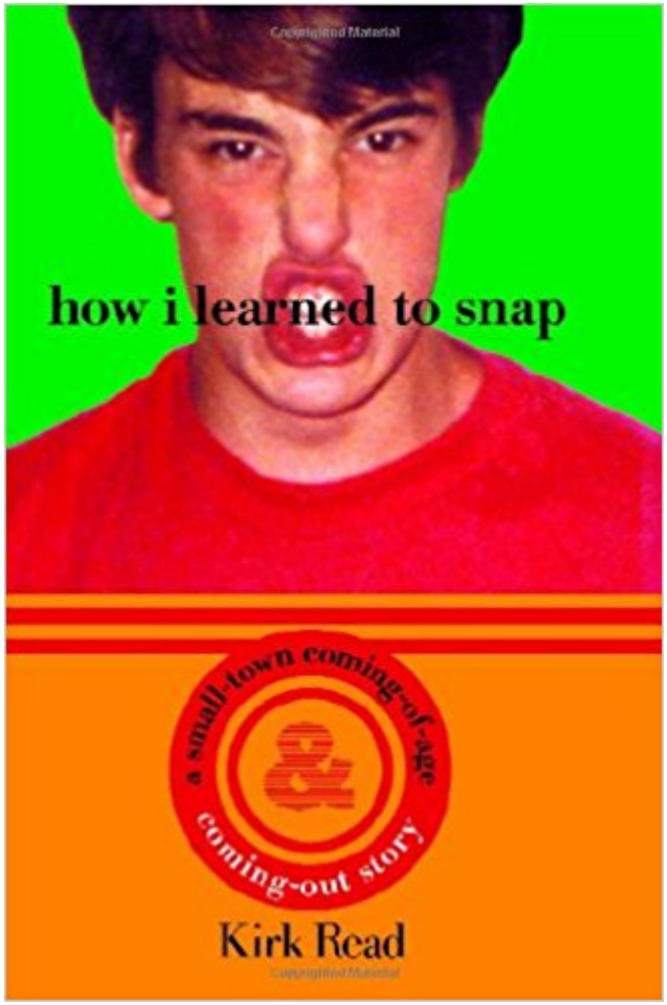
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How I Learned To Snap: A Small-Town Coming-Of-Age & Coming-Out Story



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Synopsis

Kirk Read’s youth in the Shenandoah Valley had the outward signs of a comfortable adolescence in the Reagan-era South. Dad: career military. Mom: a homemaker. Son: Little League/soccer player, Baptist youth group member, a straight-jawed boy from a long line of VMI men. One would expect that a young gay man growing up in such a way would lead a tortured teen life. But early Read began to show the surety and openness that has marked his later life and career as a young, queer journalist. Passing through the tough terrain of Bible Belt guilt and culturally ingrained sexual hypocrisy, Read acknowledged his difference first to those closest to him--with with expected doses of fag-baiting--and with acceptance from surprising corners. Read’s skewed and skewered version of the holy trinity of American adolescence--sex, drugs, and rock and roll--is described in his unique voice: he became sexually active at a time when we were only just learning that sex can kill, began saying yes to drugs when Nancy Reagan were just saying no; and when underground music was still buried. It is a story of bold strokes (premiering a play about coming-out in high school while still in high school) and ironic misfires (he expected to ignite a firestorm by demanding that he take his same-sex date to the senior prom; instead his request was calmly okayed). Read’s story is neither victim-based nor intended as a survival guide. It is not a radical call to action but a call to acceptance, with a Southern accent: "So much of gay Southern memoir has been so veiled in the shroud of first fiction that’s its lost its sense of urgency. Or its been so literary that the queer content has been erased or relegated to the back in service to Gothic, poetically indirect costuming of hard realities," Read says. Ultimately, Read’s is finally the story of every coming-of-age--heartbreaking, comic, tragic, and redemptive--and will be appreciated by everyone who, to quote Paul Goodman, grew up absurd in the 1980s.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"If I had read something like this as a teenager, I'd have had a much easier time.""Read navigates his adolescent minefield of snap queens, rednecks, love, sex, family, booze, and punk rock with an astute eye for detail and a stunning capacity for compassion." --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kirk Read is a nationally syndicated journalist and performer whose work has appeared in more than one hundred publications, including Out, Genre, and Christopher Street. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kirk Read is a master story teller, the true to life story comes alive with Kirk's wonderful composure and wit. A must read for any coming-of-age youth, gay or straight or even questioning....

Kirk's book is fantastic reading. Essentially a bio detailing his childhood and teenage years. Dealing with his sexual orientation, finding his career/life path and deciding how to stay true to himself, I felt like this would be a great book for anyone going through that phase of life, or anyone who is curious about it. Written in a down to earth, talking to a friend sort of style makes this an easy read.

The book is AMAZING!!! The author is truly a wonderful and inspiring gift to this world.

It is a great book to read if you are trying to find the courage to come out - coming out is thankfully getting easier for everyone - but this is a good book to help find that courage.

A little hard to follow at times. You must pay attention or you can lose your place in the story. To me the best part is the epilogue , it really hits home.WELL DONE !

I absolutely loved this book and read it in only a few (3, I think) sittings. It's humorous and intelligent and, personally speaking, I related to it very well as a gay teenager in the South.

I purchased this because it was recommended in a book on how to write and publish a memoir. It

was greatly overrated with an overabundance of the individual's life style rather than a picture of a typical memoir. I would not recommend it.

In my quest for more and more great gay coming-of-age fiction, I came across Kirk Read's autobiographical tale of growing up gay in Virginia in the `80s and very early `90s, focusing on his years in junior high school and high school. Based on the reviews, it sounded promising, so I decided to take a break from fiction and head over to non-fiction. Ultimately, I was pleased by the book and give it three out of five stars. It's a very interesting story of one man's gay youth, and it's filled with a lot of smiles and a few laughs. But it's more or less a series of vignettes that pop back and forth through time. Consequently, it's not easy to get to know some of the people who inhabit Read's life very well. And while I got to know the author rather well, I would have liked to been able to better follow the "supporting players." This is a solid book for readers who enjoy coming-of-age stories, but not really for those who enjoy coming-of-age novels. One caveat: I would strongly recommend this book to gay teens; it can be a telling guide, especially for teens with few or no connections to the larger gay world. Overall, I enjoyed getting to know Read, but now it's time to get back to a more literary read.

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