



The Great American Whatever

By Tim Federle

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From the award-winning author of *Five, Six, Seven, Nate!* and *Better Nate Than Ever* comes “a Holden Caulfield for a new generation” (*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review).

Quinn Roberts is a sixteen-year-old smart aleck and Hollywood hopeful whose only worry *used* to be writing convincing dialogue for the movies he made with his sister Annabeth. Of course, that was all before—before Quinn stopped going to school, before his mom started sleeping on the sofa...and before the car accident that changed everything.

Enter: Geoff, Quinn’s best friend who insists it’s time that Quinn came out—at least from hibernation. One haircut later, Geoff drags Quinn to his first college party, where instead of nursing his pain, he meets a guy—okay, a *hot* guy—and falls, hard. What follows is an upside-down week in which Quinn begins imagining his future as a screenplay that might actually have a happily-ever-after ending—if, that is, he can finally step back into the starring role of his own life story.

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The Great American Whatever By Tim Federle Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #88276 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-03-29
- Released on: 2016-03-29
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Tim Federle's Movie Song Playlist for *The Great American Whatever*



Do you ever wish your life had a soundtrack? You know, like for violins to come in as you're breaking up with somebody, or drums to thump when you're being chased down an alley? (OK, maybe that's just my life.) My lead character in *The Great American Whatever* is an aspiring filmmaker — his dream is to be the next Spielberg or Tarantino — so I thought it was only fitting that he'd punctuate his own "life soundtrack" with iconic songs from some of his favorite movies. Pop some popcorn and grab your earbuds.

- The "[Flying Theme](#)" from *E.T.* - Probbbbably my #1 most-listened to song for writing inspiration. (I'm biased, because my first novel included *E.T.* as an entire fangirl subplot, but I promise these horns will send you over the moon.)
- "[Mrs. Robinson](#)" from *The Graduate* - Filmmaker icon Mike Nichols famously rejected Paul Simon's first two song efforts for the "Graduate" soundtrack, but three's a charm with the first rock song ever to win a Grammy for Record of the Year.
- "[As Time Goes By](#)" from *Casablanca* - "Nostalgia: the song," basically. In "The Great American Whatever" Quinn looks back on his young life a lot, wondering how things could have gone differently. "As Time Goes By" is a sweet-sounding, slightly-sad song that Quinn would like, because he's 17, and being 17 is all about sweetness and sadness.
- "[Everybody's Talkin'](#)" from *Midnight Cowboy* - This tune basically plays every time a young Jon "Angelina Jolie's Dad" Voight enters a new scene in this movie, which makes me wish I had my own theme song for every time I visit the fridge during a writing session.
- "[Unchained Melody](#)" from *Ghost* - Never has wet clay seemed so dirty. Leave it to a movie about a hot dead guy to bring this old Righteous Brothers song roaring back to haunt modern audiences. FYI if you don't cry you're a ghost.
- "[Goldfinger](#)" from *Goldfinger* - Long is the legacy of a new James Bond theme song topping the charts, but

it's Shirley Bassey's camp classic "Goldfinger" that leaves me shaken AND stirred.

- "Rainbow Connection" from The Muppet Movie - First of all, Kermit, ARE there "so many songs about rainbows"? Second of all, I forgive you because I'm SOBBING.
- "9 to 5" from 9 to 5 - The only country singer with her own theme park, Dolly Parton knows a thing or two about putting in a days' work. Blast this one in your corporate cubicle.
- "Over the Rainbow" from The Wizard of Oz - The next time you're full of doubt, just keep in mind that MGM wanted to cut "Over the Rainbow" from the song for fear it would go over the head of little ones, and I don't mean munchkins.
- "Let the River Run" from Working Girl - My favorite pop/choral mashup by none other than the daughter of Richard L. Simon: one half of Simon & Schuster, who publishes my books! (OK, "Simon's daughter" is also known as Carly Simon.) I listen to her anthem when I have to face something daunting like cardio or my inbox.

From School Library Journal

Gr 10 Up—Middle grade superstar Federle's first young adult novel is a sad yet funny coming-of-age story. Quinn Roberts, the 16-year-old screenwriting protagonist, is still entrenched in grief over the tragic death of his older sister, Annabeth, six months after an accident. Geoff, Quinn's best friend, resolves to get Quinn back in the world, and he successfully nudges his friend back toward society. Quinn imagines his future as if it were a screenplay, a coping device for this witty and wisecracking teen. Narrated by the author, this book features authentic dialogue, clear character building, and a combination of grief, depression, and sexuality that come together for a modern and engaging story. VERDICT Young adult listeners who have experienced loss will relate, and older fans of the author will enjoy. ["An essential purchase for all collections": SLJ 1/16 starred review of the S. & S. book.]—Denise A. Garofalo, Mount Saint Mary College, Newburgh, NY

Review

"*The Great American Whatever* knocked me out. Tim Federle writes with a rare voice — original, authentic, engaging." (Rob Thomas, author of *Rats Saw God* and creator of *Veronica Mars*)

"A raw nerve of a book—so perfectly tender and funny and true. My heart now belongs to *The Great American Whatever*. Officially. Completely." (Becky Albertalli, author of *Simon Vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda*)

Sixteen-year-old Quinn is suffering from both the second week of record-high temperatures and the sixth straight month of record-breaking lows. The temperature is due to meteorology; the lows to the death of his older sister in an automobile accident the day before Christmas break. As a result, a devastated Quinn has sequestered himself inside his increasingly messy bedroom—until, that is, his best friend Geoff persuades him to go to a party and there he meets the guy (yes, Quinn is gay) and his life begins to turn around. One thing, though: the guy, Amir, is older—a college student. Can anything good come of that? And will film buff Quinn resume writing screenplays, a practice he ditched in the wake of his collaborator sister's death? Federle's (*Better Nate Than Ever*, 2013) first foray into YA is an accomplished effort, dramatic and distinguished by carefully developed, appealing characters. It is cleverly plotted and smoothly written with many scenes presented in screenplay style. More importantly, while it has its serious aspects, it is whimsical, wry, and unfailingly funny—a refreshing change from the often dour nature of much LGBTQ literature. Bright as a button, this is a treat from start to finish. (Booklist *STARRED* December 1, 2015)

*"Federle's first foray into YA is an accomplished effort, dramatic and distinguished by carefully developed, appealing characters... whimsical, wry, and unfailingly funny." (Booklist, starred review)

*"A Holden Caulfield for a new generation." (Kirkus Reviews, starred review)

Sixteen-year-old Quinn Roberts is officially hiding from the world. Six months after the death of his beloved sister, Annabeth, Quinn's house remains preserved as a shrine to the father who walked out on his family voluntarily and the daughter whose exit was anything but. "Without the vision and silent encouragement of [his] sister," Quinn is ready to renounce his dreams of writing screenplays, yet he cannot help but view the world cinematically. The juxtaposition of Quinn's scripted version of events with what actually occurs enables readers to experience the flawed goofiness of the real world while enjoying Quinn's ideal of how it should be. In his first novel for teens, *Federle* (Better Nate Than Ever, 2013, etc.) crafts a poignant and thoroughly convincing portrait of a teenager who is acerbic and self-deprecating, astute enough to write piercing observations about his own life yet too self-involved to discern obvious truths about those closest to him. Quinn's supporting cast of characters, both minor and major, are wonderfully flawed and nuanced, from Amir, the college boy upon whom Quinn has a crush, to Mrs. Roberts, who cannot bear to throw away her deceased daughter's favorite junk food. Quinn's epiphanies about his sister and himself are distinctively less cinematic than he would like them to be. The journey he takes to arrive at them, however, is hauntingly authentic and consummately page-turning. A Holden Caulfield for a new generation. (Fiction.15 & up) (Kirkus Reviews *STARRED* December 15, 2015)

Annabeth and Quinn were sibling filmmakers—she the director, he the screenwriter—and Quinn, 16, dreamed that they would become famous collaborators like the Wachowskis, Ephrons, or Coens. Then Annabeth died on a icy road. Six months later, Quinn's mother is still grief-stricken, and Quinn has holed up in his bedroom. Into this stasis arrives best friend Geoff, who prods him to take a needed shower and get out of the house. Quinn tells part of his rebound story in screenplay form, but the key plot element is his flirtation with Amir, a college guy he meets at a party: the possibility of love (and sex and romance) makes him realize that there's still a future to look forward to. *Federle's* first venture into YA shares the same wry sensibility and theatrical underpinnings of his middle-grade books, while freeing him up to make some edgier jokes (" 'A little less tongue,' he slurs, which was precisely the note I was going to give him"). The mix of vulnerability, effervescence, and quick wit in Quinn's narration will instantly endear him to readers. (Publishers Weekly December 7, 2015)

"The mix of vulnerability, effervescence, and quick wit in Quinn's narration will instantly endear him to readers." (Publishers Weekly)

*"Even under the weight of grief, Quinn's conversational and charming narrative voice effervesces, mixing humor and vulnerability in typical *Federle* style." (School Library Journal, starred review)

In the six months since his sister was killed in a car accident, Quinn has hardly left his bedroom. He hasn't gone to school or talked to his best friend and has barely interacted with his heartbroken mother. He hasn't turned on his phone, either, knowing the last text his sister sent before running a red light was to him. Urged on by his best friend, Geoff, Quinn reluctantly emerges from his isolation just in time to meet a cute boy, turn 17, rediscover his passion for writing screenplays, and uncover some big secrets about the people he thought he knew best. He also gets some advice from a former idol, a neighbor turned Hollywood screenwriter: forget the rules of what's expected in a script and just write the truth. For Quinn, who seeks solace in his daydreamy scripts with imagined conversations and outcomes that he can control, this is a hard pill to swallow, especially as he's learning some truths he's not really sure he likes. Even under the weight of grief, Quinn's conversational and charming narrative voice effervesces, mixing humor and vulnerability in typical *Federle* style. Quinn's story is at turns sad, funny, awkward, and endearing as he figures out friendship, romance, coming out, and moving on. VERDICT-*Federle's* YA debut about life's unscripted moments has wide appeal and is an essential purchase for all collections. Readers will be instant fans of the funny and honest Quinn.—Amanda MacGregor, Great River Regional Library, St. Cloud, MN (School Library Journal *STARRED* January 1, 2016)

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Sixteen-year-old Quinn Roberts, aspiring screenwriter and closeted gay teen, has not returned to school since his older sister died in a tragic car accident last December. It is now summer, and Geoff, his best friend, is determined to get him out of the house. Quinn goes with Geoff to a college party where he is instantly attracted to Amir who later asks him out on a date. What follows is a fluid first-person narrative that shines with Quinn's flippant humor and genuine teenage vulnerability. The narrative is interspersed with Quinn's favorite movie moments and quotes, albeit somewhat obscure for today's teens, and Quinn's unique way of imagining moments of his life written as a screenplay. The reader cares not only for Quinn, but also for Geoff, whose secretly dated Quinn's sister before her death, and Quinn's mother, an obese hoarder who was abandoned by her husband but who is loved dearly by her son.

Quinn ultimately discovers, through a series of events—seeing Amir, talking with his childhood idol, a screenwriter who is in town on the set of his latest movie—that life is not like the movies, but it is worth living to the fullest. He is able to come out to Geoff and his mom, and he finally reads his sister's last text message, the one she sent before her death. Quinn experiences sex for the first time with Amir in a somewhat glossed-over sex scene. This is recommended for mature teens who want to be inspired.—Christina C. Jones. (VOYA February 2016)

"Recommended for mature teens who want to be inspired." (VOYA)

Sixteen-year-old Quinn's life is static: less than a year after his sister's fatal car crash in front of their school and his father's subsequent departure, his screenwriting ambitions have been put on hold, his social life has evaporated, and he and his grieving mother stay mostly confined to their house. When his best friend Geoff (who is straight) manages to drag him to a party, Quinn meets college-guy Amir and reemerges from his shell as they develop a mutual attraction. Fearing being seen as a pitiable figure defined only by tragedy, Quinn avoids sharing details of his personal life with Amir, but as the story progresses and he is pushed toward honesty, he begins to reveal his perspective on his sister's accident, and in doing so learns that it might not be the whole story. Although Quinn describes his life as "a fairly standard coming-of-age LGBT genre film, with a somewhat macabre horror twist," the narrative focus is less on coming out ("It just seems like such a hassle to come out. I want to just be out") than it is equal parts romance and friendship, humor and healing. Quinn's relationships with his mom and Geoff are particularly well developed, but the entire cast is well rounded, flawed, funny, and human. Humorous, heartbreaking, and heartwarming, Federle's (*Better Nate Than Ever*) YA debut takes its place in the lineage of Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and John Green's coming-of-age tales. (The Horn Book Magazine March/April 2016)

After stealing the show with his popular middle-grade novels (*Better Nate Than Ever*, BCCB 2/13, *Five, Six, Seven, Nate!*, BCCB 1/14), Federle turns his attention to teen angst. At sixteen, Quinn Roberts has retreated to his room after his older sister, Annabeth, ran a red light, probably while texting, and was instantly killed in a collision. His best friend, Geoff, has other plans for Quinn, however, including facilitating his relationship with a handsome Iranian-American college guy named Amir. Quinn's head is turned by the older, more experienced Amir, but nothing shakes Quinn's wisecracking veneer until he learns that he didn't know Annabeth as well as he thought he did and realizes that his self-involvement means he never heard what she truly wanted. Quinn's management of his relationships is as credible as it is frustrating; he's constantly stepping out of the scene he's in to focus on his inner world, and his angry jealousy over his sister's life apart from him bears out his need to read and heed the final text she sent. However, he is both lovable and well-loved by Geoff, who wins major bro points for his unfailing support. Amir treats Quinn with remarkable kindness as well, although there is much to discuss regarding whether Quinn's motivations to lose his virginity, and Amir's willing participation in that effort, are entirely wise under the circumstances. Lively

first-person narration peppered with imaginary screenplay scenes keep the serious from being too serious, and there is absolutely no don't-text-and-drive messaging here; in the end, this is about Quinn's distractions rather than Annabeth's, and his chain of successes in life and love proves, perhaps, that it really is all about him after all. (Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books February 2016)

"Federle's YA debut takes its place in the lineage of Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and John Green's coming-of-age tales." (Horn Book Magazine)

Tim Federle's (*Better Nate Than Ever; Five, Six, Seven, Nate!*) confident YA debut, *The Great American Whatever*, stars 16-year-old Quinn Roberts, a film-obsessed gay teen from western Pennsylvania, struggling to recover from the death of his sister, Annabeth. The day she died in a car accident, he started wearing earplugs and "gave up on becoming a screenwriter, or an anythingwriter, or anything." The story kicks off with Quinn's best friend, Geoff, dragging him to a party, where Quinn meets a cute Iranian-American college guy. The promise of romance helps draw Quinn out of his extended mourning period, but he still has to deal with his mother's paralyzing grief and a number of harsh realizations about the sister he thought he knew everything about. If Quinn's life were a screenplay, he says, his would be "a fairly standard coming-of-age LGBT genre film, with a somewhat macabre horror twist." Quinn is underselling his own story, which reveals new levels of heart as it follows the occasionally surprising arc of his recovery.

What sets this fantastic novel apart is Quinn's brilliantly realized, often hilarious first-person voice, from laugh-out-loud asides ("My mom's theory--which I *fully* endorse--is that fruits are best in a cobbler and vegetables are best in the ground") to heart-wrenching admissions, such as the wry observation that earplugs "give the world a comforting dullness." Quinn's tendency to view scenes from the perspective of a true film geek has him occasionally re-inventing real-life dramatic moments as fictitious screenplays. Charming and imaginative.

Discover: In Tim Federle's clever YA debut, Quinn Roberts overcomes tragedy and navigates young love as he wryly writes the screenplay of his own life. (Shelf Awareness, STARRED REVIEW 4/5/16)

*"What sets this fantastic novel apart is Quinn's brilliantly realized, often hilarious first-person voice, from laugh-out-loud asides to heart-wrenching admissions...Charming and imaginative." (Shelf Awareness, starred review)

? "Federle has triumphed. He's written a moving tale about grief that's also laugh-out-loud funny." (The New York Times Book Review)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nancy Martindale:

What do you concerning book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material when you want something to explain what the one you have problem? How about your spare time? Or are you busy person? If you don't have spare time to complete others business, it is gives you the sense of being bored faster. And you have spare time? What did you do? Everybody has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question because just their can do in which. It said that about book. Book is familiar in each person. Yes, it is appropriate. Because start from on kindergarten until university need this specific *The Great American Whatever* to read.

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