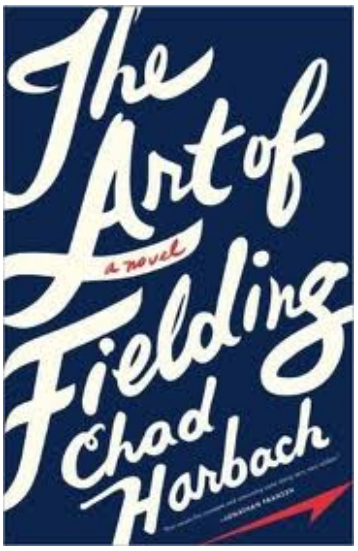
# The Art of Fielding by Chad Harbach




Henry Skrimshander is a slight shortstop with a love and strong appreciation for baseball. Henry isn?t a great player, and not very strong at bat but he does have potential. When his sister writes the message ?Call Mike Shorts!? by the phone, Henry?s life changes forever.
Mike Schwartz is the captain of the baseball team at Westish College in Wisconsin. Mike is addicted to painkillers (also the captain of the football team, he has bad knees), hardworking and spends a lot of his time helping his teammates become the best players they can be. He is hard on them, pushing them through more squats, more lifts, and more runs than seemingly possible.

Just as Henry is about to break the NCAA record for most error free games, an errant ball slips out of his hands and flies into the face of his roommate Owen Dunne who is sitting in the dugout reading a book. This seemingly innocuous error sets into motion a series of events that become life changing not only for Henry, Mike, and Owen but also the President of Westish, Guert Affenlight, and his daughter Pella who has just returned to Wisconsin after some personal problems of her own.

The spring baseball season frames most of the story, and there is no small amount of baseball in *The Art of Fielding* [1]. But what I thought really carried the book were the characters. Mike?s realization that he has spent too much of his time mentoring the younger players and not enough focusing on his own path is heartbreaking. Because he has been mentored by Mike, Henry has never had to make a decision for himself and you hope he can learn how before it becomes too late. Guert begins a doomed affair, the results of which are shockingly sad. And Pella?s attempts at reclaiming herself are hopeful even when she has setbacks.

The path of one single baseball also changes lives for the characters in *A Prayer for Owen Meany* [2] by one of my favorite authors, John Irving. While the setting and overall story line are different, I couldn?t help but be reminded a little of this novel.

While these two novels aren?t really seasonally appropriate, they both feature strong, interesting, flawed and memorable characters.

For the Love of Reading[3]Information, Answers & Reviews [4]Fiction [5]Sports [6]The art of fielding : a novel [7]

Posted by Sarah B. on Oct 3, 2012

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**Links:**
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