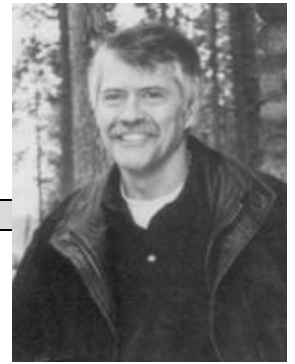


# CHRIS CRUTCHER

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## A FEW OF THE CHALLENGED BOOKS

*Athletic Shorts* (1991)  
(See summary on back)  
Challenged because of the book's (short stories) lack of respect for parents and God, its discussion of homosexuality, and its bad language.

*Chinese Handcuffs* (1991)  
(See summary on back)  
Challenged because of "the book's depiction of incest, rape, animal torture, teen drug use," and the list goes on.

*Whale Talk* (2001)  
(See summary on back)  
Challenged because of the book's use of racial slurs and profanity.

*Running Loose* (1983)  
Challenged because of its discussion of sex.

*Stotan!* (1986)  
Challenged because of sexual content, racial slurs and profanity.

*Staying Fat for Sarah Burns* (2003)  
(See summary on back)  
Challenged because of the book's discussion of parental physical abuse, suicide and abortion.

*Crazy Horse Electric Game* (1987)  
Challenged because parents felt material was too mature for middle school students.

## CONTROVERSIAL AUTHOR OF YOUNG ADULT NOVELS

*Known for creating true-to-life teenage characters with real-life problems*

(Many Crutcher novels are listed on [PABBIS](#), Parents Against Bad Books in Schools)

### Personal Qualities that Impact His Stories

- **"C" average student:** An admitted slacker who believed he struck it rich when he found his brother's top-notch book reports hidden in a closet
- **Questioned authority:** Had a quick temper and didn't hesitate to respond when he felt challenged or saw something unfair
- **Not a reader in school:** Couldn't connect with the "old" texts assigned in high school because he couldn't see himself or his fellow teens in the novels
- **Truthful observer:** Explores controversial authentic issues teens face every day
- **Loves sports:** Sees sports as a great metaphor for many things in life: the triumph, the disappointment, the struggle, the competitiveness, the group dynamics, the rules, etc. Most of his novels include sports.
- **Hates censorship:** Abhors attempts at preventing teens from having access to "real" material that explores the real issues teens face

### Awards

#### Margaret A. Edwards Award

Awarded in 2000 by the American Library Association for lifetime contribution in writing for teens

#### National Intellectual Freedom Award

Awarded in 1998 by the National Council of Teachers of English for showing courage in advancing the cause of intellectual freedom or fighting censorship

#### Various state and national awards

Multiple honors, including ALA awards such as Best Book for Young Adults, Quick Picks, etc.

#### Assembly on Literature for Adolescents

Awarded in 1993 by the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents, an independent group of NCTE, for outstanding contribution to adolescent literature

### Education/Experience

#### Bachelor's Degree Teacher Director Therapist Author

Psychology and Sociology  
Washington State and California  
K-12 inner city alternative school in California  
Child advocate and family therapist in Spokane, WA  
Began with *Running Loose* in the 1980s

## Book Summaries

### Whale Talk Review/Summary

From Publishers Weekly ([http://www.amazon.com/Whale-Talk-Chris-Crutcher/dp/0061771317/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1266344045&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Whale-Talk-Chris-Crutcher/dp/0061771317/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1266344045&sr=8-1))

Representing one-third of his community's minority population ("I'm black. And Japanese. And white"), narrator T.J. Jones voices a darkly ironic appraisal of the high school sports arena. Despite his natural athletic ability, T.J. has steered away from organized sports until his senior year, when Mr. Simet, a favorite English teacher, implores him to help form a swim team for the school (and thereby help the teacher save his job). T.J. sees an opportunity to get revenge on the establishment and invites outcasts to participate on the team; he ends up with "a representative from each extreme of the educational spectrum, a muscle man, a giant, a chameleon, and a psychopath."

As might be expected, he accomplishes his mission: his motley crew of swimmers is despised by more conventional athletes (and coaches). The swimmers face many obstacles, but their dedication to their sport and each other grows stronger with every meet. The gradual unfolding of characters' personal conflicts proves to be as gripping as the evolution of the team's efforts. Through T.J.'s narration, Crutcher offers an unusual yet resonant mixture of black comedy and tragedy that lays bare the superficiality of the high school scene. The book's shocking climax will force readers to re-examine their own values and may cause them to alter their perception of individuals pegged as "losers." Ages 12-up.

### Chinese Handcuffs

From School Library Journal ([http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/product-description/0060598395/ref=dp\\_proddesc\\_0?ie=UTF8&n=283155&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/product-description/0060598395/ref=dp_proddesc_0?ie=UTF8&n=283155&s=books))

Grade 9-12-- There are enough plots here to fuel a soap opera for a year. Dillon Hemingway is a brilliant student and athlete whose older brother, Preston, gets involved with a motorcycle gang, loses his legs in a bike accident, and later blows his head away in full view of his younger brother. Dillon writes long letters to his dead brother to tell him about Stacy, who was Preston's girl and the mother of their child but who may secretly love Dillon, and Jennifer, star basketball player, whose father sexually abused her and whose stepfather, a madman, also abuses her. Dillon's mother walked out on his family some years before. So much for the beginning. Beyond the first chapters there are scenes in which Dillon sprinkles his brother's ashes into the gas tanks of the cyclists who corrupted Preston and in which Stacy uses the school public address system to announce that she is indeed the mother of Preston's child. Dogs are crushed by cars, the Vietnam War is rehashed. Characters keep asking "can we talk" and then prattle on with enormous presence and wisdom about the evils of society, their parents, all adults, their own sorry lot in life, and love ("There are so many crazy things, dangerous things sometimes, that we're taught to call love"). Jesus Christ is at one point called "a heroic dude." Dillon is too much in control of himself and the other characters to be believable. The ending, in which Dillon single-handedly drives Jennifer's crazed step-father out of town, is contrived. There's a place in fiction for teenage problems, but surely not all in one novel.

### Athletic Shorts

From Publishers Weekly ([http://www.amazon.com/Athletic-Shorts-Six-Short-Stories/dp/0060507837/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1266347133&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Athletic-Shorts-Six-Short-Stories/dp/0060507837/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1266347133&sr=1-1))

If the stereotype of the "bonehead jock" is ever to be defeated, it will be at Crutcher's hands. In these six short stories, he and his athlete protagonists take on such weighty issues as racism, homophobia, sexism and the teenager's essential task of coming to terms with his parents. At the same time the author makes the world of sports compelling enough to engage even the most sedentary readers. Three of the stories revolve around characters featured in Crutcher's *The Crazy Horse Electric Game*, including the memorable eccentric known as Telephone Man. Also starring in his own story is Lionel Serbousek, the orphaned artist and swimmer of Stotan! In the book's final tale, Louie Banks (from *Running Loose*) is befriended by a young man with AIDS and must cope once again with the untimely death of a loved one. The stories' locales--mostly small towns in Montana and Idaho--are vividly evoked, and make a satisfying change from the well-known big cities and bland suburbs where so many YA novels are set. Ages 12-up.

### Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes

From School Library Journal ([http://www.amazon.com/Staying-Sarah-Byrnes-Chris-Crutcher/dp/0060094893/ref=pd\\_sim\\_b\\_6](http://www.amazon.com/Staying-Sarah-Byrnes-Chris-Crutcher/dp/0060094893/ref=pd_sim_b_6))

Grade 8 and Up. An obese boy and a disfigured girl suffer the emotional scars of years of mockery at the hands of their peers. They share a hard-boiled view of the world until events in their senior year hurl them in very different directions. A story about a friendship with staying power, written with pathos and pointed humor.