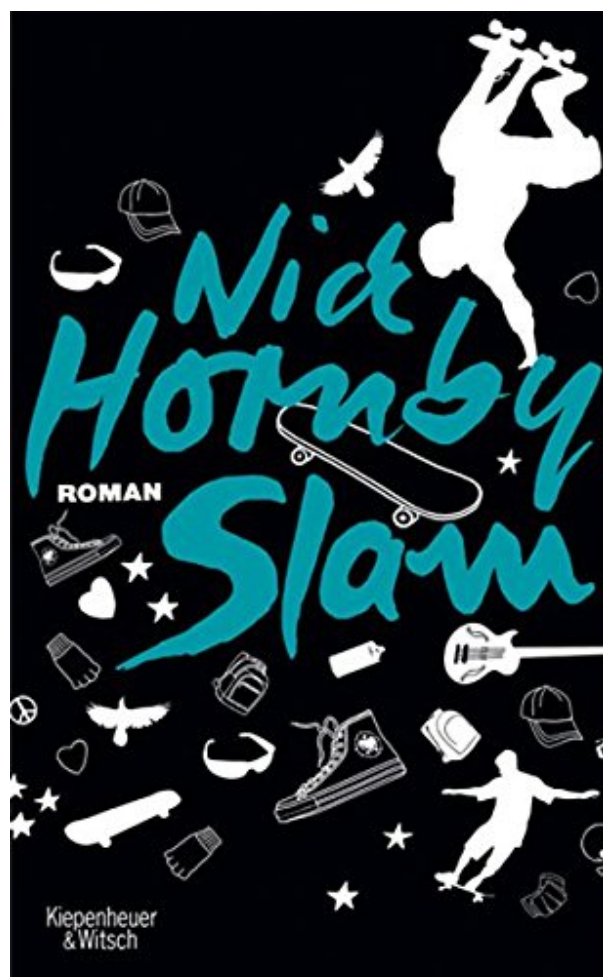
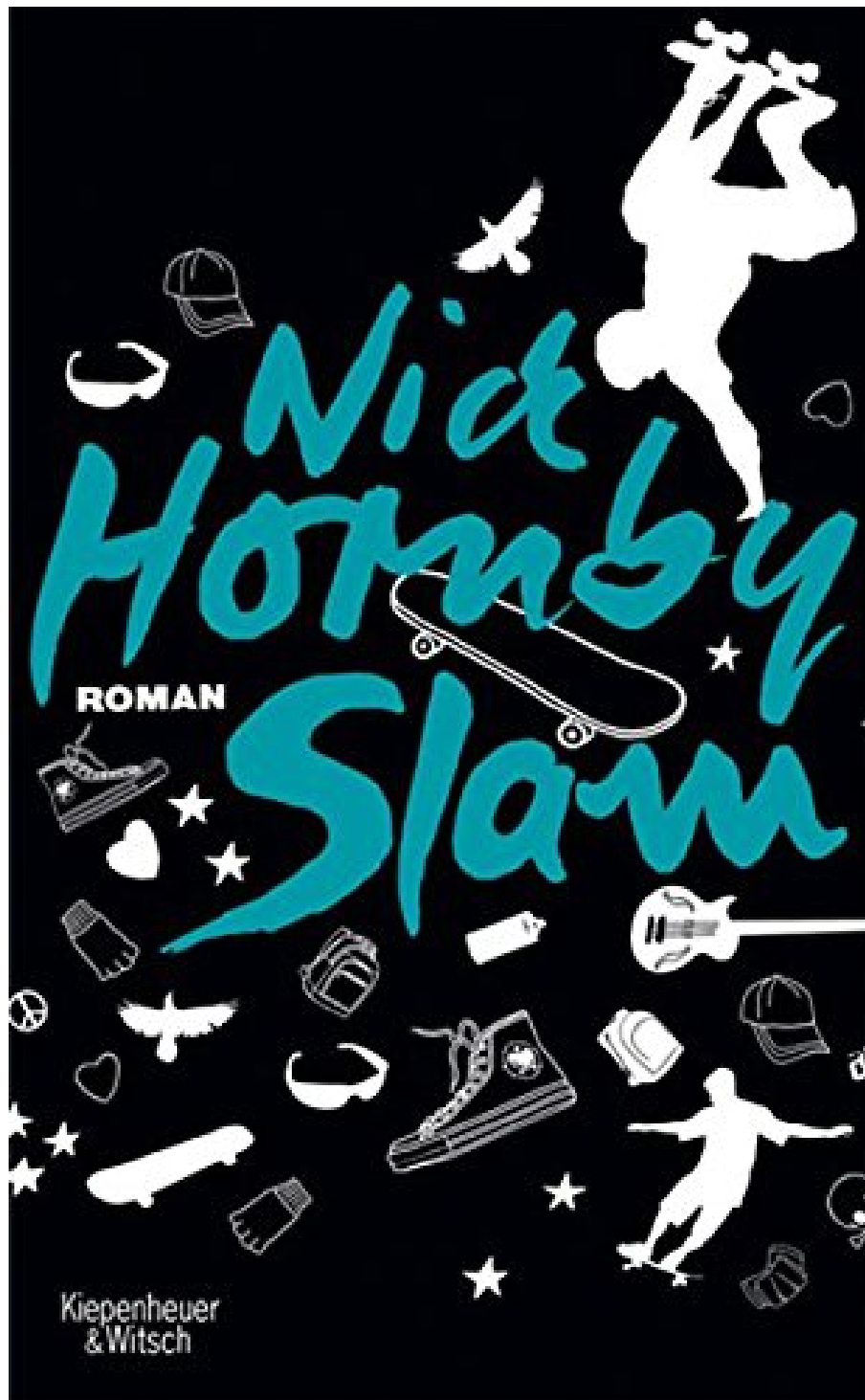


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- Binding: Hardcover

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Tender and funny

By Alpha Reader

Written by: Nick Hornby

Narrated by: Nicholas Hoult

Length: 7 hrs and 17 mins

Unabridged Audiobook

‘Slam’ was the 2007 contemporary young adult novel from Nick Hornby, and I’ve been meaning to read it ever since Hornby said this very intelligent thing about YA books:

“I see now that dismissing YA books because you’re not a young adult is a little bit like refusing to watch thrillers on the grounds that you’re not a policeman or a dangerous criminal, and as a consequence, I’ve discovered a previously ignored room at the back of the bookstore that’s filled with masterpieces I’ve never heard of.”

I always feel like hugging that quote.

So, ‘Slam’ is Hornby’s first and only young adult book to date – but now that I’ve read it (via listening on audiobook) I’m really crossing my fingers that he writes something else for this readership because ‘Slam’ was just so darn good.

It’s hard to pinpoint what I love most about Nick Hornby’s books. I’ve read most of them and most recently fell head-over-heels in love with his 2014 book ‘Funny Girl’ – and now that I’ve read his YA offering in ‘Slam’ I can safely say that a real strength in his writing for younger audiences is that he brings a lot of his adult sensibilities over. ‘Slam’, without giving too much away, is all about teen pregnancy from the perspective of 16-year-old father-to-be Sam Jones. Like with most of Hornby’s books, we first meet our protagonist from a place of “WTF have I done?!” and the rest of the novel is an attempt to untie the knots of their lives.

I must admit – I went in a little sceptical of a “teen pregnancy” book from the perspective of the teen father. Even as I count Angela Johnson’s ‘The First Part Last’ (which is on the same subject) as one of my favourite books of all time. What’s great about ‘Slam’ is that Hornby brings no preaching, tick-the-boxing “sorting

teen problems” feel to this book. Hornby and Sam both know what a monumental fuck-up this is, and Sam is suitably terrified – especially because the men in his family have a history of repeating this particular mistake, and he’s well aware of the repercussions. This repeating of history also means that Sam sets himself up to be a better father than his own, who is uneducated and wholly uninterested in helping to raise his son.

I also wonder if part of my loving ‘Slam’ so much was the audiobook itself ... it is narrated by actor Nicholas Hoult, who had a break-out role in the movie adaptation of Hornby’s ‘About a Boy’ playing Marcus Brewer. Perhaps because of Hoult’s previous affiliation with the Hornby universe, he seemed perfectly suited to narrating Sam’s story – more likely though is just that Hoult is a fine, fine actor and as such a grand audiobook narrator. There’s real vulnerability in Hoult’s reading, even as he also hits those comedic marks perfectly. Because of course, this being a Nick Hornby book there are a lot of laughs interspersed throughout the quite weighty topic of teen pregnancy – from Sam’s conversations with an imaginary Tony Hawk, to the dreams he has of the father he will grow into.

"There are many differences between a baby and an I-Pod. And one of the biggest is, no ones going to mug you for your baby."

I loved ‘Slam’. This is a really tender and funny portrayal of what happens when a teenage boy desperately wants to take responsibility for one of the biggest mistakes (and loves) of his life. Nick Hornby has long been a beloved writer of adult fiction with tricky characters butting heads against God-awful situations, and I was thrilled to discover that his YA turn is a similarly evocative exploration. Narrated by a young Nicholas Hoult (circa 2007), Sam’s voice shines through in all his earnest, shit-scaredness.

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