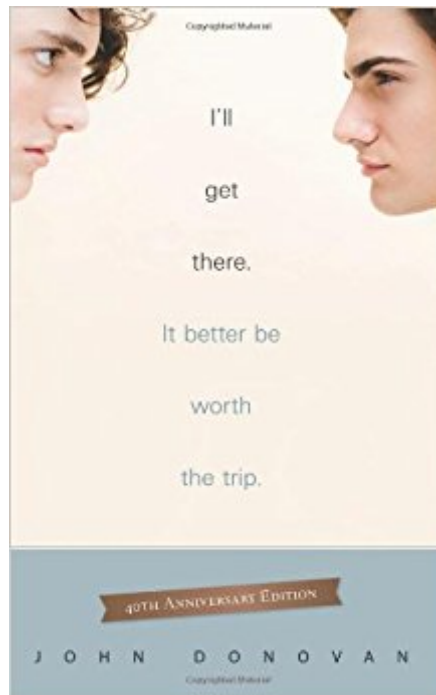


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# I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip.



## Synopsis

The 40th anniversary edition of a groundbreaking teen classic When the grandmother who raised him dies, Davy Ross, a lonely thirteen-year-old boy, must move to Manhattan to live with his estranged mother. Between alcohol-infused lectures about her self-sacrifice and awkward visits with his distant father, Davy's only comfort is his beloved dachshund Fred. Things start to look up when he and a boy from school become friends. But when their relationship takes an unexpected turn, Davy struggles to understand what happened and what it might mean. Shattering frank intelligent. Horn Book This book should be available wherever young people read. New York Times Sophisticated remarkably touching. Time magazine New York Times Best of 1969 Book List School Library Journal Best of 1969 Book List This anniversary edition features reflections from Brent Hartinger (Geography Club), Martin Wilson (What They Always Tell Us), and Kathleen T. Horning (Director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center), with a foreword by Stacey Donovan (Dive).

## Book Information

Paperback: 228 pages

Publisher: Flux; 40th Anniversary ed. edition (September 8, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0738721344

ISBN-13: 978-0738721347

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 25 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #737,168 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in [Books > Teens >](#)

[Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > LGBT Issues](#) #200 in [Books > Teens >](#)

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

"Shattering... frank... intelligent."--Horn Book "This book... should be available wherever young people read."--New York Times "Sophisticated... remarkably touching." --Time magazine New York. This anniversary edition features reflections from Brent Hartinger (Geography Club), Martin Wilson (What They Always Tell Us), and Kathleen T. Horning (Director of the Cooperative Children's Book

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John Donovan was a novelist and a playwright, who also served as the president of the Children's Book Council. *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip.* was originally published in 1969 and reprinted by Dell in 1973.

Martin Wilson wrote an essay about John Donovan's 1969 novel *I'LL GET THERE, IT BETTER BE WORTH THE TRIP* in the recently published excellent *THE LOST LIBRARY: GAY FICTION REDISCOVERED*. He, along with two other writers Brent Hartinger and Kathleen T. Horning, offer "reflections" in this 40th anniversary of this perfect book that has the distinction of being the first young adult novel to deal with teen homosexuality. While there are literally dozens of novels-- some better than others of course-- on the subject now, the publication of this book had to have been a watershed in 1969, just a year before Gordon Merrick unleashed *THE LORD WON'T MIND* on unsuspecting gay readers. (As I recall, the ads in the long-since defunct "After Dark" magazine touted that novel as the first gay novel that has a happy ending or nobody dies or some such.) But I digress. Mr. Donovan's novel was a fine novel in 1969; it's a fine novel today. The narrator is Davy Ross, a thirteen-year-old, who, when the novel opens, has just lost his beloved grandmother with whom he has been living. After he has to go to New York to live with his alcoholic mother-- she often starts drinking in the early mornings-- here are his thoughts on his loving grandmother and his guilt as he has to go on with his new life in New York: "I feel guilty as h--l that I haven't thought of Grandmother for a long time. She's the only person I may ever know I didn't have to put on some big act around. She's the only person I could be myself with. My mother and my father don't know me yet. But I think of them more than of Grandmother, who will be the most important person in my life forever. And they aren't worth my not thinking of Grandmother." Besides having to deal with the

mess called his mother, Davy now every Saturday sees his father and his stepmother Stephanie, who is a sensitive and caring person: "Stephanie talks to us as though we are people, not kids and something apart from other people." His own mother of course fluctuates between reminding him, usually while in her cups, that he is a great burden to her and tearfully telling him, that he is the joy of her life, blah, blah, blah. Then there are the pressures of being the new kid in school where on the first day he takes the seat of the mysteriously-absent student named Larry and meets the class jock Altschuler. But through all his perils of moving to a strange new home, Davy has the comfort of his best friend, a dachshund named Fred. Mr. Donovan's prose is precise, beautiful and believable. His insights into the mind of a lonely thirteen-year-old who is dealing with the death of a beloved family member and the problems of adjusting to a new alien environment and becoming a young man ("Some of the guys at home have already had one or two shaves, but I haven't, and to tell the truth I'd like to") are, in the buzzword of the month, spot-on. Finally he handles Davy and Altschuler's friendship and whatever else happens between them with delicacy and grace. This is one of those moving and honest novels that made me wish Mr. Donovan had written a sequel. Or I can fantasize as to what might have been their fates. The boys would be fifty-three now. Their friendship probably would not have survived the separation brought on by their going away to different colleges. One or both of them may have perished in the first wave of AIDS. They would have been at that dangerous age in the 1970's and early 80's when easy sex was available, particularly in big cities. On the other hand, they may have settled in with life partners and had happy lives. In a word, Davy and Altschuler are totally alive characters. This novel is not to be missed.

I have mixed feelings for *It's a Wonderful Life* because upon finishing this book, I was delighted; but while reading, especially the first half, I was bored. But this is definitely a masterful title and something that will resonate with intelligent readers long after it's finished. The writing style is very blunt and staccatoed, it's not an entirely unpleasant to read. Though, it felt so foreign to the types of books I generally read. It reads like a child has written it which is very true to the inner voice of our protagonist Davy. The star of this book is definitely Davy's dog, Fred! He completely captured my heart and had me chuckling in many places. Who can resist an adorkable puppy? Honourable mentions go to the realistic character portraits of the new best friend, Altschuler and Davy's alcoholic mother. Both were painted in raw gritty colours through Davy's eyes, and a story behind their

behaviour is inferred. This made an intriguing read, not to have all the facts explained. A breakdown for the mediocre rating and the reason I found the first half less than exciting lies with how it felt very much like a recount of mundane facts. And on the surface that's all it is. The perspective you gain upon finishing the novel will switch that all on its head. There is a lot of symbolism and metaphors, and it did take me a while to switch on to it all. I mainly because I repeatedly put this book down (due to afore mentioned waning of attention). Given this novel was written over 40 years ago, the tale still stands the test of time. I loved the description of the streets of New York, and Central Park as they jumped from the page just as brightly as Fred. I went into this book not knowing anything other than it was about a boy and his dog and was considered a classic in LGBTQI+ Literature. It was nice. I guess I expected more to happen. I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth The Trip is quietly impactful. Much like life, it travels along innocently until something happens to shift your perspective: and that is the strong sense I garnered from this book. It's not necessarily a coming out story, but one of accepting loss and change. This fact alone sets it apart from the typical novel in this genre. At the beginning of the novel this theme is set up immediately when Davy's Grandmother passes. The rest of the story line interprets the same narrative style in varying degrees. It ends with a typical note seen in classic contemporaries, that after a poignant moment, leaves you to draw your own conclusions. Which I like, and am starting to see a trend away from that in modern releases as not everything needs to be tied up in a pretty little bow. A short novel with a lot of meaning, well worth the read especially if you love dogs.

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