 2007-06-05
- Format: Kindle eBook

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

*Starred Review.* This autobiography by the author of the long-running strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*, deals with her childhood with a closeted gay father, who was an English teacher and proprietor of the local funeral parlor (the former allowed him access to teen boys). *Fun Home* refers both to the funeral parlor, where he put makeup on the corpses and arranged the flowers, and the family's meticulously restored gothic revival house, filled with gilt and lace, where he liked to imagine himself a 19th-century aristocrat. The art has greater depth and sophistication than *Dykes*; Bechdel's talent for intimacy and banter gains gravitas when used to describe a family in which a man's secrets make his wife a tired husk and overshadow his daughter's burgeoning womanhood and homosexuality. His court trial over his dealings with a young boy pushes aside the importance of her early teen years. Her coming out is pushed aside by his death, probably a suicide. The recursively told story, which revisits the sites of tragic desperation again and again, hits notes that resemble Jeanette Winterson at her best. Bechdel presents her childhood as a "still life with children" that her father created, and meditates on how prolonged untruth can become its own reality. She's made a story that's quiet, dignified and not easy to put down. (June)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

That Alison Bechdel kept a childhood journal made *Fun Home* a perhaps more true-to-life project than it would have been if she'd relied on memory alone. A powerful graphic novel-memoir, *Fun Home* documents Bechdel's childhood experiences and coming-of-age as a woman and lesbian. At its center lies her heartbreaking relationship with her distant father, which produces emotionally complex and poignant reflections and clean, bitonal images. While detractors cited confusing chronology and repetition of events, literary buffs enjoyed the challenging references to Albert Camus, James Joyce, and classical mythology. In the end, *Fun Home* "is an engrossing memoir that does the graphic novel format proud" (*New York Times*).

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From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* This is a father and daughter story. Bechdel's mother and two brothers are in it, of course, but Bruce Bechdel had the biggest impact on his eldest child and so is naturally the other main character in her autobiographical graphic novel. Emotionally and physically reserved, to the point of brusqueness, he busied himself restoring--and then some--the Victorian-era house he bought for the family in the Pennsylvania town in which he was born and lived virtually all his 44 years. He enlisted the kids for never-ending interior and exterior modifications of the place in what obviously was his major creative outlet. For a living, he taught twelfth-grade English and ran the small undertaking business that occupied part of his parents' house and that the kids called the fun home. Bechdel doesn't even hint about how ironic she and her brothers meant to be, because she is a narrative artist, not a moralist or comedian, in this book and because she has a greater, real-life irony to consider. After disclosing her lesbianism in a letter home from college, her mother replied that her father was homosexual, too. Alison suddenly understood his legal trouble over buying a beer for a teenage boy, all the teen male "helpers" he had around the house, and his solo outings during family vacations to New York. Bechdel's long-running *Dykes to Watch Out For* is arguably the best comic strip going, and *Fun Home* is one of the very best graphic novels ever. *Ray Olson*

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