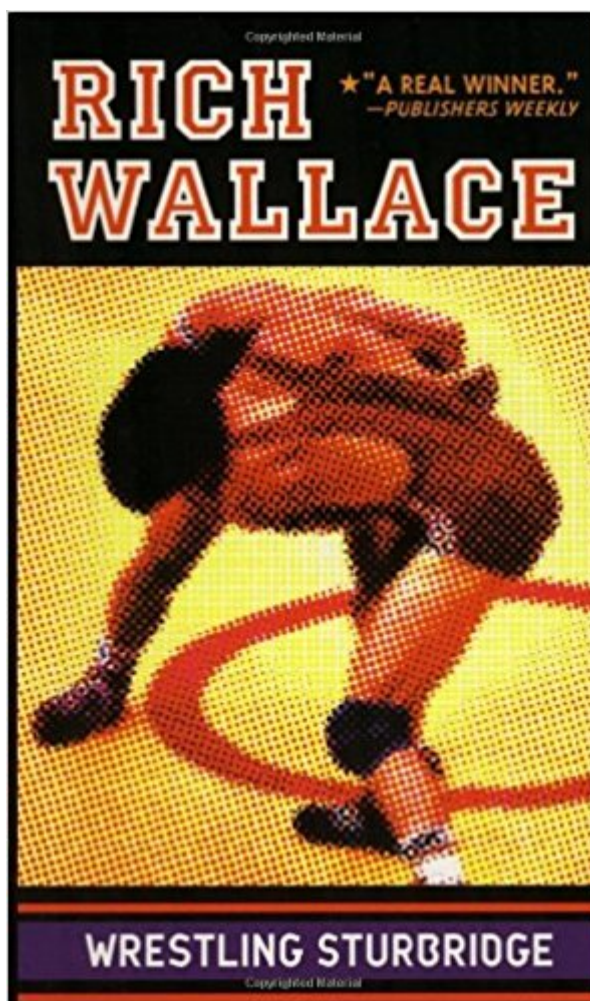


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# Wrestling Sturbridge



## Synopsis

The critics' votes are in--Wrestling Sturbridge is a winner! Now available in rack-sized paperback.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 850L (What's this?)

Mass Market Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: Laurel Leaf (July 8, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0679885552

ISBN-13: 978-0679885559

Product Dimensions: 4.4 x 0.4 x 6.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 38 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,374,114 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Sports > Martial Arts #2215 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Being a Teen #2921 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Friendship

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Ben will be damned if he's going to stay in Sturbridge, Pennsylvania, when he gets out of high school. Work in the cinder block factory like everyone else? No way. He's also not going to let his friend Al win the state wrestling championship. Ben wants it more than Al does. Ben needs it more than Al does. Ben is going to win. Robert Cormier writes: "in a beautifully understated first novel, Rich Wallace brings the town and the teenager achingly alive as Ben wrestles not only his high school opponents, but with the big issues of life and love and the choices a teenager must make."

Anyone even remotely curious about small-town America need look no further than this exemplary first novel. Wallace's clipped, gently sardonic prose captures it all, from the red-faced former jocks in the wrestling booster club, to the teens with nothing to do but drink (a lot) and drive in an endless loop through town, to the Saturday night polka party on public TV. Narrator Ben, a high school senior, doesn't want to be like his father and so many others in Sturbridge, Pa., who after graduating

get a job at the cinder block plant. Seemingly his only alternative is to become a state wrestling champion and thus win an athletic scholarship. But his way is firmly blocked by his buddy Al, who reigns supreme in their weight class, and Ben is relegated to the ignominy of being Al's practice partner and a benchwarmer during tournaments. Enter Kim, a Puerto Rican track enthusiast transplanted from New Jersey. Despite their close relationship, Kim won't put up with Ben's self-pitying, defeatist attitude. Wallace isn't writing a sports fairy story, so Ben doesn't achieve his goal; much more believably, he feels like a winner because he finally tries with all his might. The sports angle makes this a great "guy's" book, while the gripping narrative and feisty heroine will appeal to young women, too. A real winner. Ages 12-17. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

MY SON ENJOYED THIS BOOK. VERY NICE ENDING. GOOD LIFE LESSON.

Attention grabbing book. Great read for teen wrestlers!! Realistically written. Captures a wrestlers world and teen life! My boys enjoyed this book!

Thanks

Wrestling Sturbridge features the protagonist Ben, a senior wrestler yearning to accomplish his dreams with his childhood pals, by winning the Pennsylvania state championships for his history-rich school. As a senior, Ben has only one more opportunity to win it all, but only his best friends stand in the way of his goal. Unable to move weight classes, Ben realizes that unless he is able to defeat preseason-favorite Al, he will spend his final season on the bench. While inventing a high-potential concept, Wallace fails to deliver. The author constantly declines to go in depth with his scenes, and overall doesn't sustain a thorough plot; he grazes heartfelt scenes of Ben with his father, skims the development of Ben and Kim's relationship, and utterly adds no detail in the matches of other wrestlers at Sturbridge. The book is only 133 pages, largely due to the brief descriptions of scenes that could have left an impact on the reader if Wallace had gone in depth. Like any loss, the book still has its highlights. Ben is a very relatable character, with good intentions and high hopes for his future after high school. There are bits and pieces of humor cleverly scattered throughout the pages that keeps an otherwise hopeless tone light hearted. The book contains quotes that are memorable, specifically about the ability of desire to overcome talent. All in all, the book is worth a shot, especially if the reader is familiar with the sport of wrestling.

While one shouldn't expect to be reading a classic, the story provides a quick, acceptable read. As it only takes a few hours to read start-to-finish, it wouldn't be a horrible idea to give it a try, as long as you don't expect too much out of it.

Sturbridge, Pennsylvania is one of those little blue-collar plant towns where people pour all their energy into living vicariously through a high school sport, sometimes football, sometimes basketball, here wrestling. The premise is simple: Ben is a senior and his three best friends--wrestling at 130, 135, and 140, respectively--stand squarely in the way of his wrestling dreams. His dreams after high school? There isn't much of that to go around in Sturbridge. Time not spent in class or wrestling is spent on those quintessential small town vices: cruising, drinking, and cruising a slightly different route. The essence of small town America, the heart of the sport of wrestling, the growing pains of adolescence--Wallace pins each perfectly. I enjoyed and appreciated it as much rereading it over a decade later as I did first reading it as a high school wrestler. It's a book any high school wrestler (or former high school wrestler) should appreciate, but the themes are universal and Ben provides enough info to avoid confusion by non-wrestlers (we're informed a takedown is worth two points early on). It avoids the mistake I think too many YA novels (written by adults) make of assuming teenagers spend all their time thinking about adults. Wrestling Sturbridge is written in first person entirely from Ben's perspective. It's an ideal POV for a YA novel because, by showing us what our protagonist thinks but not anyone else, we can better grasp the inherent confusion to be a teenager. It doesn't hobble the author's prose the way it can in adult fiction because the language needs to be kept simple anyway. Wallace does so, and in a very short novel makes every word count. The prose sometimes comes ever so close to being trite, but it is always spot on. E.g., "Sturbridge is almost like a stadium--there's a flat two-block-wide valley down the spine of the town, then it rises up on both sides. It's a pit only the strongest crawl out of."

Ben and his three friends have been a solid group since middle school. They started out wrestling together when they were that young, and their dream was always to wrestle for the high school team and perhaps lead their team to state championships in four different weight classes. Wrestling is a huge sport--the only sport that matters--in the town of Sturbridge, though, and many other boys have had the same dream. Ben and his friends think that they have the drive to make it, though. Suddenly it is senior year, and they seem to be living the dream. Well, all except Ben. The previous year it had seemed like he and his friends would rule four consecutive weight classes. Then one of his friends gained weight and moved up into Ben's class, and Ben can't seem to beat

him. He can't gain enough weight in muscle to move up beyond his friends, and he can't lose enough weight to drop a class without being too weak to wrestle at all. It is beginning to look to Ben like he may not wrestle this season--unless he is able to beat his friend in a match for the slot on the team. Will Ben have the drive and the ability to earn a varsity position? When his focus is drawn to a new girlfriend, will wrestling even matter to him anymore? I liked the relationship between Ben and his father, and especially the odd gift Ben's father gives him at the end of the book. I also liked the description of Sturbridge; it was very well set up in this book. I liked the way each chapter started with lists of things that were important to know about Ben, and I especially liked the unpredictable ending. I didn't really understand the relationship between Ben and Kim. It seemed that all of a sudden they were dating pretty seriously with no real lead-in or explanation.

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