



The Obstacle Course

By J. F. Freedman

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In the habit of running through the obstacle course at nearby Annapolis, fifteen-year-old Ray Poole is discovered, sent to prep school, and headed for Annapolis, until a twist of fate changes his course. 35,000 first printing. \$35,000 ad/promo.

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The Obstacle Course By J. F. Freedman Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1740813 in Books
- Brand: Viking Penguin
- Published on: 1994-01-07
- Released on: 1994-01-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 6.50" w x 1.25" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 368 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Set in southern Maryland during the first three months of 1957, this excellent novel by the author of *Against the Wind* is a first-person narrative by 14-year-old Roy Poole, who runs the obstacle course at nearby Annapolis and hopes to become a midshipman. But his father is an alcoholic, his mother a non-presence in the household and his grades are low--deliberately so, because kids with good grades are ostracized in Roy's peer-pressured world. A chance meeting with a retired admiral gives Roy the opportunity to realize his dream of attending Annapolis, but neither his peers nor his elders believe that he can rise above their preconceptions about him. Not looking forward to an existence like that of his family and friends, keenly aware of how out of place he is in any better life, Roy is an authentic adolescent: confused, eager, honest and alive. Freedman nails the teenage state of mind, for which being humiliated in math class or laughed at by friends is nothing less than the end of the world, and tells a wonderfully truthful tale about youthful choice and change, examining how each is controlled by adults. Readers can't help but care for the appealing main character, root for him and wonder what kind of an adult he will be. 35,000 first printing; \$50,000 ad/promo; Literary Guild selection; author tour.

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From Library Journal

In 1957, 14-year-old Roy Poole dreams of escaping his grimy small-town life by attending the Naval Academy, where he runs the obstacle course when he is not hustling homework, trading insults with buddies, shoplifting, or robbing washing-machine coin boxes. A chance meeting with a retired admiral gives Roy a patron, but his hope for the future is endangered when he is accused of the one theft he didn't commit. Both a survivor and his own worst enemy, Roy careens from mishap to catastrophe: a quick escape from a junkyard guard results in six days as a runaway; a last-minute assault on coin boxes for some ready cash undoes his final opportunity with the admiral. Freedman's second novel doesn't live up to *Against the Wind* (LJ 9/15/91), but its selection by the Literary Guild, an author tour, and a hefty ad budget may boost demand. - *Jan Blodgett, St. Mary's Cty. Records Ctr. & Archives, Leonardtown, Md.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Episodic coming-of-age tale from Freedman, here showing little of the flair for high melodrama that marked his robust literary debut, *Against the Wind* (1991). The title refers not only to the obstacle course at the Naval Academy at Annapolis that narrator Ray Poole, 15, likes to sneak onto during the winter of 1957, but also to the barricades to happiness that he must leap on his way to manhood--starting with his family (womanizing dad; abused mom) and their barren life in the white-trash town of Ravensburg, Maryland. Like his friends, Ray is tough, quick with his fists, and not adverse to stealing to support his passion: the building of elaborate ship models, his way of sustaining his dream of going to Annapolis. The dream begins to look possible when, at a hobby store, Ray meets a retired admiral who shares his love of models. The admiral takes the bright if wayward boy under his wing, introduces him to Navy brass (and a lovelorn Navy brat), then gets him into a military prep school. But life deals a hard lesson about human nature and class realities when, after the theft of a figurine at the admiral's house, the admiral spurns the accused Ray rather than name the real thief, a kleptomaniac old friend; and the lesson is fortified as Ray is twice treated well by the generally despised blacks--first by a whore to whom he loses his virginity, then by a church congregation that takes him in after the boy, despairing, has ridden the rails into the Deep South. At story's end, Ray--battered but wiser--is back running the Annapolis obstacle course, his future a mystery ready to unfold. Ray's an appealingly spunky creation, but his adventures feel contrived--as if he's not living a life but being hustled

through his paces toward Meaning by Coach Freedman. (First printing of 35,000) -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donna Vandyne:

Reading a guide can be one of a lot of action that everyone in the world loves. Do you like reading book thus. There are a lot of reasons why people like it. First reading a guide will give you a lot of new facts. When you read a e-book you will get new information simply because book is one of many ways to share the information or their idea. Second, looking at a book will make you actually more imaginative. When you reading a book especially tale fantasy book the author will bring someone to imagine the story how the characters do it anything. Third, you are able to share your knowledge to some others. When you read this The Obstacle Course, you can tells your family, friends and soon about yours publication. Your knowledge can inspire the others, make them reading a publication.

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