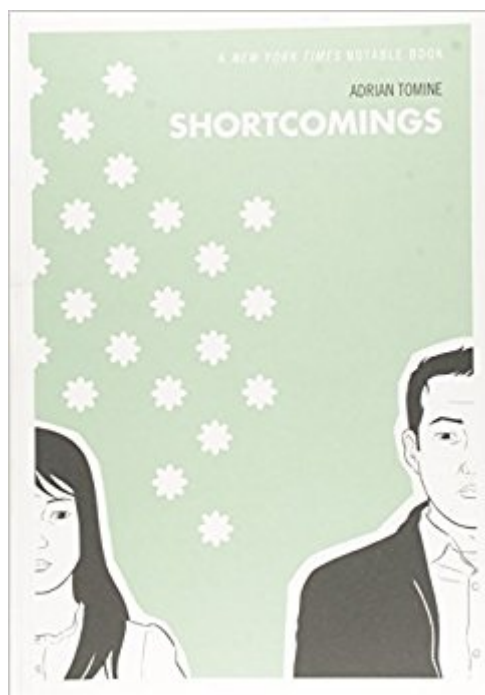


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# Shortcomings



## Synopsis

The 2007 New York Times Book Review Notable Book now in paperback  
Lauded for its provocative and insightful portrayal of interpersonal relationships, Adrian Tomine's politically charged *Shortcomings* was one of the most acclaimed books of 2007. Among many interviews and reviews in outlets around the country, Tomine was interviewed by Terry Gross on NPR's *Fresh Air* and also in *The Believer*, *New York* magazine, and *Giant Robot*. *Shortcomings* landed on countless "best of" lists, including those in *Entertainment Weekly* and *The New York Times*; was praised by Junot Díaz in *Publishers Weekly*; and was the subject of a solo review in *The New York Times Book Review* that drew comparison between Tomine and Philip Roth. The groundbreaking graphic novel now returns in paperback.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Significant Seven, November 2007: Adrian Tomine draws his mid-twenties slackers with an impeccable, exact line for every slumpy gesture and cultivated rumple. In *Shortcomings*, this ex-wunderkind tackles a book-length comic for the first time after three collections of stories, and his maturity shows not so much in the ages of his characters, who are still slackly wandering, dropping out of grad school or managing a movie theater, but in his calm and masterful handling of his story, in which vividly individual characters wander through the maze of imposed and self-generated stereotypes of Asian and American identities (the title is a wry allusion to one of the most enduring of those assumptions). Never has that old commonplace that the personal is the political seemed more paralyzing, and more true. --Tom Nissley --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable

edition of this title.

Starred Review. Signature Reviewed by Junot Díaz - azTomine's lacerating falling-out-of-love story is an irresistible gem of a graphic novel. Shortcomings is set primarily in an almost otherworldly San Francisco Bay Area; its antihero, Ben Tanaka, is not your average comic book protagonist: he's crabby, negative, self-absorbed, a bit critical, slack-a-riffic and for someone who is strenuously race-blind, has a pernicious hankering for white girls. His girlfriend Miko (alas and tragically) is an Asian-American community activist of the moderate variety. Ben is the sort of cat who walks into a Korean wedding and says, Man, look at all these Asians, while Miko programs Asian-American independent films and both are equally skilled in the underhanded art of fighting without fighting. As you might imagine, their relationship is in full decay. In Tomine's apt hands, Tanaka's heartbreaking descent into awareness is reading as good as you'll find anywhere. What a relief to find such unprecious intelligent dynamic young people of color wrestling with real issues that they can neither escape nor hope completely to understand. Tomine's no dummy: he keeps the issues secondary to his characters' messy humanity and gains incredible thematic resonance from this subordination. Tomine's dialogue is hilarious (he makes Seth Rogan seem a little forced), his secondary characters knockouts (Ben's Korean-American only friend Alice steals every scene she's in, and the Korean wedding they attend together as pretend-partners is a study in the even blending of tragedy and farce), and his dramatic instincts second-to-none. Besides orchestrating a gripping kick-ass story with people who feel like you've had the pleasure/misfortune of rooming with, Tomine does something far more valuable: almost incidentally and without visible effort (for such is the strength of a true artist) he explodes the tottering myth that love is blind and from its million phony fragments assembles a compelling meditation on the role of race in the romantic economy, dramatizing with evil clarity how we are both utterly blind and cannily hyperaware of the immense invisible power race exerts in shaping what we call desire. And that moment at the end when the whiteboy squares up against Ben, kung-fu style: I couldn't decide whether to fold over in laughter or to hug Ben or both. Tomine accomplishes in one panel of this graphic novel what so many writers have failed to do in entire books. In crisp spare lines, he captures in all its excruciating, disappointing absurdity a single moment and makes from it our world. (Oct.) Junot Díaz - az's first novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, has just been published by Riverhead. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Wow, this is just story telling at its finest. Ever watch an embarrassing moment in slow motion? That was the pace of the book. The main character's frustrations on society and his views of himself is overwhelmingly college-like. There are some very funny moments in the book. Adrian does a good job addressing some stereotypes but does not openly dispel any of it. I felt that he kind of spells it out for the reader but it is up to the reader to believe them or not and that might be worth more than the story itself. I found myself questioning on how much I really know about other cultures and let alone other cultures that have one or two generations in America. I hope that Adrian Tomine continues the main character in other books.

Although *Shortcomings* may take not more than an hour to get through, the text is meaty and packs a powerful punch. It forcefully commands you to go back and pore over each and every frame again because you might have missed minute details in Adrian Tomine's exquisite illustrations the first time around. The story is set in Berkeley, CA and for anyone who has lived or who is familiar with that area, this book will immediately feels like a piece of home in terms of the setting. It begins with our introduction to Ben who is attending an Asian American film festival with his Japanese girlfriend Miko. Upon reading a few pages, the reader experiences instant dislike with douche-bag Ben. His snarky and disapproving comments about the film festival and its organizers firmly plants the topic of race at the forefront of the novel. Yet at the same time Tomine also masks the heavy topic of race so casually that you don't even realize that that is the direction the book is taking. Tomine examines obsession with white women, self-hate, discrimination and the refusal to accept homosexuality by Asian American families. Tomine provides a space for all readers to really engage with this topic of how we fit in and how as Asian Americans do we view ourselves in this society. I was completely caught off guard by the way in which I reacted to this text. It forced me to question how I view my own identity. There were times where I understood where Ben was coming from because I myself had felt like this at one point in my life. Tomine utilized clever dialogue and subtleties in his illustrations to really evoke emotion out of the text. The characters were so real because we all know a Ben, an Alice and a Miko. He is able to really capture the true essence of relationships, the good, the bad and the inner struggles that one has to triumph over. You can't help but be annoyed by Ben, fall in love with the carefree ways of Alice (his Korean Lesbian best friend) and sympathize and then be surprised by Miko. The illustrations really give you a unique voyeuristic view into the lives of these people that is quite different from just reading a regular novel. I admired the way Tomine used multiple frames to demonstrate how time had passed. I think the most poignant scene for me was when he was dropping off his Miko the airport. There are six illustrations with just three

cars to show how time had passed. I felt Ben's pain and I love the way this translated through. Tomine's delivery is remarkably beautiful and I was left wanting more. The subtle way in which he drives his point across is not only clever but also so creative. The characters are so incredibly real and you can't help but be swept away. Race relations and identity are topics not so well received when introduced, but Tomine does it in a way that makes you feel right at home.

I've read this every couple of years since it was published and it's remarkable to me how much there is so much to see in this slight volume. My sympathies tend to rearrange on each reading -- Ben is the type of character that makes me veer between wanting to slap him and hug him in the space of a page or two. Tomine has such a knack at portraying awkward moments, there are a couple of scenes in here that feel so real it is almost as if they happened to me. One of my favorite realist graphic novels -- the entire thing just feels drawn from life.

Arrived in a timely manner and was as described in product description.

Shortcomings- Adrian Tomine A story about a jerk boyfriend, a deceptive girlfriend, and a lesbian. All happens to live in the Berkeley, California area, which happens to be where I reside. Though little explained about the area, but more illustrated, I can say that Berkeley is portrayed correctly within the illustrations. Somehow those characters (plus a couple minor characters) combine together to form a book that has complexities of cheating, the reverse of "Yellow Fever" which is the Asian male interested in Caucasian females, self-consciousness, and self-identification toward the family. Complexities that keep the reader wanting to know more, wanting to know what happens after. This book is a story that takes on more than one perspective despite that it seems to be focused on one particular character. You get the perspective of everyone throughout the book; every character's speech style opens a window into their mind. It gives us insight the characters making them relatable to the readers and essentially making them feel like the characters are true people. The characters seem to be realistic. Overall, the book was an easy read and flows nicely. It was also easy to follow since the book went in chronological order with graphics so guide the readers.

All of Adrian's work is worth checking out. Yet, Shortcomings was a story that made me think about who I am more than any of Tomine's other works; nonetheless, the story and characters are as real as the air we breath. If you can't enjoy this work of art you may have to seek professional help. Enjoy Short Comings and all other work by Adrian Tomine--check out other Optic Nerve writings.

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Shortcomings

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