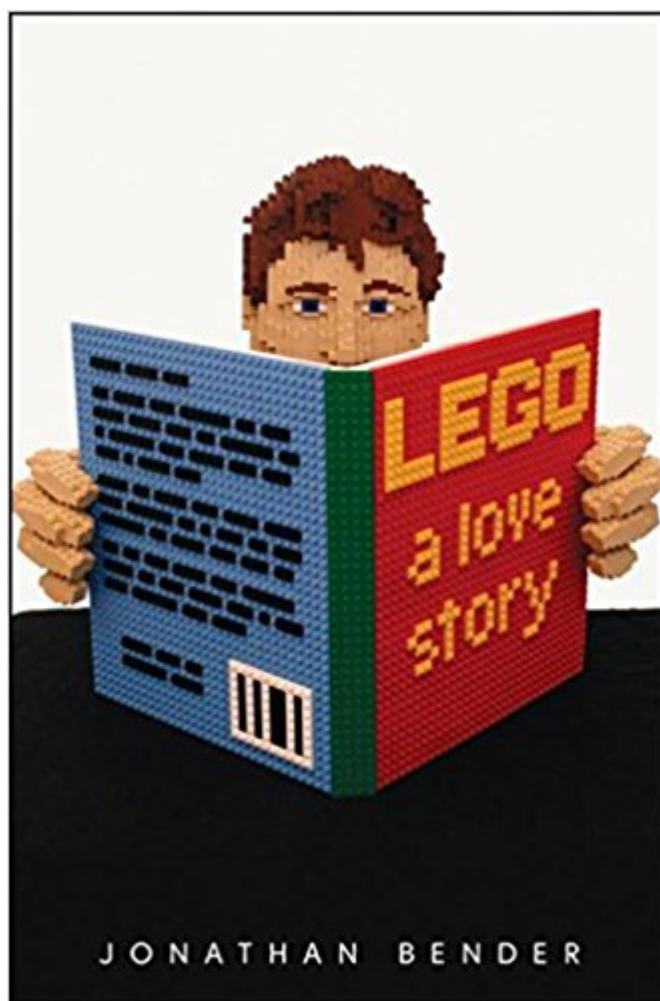


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LEGO: A Love Story



Synopsis

An adult LEGO fan's dual quest: to build with bricks and build a family There are 62 LEGO bricks for every person in the world, and at age 30, Jonathan Bender realized that he didn't have a single one of them. While reconsidering his childhood dream of becoming a master model builder for The LEGO Group, he discovers the men and women who are skewing the averages with collections of hundreds of thousands of LEGO bricks. What is it about the ubiquitous, brightly colored toys that makes them so hard for everyone to put down? In search of answers and adventure, Jonathan Bender sets out to explore the quirky world of adult fans of LEGO (AFOLs) while becoming a builder himself. As he participates in challenges at fan conventions, searches for the largest private collection in the United States, and visits LEGO headquarters (where he was allowed into the top secret set vault), he finds his LEGO journey twinned with a second creative endeavor— to have a child. His two worlds intertwine as he awaits the outcome: Will he win a build competition or bring a new fan of LEGO into the world? Like every really good love story, this one has surprises— and a happy ending. Explores the world of adult fans of LEGO, from rediscovering the childhood joys of building with LEGO to evaluating LEGO's place in culture and art Takes an inside look at LEGO conventions, community taboos, and build challenges and goes behind-the-scenes at LEGO headquarters and LEGOLAND Tells a warm and personal story about the attempt to build with LEGO and build a family Whether you're an avid LEGO freak or a onetime fan who now shares LEGO bricks with your children, this book will appeal to the inner builder in you and reignite a love for all things LEGO.

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Customer Reviews

Ah, the tender story of a man and his plastic bricks. Like Stefan Fatsis' *Word Freak* (about Scrabble enthusiasts), or Stanley Newman and Mark Lasswell's *Cruciverbalism* (about crossword puzzlers), Bender's memoir offers an entertaining look at a rich, vibrant, and only somewhat eccentric subculture built around something many would consider a mere pastime. But, for some, including the author, LEGO is no mere pastime. There are conventions devoted to the stackable plastic bricks; at least one publication (*BrickJournal*); an online marketplace for collectors (similar to eBay); and a surprising number of fairly strict rules (do not, under pain of ridicule or worse, pluralize the word LEGO). LEGO has been around since the late 1950s, but it was only in the mid-'90s that adult fandom really came into its own—the acronym AFOL, for adult fan of LEGO, was coined in 1995. Bender explores not just the AFOL subculture, with its superstars and wannabes and rivalries, but also describes his own rediscovery of a childhood toy and the impact it has had on his life. If you wanted to call the book a paean to LEGO, you wouldn't be far wrong, but don't think the audience for this utterly delightful work is limited to, well, LEGO freaks. --David Pitt

The unofficial LEGO Museum lies hidden in Bellaire, Ohio, with millions of plastic bricks sculpted into everything from robotic bands to Dirk Nowitzki to a goat on a lifeguard tower. A secret set vault slumbers beneath a hidden panel in the original house of LEGO founder Ole Kirk Christiansen in Billund, Denmark. An eleven-foot LEGO replica of a speedboat teeters on a rickety wooden dock in Seattle, Washington, threatening to plunge and sink into the Pacific Ocean as five men struggle to keep it balanced. And in the Kansas City, Missouri, home of Jonathan Bender, a massive Star Wars LEGO set leans against the wall in a vacant room. Jonathan comes face-to-face with all of these scenes as he explores the obsessive and diverse subculture of adult fans of LEGO (AFOLs), walking the line between art and commerce, play and Serious Play, and fantasy and real life, hoping to learn how the plastic brick of our childhoods inspires us as adults. Awakened from the "Dark Ages"—that period of time when LEGO bricks are forgotten in a childhood closet—Bender rekindles his dream of becoming a master model builder, putting his skills to the test at adult fan conventions around the country. Here he meets fans who design their own sets, customize minifigures (LEGO people) to resemble superheroes and movie characters, and amass collections that number in the hundreds of thousands of bricks. Bender also recruits his wife—the furniture builder in their household—to build alongside him, attempting to fill the child-size void in their

lives. As their home slowly fills up with LEGO bricks, the spare bedroom swings between build room and potential nursery. Immersed in a toy-centric world without children, LEGO: A Love Story is ultimately about what it takes to build a family. EGO: A Love Story explores what happens when the imagination of your childhood intersects with your life as an adult. Jacket art by Nathan Sawaya, a New York-based artist who creates awe-inspiring works out of some of the most unlikely things. His work has been featured in collections across the country. His most recent North American museum tours feature large-scale sculptures using only LEGO bricks. Learn more at brickartist.com.

This story is a expertly written glimpse into the world of Lego, it tells a good story while providing a history of the famous studded bricks. The author experiences all the ups and downs of life while trying to rediscover a childhood passion. I love this book and recommend it to any avid builder, or just anyone who likes a good story.

This book is interesting as a well-researched study of the adult LEGO fan community, but it is also utterly charming as a peek into the author's childhood and young adulthood as a fan of Legos and a lover of his wife and new daughter. A treat!

I bought this book as well as another for my kids who are Lego fans. I ended up reading both of them when it turned out that my sons would rather build Legos than read about them. The first book was a detailed history about Lego which was well-detailed, but read like a dry textbook. Bender's book, however, was a fun read and written with plenty of wit, particularly as he describes the Lego conventions (which anyone who has attended comic and toy cons will easily relate) and his entrance into the Lego culture and community. It also made me appreciate this "child's toy" a lot more, which is something my parents never purchased for me (a bit too pricy in my days) but I've gone overboard for my kids --- the cost of their STAR WARS sets probably cost more than the original models made by George Lucas. As other reviewers have said, this isn't a novel which will change your life, but it will keep you entertained with each chapter.

I think first that I need to set the stage. I am not technically an AFOL (Adult Fan of LEGO). However, I have always enjoyed LEGO, and I still build kits today even at my advanced age of 64. So, I was ripe for a book telling me things about LEGO that I didn't already know. Mr. Bender's book fits the bill. The love story subtitle has two sides. The first is the author's marriage to Kate and their struggle

to conceive a child. The second is his rediscovered love affair with LEGO. Like a lot of other people, Mr. Bender enjoyed his LEGO projects as a child. However, he reached a point where it could be said that he outgrew LEGO and a period of years with no LEGO activity followed. Then the colorful little plastic bricks became a part of his life again. Only this time he was an adult and he was writing a book. He delved into the world of LEGO to an amazing extent. He spent time with collectors, master builders, LEGO employees, exhibitors, and regular fans. He attended trade shows and LEGO conventions and got involved at a detailed level. I found that following his experiences in the global world of LEGO was fascinating. Mr. Bender got much more involved with the serious builders of LEGO than I ever will. I admit to having some misgivings about his building style when he would buy a new set and then cannibalize it in search of particular pieces for something else of his own design. He spent a great deal of the book postponing the opening of the Trade Federation MTT from Star Wars. He seemed to be a little overwhelmed by the magnitude of building it, so he kept making his own creations from various stashes of bricks he owned. Just a matter of style. I got the Trade Federation MTT and I couldn't wait to build the kit in accordance with the instructions. If you like LEGO, you will find Mr. Bender's book to be very interesting. Also, if you want more LEGO reading I highly recommend LEGO Star Wars: The Visual Dictionary by Simon Beecroft and Jeremy Beckett and The LEGO Book by Daniel Lipkowitz.

Holy cow, was this a wondrous find for me! Talk about reliving your childhood dreams of building! The premise behind this book does for the reader exactly what it did for the author: it makes you want to pull out your old Lego sets and start creating again! There is more to Lego than stacking bricks together and this book has it all. The author visits where Lego bricks are made, travels to conventions and the Toy and Plastic Brick Museum, and talks with other Adult Fans of Lego (AFOLs), all while documenting his own journey into the rediscovery of being an AFOL himself and taking his readers along for the ride. I always thought of myself as a casual builder who was somewhat interested in the toy, but this book had me turning pages faster than I have ever turned pages and left me wondering if I am really a serious fan at heart. I suddenly wanted to start building with any set I could get my hands on, so beware! Collecting Lego sets is an expensive passtime, as this book clearly states in the examples of AFOLs that the author visits with. There is a secondary story wrapped up in all of this Lego learning, which is about the author himself. It is partly his rediscovery of building and his acceptance of allowing himself to become part of the Lego fandom and partly his desire to bring his renewed love of bricks to a future child. This format made reading even more enjoyable. There were times I actually felt as if I were experiencing the pressure of my

first building contest at a convention or seeing a museum piece for the first time. The storytelling gave the fact finding aspect a purpose within the work of exploration and by the end I felt as if I had actually parted with a friend. You may not be an AFOL when you start reading this book, but you will be a lot closer to it once you finish.

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