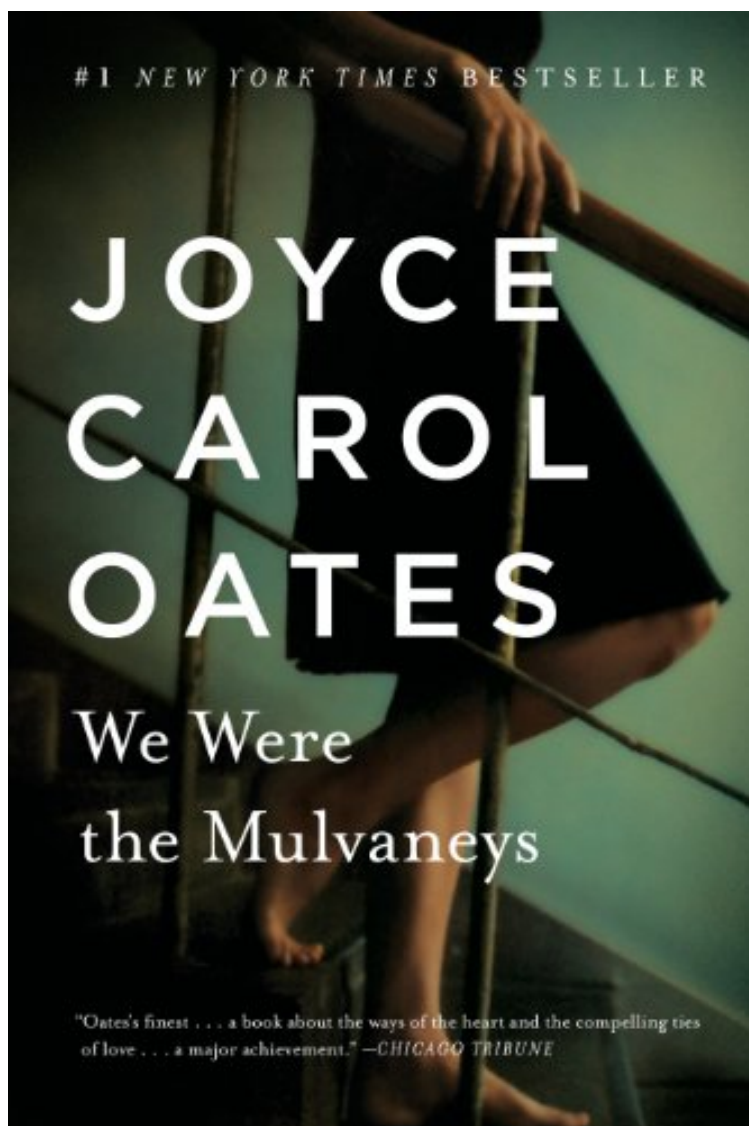


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We Were the Mulvaney



*Par Joyce Carol Oates
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAnOprah Book Club selectionA New York Times Notable Book"It's the novel closest to my heart. I'm deeply moved that Oprah Winfrey has selected this novel for Oprah's Book Club, a family novel presented to Oprah's vast American family."Joyce Carol OatesMoving away from the dark tone of her more recent masterpieces, Joyce Carol Oates turns the tale of a family struggling to cope with its fall from grace into a deeply moving and unforgettable account of the vigor of hope and the power of love to prevail over suffering.The Mulvaney of High Point Farm in Mt. Ephraim, New York, are a large and fortunate clan, blessed with good looks, abundant charisma, and boundless promise. But over the twenty-five year span of this ambitious novel, the Mulvaney will slide, almost imperceptibly at first, from the pinnacle of happiness, transformed by the vagaries of fate into a scattered collection of lost and lonely souls.It is the youngest son,

Judd, now an adult, who attempts to piece together the fragments of the Mulvaneys' former glory, seeking to uncover and understand the secret violation that occasioned the family's tragic downfall. Each of the Mulvaneys endures some form of exile- physical or spiritual - but in the end they find a way to bridge the chasms that have opened up among them, reuniting in the spirit of love and healing. Profoundly cathartic, Oates' acclaimed novel unfolds as if, in the darkness of the human spirit, she has come upon a source of light at its core. Rarely has a writer made such a startling and inspiring statement about the value of hope and compassion. From the Trade Paperback edition..com Oprah Book Club Selection, January 2001: A happy family, the Mulvaneys. After decades of marriage, Mom and Dad are still in love--and the proud parents of a brood of youngsters that includes a star athlete, a class valedictorian, and a popular cheerleader. Home is an idyllic place called High Point Farm. And the bonds of attachment within this all-American clan do seem both deep and unconditional: "Mom paused again, drawing in her breath sharply, her eyes suffused with a special lustre, gazing upon her family one by one, with what crazy unbounded love she gazed upon us, and at such a moment my heart would contract as if this woman who was my mother had slipped her fingers inside my rib cage to contain it, as you might hold a wild, thrashing bird to comfort it." But as we all know, Eden can't last forever. And in the hands of Joyce Carol Oates, who's chronicled just about every variety of familial dysfunction, you know the fall from grace is going to be a doozy. By the time all is said and done, a rape occurs, a daughter is exiled, much alcohol is consumed, and the farm is lost. Even to recount these events in retrospect is a trial for the Mulvaney offspring, one of whom declares: "When I say this is a hard reckoning I mean it's been like squeezing thick drops of blood from my veins." In the hands of a lesser writer, this could be the stuff of a bad television movie. But this is Oates's 26th novel, and by now she knows her material and her craft to perfection. We Were the Mulvaneys is populated with such richly observed and complex characters that we can't help but care about them, even as we wait for disaster to strike them down. --Anita Urquhart

Extrait We were the Mulvaneys, remember us? You may have thought our family was larger, often I'd meet people who believed we Mulvaneys were a virtual clan, but in fact there were only six of us: my dad who was Michael John Mulvaney, Sr., my mom Corinne, my brothers Mike Jr. and Patrick and my sister Marianne, and me Judd. From summer 1955 to spring 1980 when my dad and mom were forced to sell the property there were Mulvaneys at High Point Farm, on the High Point Road seven miles north and east of the small city of Mt. Ephraim in upstate New York, in the Chautauqua Valley approximately seventy miles south of Lake Ontario. High Point Farm was a well-known property in the Valley, in time to be designated a historical landmark, and "Mulvaney" was a well-known name. For a long time you envied us, then you pitied us. For a long time you admired us, then you thought Good! that's what they deserve. "Too direct, Judd!" my mother would say, wringing her hands in discomfort. But I believe in uttering the truth, even if it hurts. Particularly if it hurts. For all of my childhood as a Mulvaney I was the baby of the family. To be the baby of such a family is to know you're the last little caboose of a long roaring train. They loved me so, when they paid any attention to me at all. I was like a creature dazed and blinded by intense, searing light that might suddenly switch off and leave me in darkness. I couldn't seem to figure out who I was, if I had an actual name, or many names, all of them affectionate and many of them teasing, like "Dimple," "Pretty Boy" or, alternately, "Sourpuss," or "Ranger" my favourite. I was "Baby" or "Babyface" much of the time while growing up. "Judd" was a name associated with a certain measure of sternness, sobriety, though in fact we Mulvaney children were rarely scolded and even more rarely punished. "Judson Andrew" which is my baptismal name was a name of such dignity and aspiration I never came to feel it could be mine, only something borrowed like a Hallowe'en mask. You'd get the impression, at least I did, that "Judd" who was "Baby" almost didn't make it. Getting born, I mean. The train had pulled out, the caboose was being rushed to the track. Not that Corinne Mulvaney was so very old when I was born she was only thirty-three. Which certainly isn't "old" by today's standards. I was born in 1963, the year Dad used to say, with a grim shake of his head, a sick-at-heart look in his eyes, "tore history in two" for Americans. What worried me was I'd come along so belatedly, everyone else was here except me! A complete Mulvaney family without Judd. Always it seemed, hard as I tried I could never hope to catch up with all their good times, secrets, jokes their memories. What is a family, after all, except memories? haphazard and precious as the contents of a catchall drawer in the kitchen (called the "junk drawer" in our household, for good reason). My handicap, I gradually realized, was that by the time I got around to being born, my brother Mike was already ten years old and for children that's equivalent to another generation. Where's Baby? who's got Baby? the cry would commence, and whoever was nearest would scoop me up and off we'd go. A scramble of dogs barking, exaggerated as animals are often exaggerations of human beings, emotions so rawly exposed. Who's got Baby? Don't forget

Baby! The dogs, cats, horses, even the cars and pickups Dad and Mom drove before I was born, those big flashy-sexy Fifties models all these I would pore over in Mom's overstuffed snapshot albums, determined to attach myself to their memories. Sure, I remember! Sure, I was there! Mike's first pony Crackerjack who was a sorrel with sand-coloured markings. Our setter Foxy as a puppy. The time Dad ran the tractor into a ditch. The time Mom threw corncobs to scare away strange dogs she believed were threatening the chickens and the dogs turned out to be a black bear and two cubs. The time Dad invited 150 people to Mulvaney's Fourth of July cookout assuming that only about half would show up, and everyone showed up and a few more. The time a somewhat disreputable friend of Dad's flew over to High Point Farm from an airport in Marsena in a canary-yellow Piper Cub and landed "Crash-landed, almost," Mom would say dryly in one of the pastures, and though the baby in the snapshots commemorating this occasion would have to have been my sister Marianne, in July 1960, I was able to convince myself Yes I was there, I remember. I do! And when in subsequent years they would speak of the incident, recalling the way the wind buffeted the little plane when Wally Parks, my Dad's friend, took Dad up for a brief flight, I was positive I'd been there, I could recall how excited I was, how excited we all were, Mike, Patrick, Marianne and me, and of course Mom, watching as the Piper Cub rose higher and higher shuddering in the wind, grew smaller and smaller with distance until it was no larger than a sparrow hawk, high above the Valley, looking as if a single strong gust of wind could bring it down. And Mom prayed aloud, "God, bring those lunatics back alive and I'll never complain about anything again, I promise. Amen." I'd swear even now, I'd been there. For the Mulvaney's were a family in which everything that happened to them was precious and everything that was precious was stored in memory and everyone had a history. Which is why many of you envied us, I think. Before the events of 1976 when everything came apart for us and was never again put together in quite the same way.