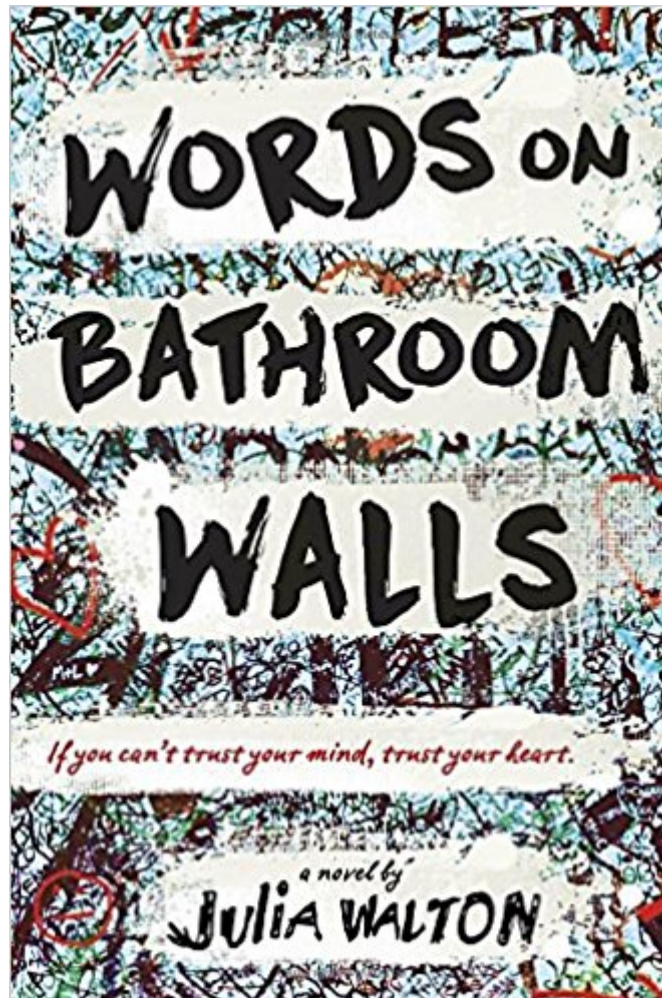




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# Words On Bathroom Walls



## Synopsis

Fans of *More Happy Than Not*, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, and *It's Kind of a Funny Story* will cheer for Adam as he struggles with schizophrenia in this brilliantly honest and unexpectedly funny debut. Adam has just been diagnosed with schizophrenia. He sees and hears people who aren't there: Rebecca, a beautiful girl who understands him; the Mob Boss, who harasses him; and Jason, the naked guy who's unfailingly polite. It should be easy to separate the real from the not real, but Adam can't. Still, there's hope. As Adam starts fresh at a new school, he begins a drug trial that helps him ignore his visions. Suddenly everything seems possible, even love. When he meets Maya, a fiercely intelligent girl, he desperately wants to be the great guy that she thinks he is. But then the miracle drug begins to fail, and Adam will do anything to keep Maya from discovering his secret."Echoing the premise and structure of *Flowers for Algernon*, this frank and inspiring novel shows how a teen's life changes after he is given an experimental medication to treat symptoms of schizophrenia."--Publishers Weekly, STARRED REVIEW "A brutal, beautiful book that sits right beside *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and *I'll Give You the Sun*." --Jennifer Longo, author of *Up to This Pointe*"This book reminds me of *A Monster Calls*. I saved the final twenty pages for the next day because I didn't want Adam's story to end."--Peter Brown Hoffmeister, author of *This Is the Part Where You Laugh*"Walton has crafted a character with unparalleled likability, a boy whose endearing, witty, introspective commentary allows readers to get inside the head of a person with a debilitating mental illness. . . . Highly recommended."--SLJ"I loved it more than anything I've ever read. I LOVE THIS BOOK AND EVERYONE EVER SHOULD READ IT BECAUSE IT IS AMAZING AND BEAUTIFUL AND PUTS YOUR PROBLEMS IN PERSPECTIVE!!!!!!" •Camille P., 12

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"First-time author Walton creates a psychologically tense story with sympathetic characters while dispelling myths about a much-feared condition." — Publishers Weekly, starred review

JULIA WALTON received her MFA in creative writing from Chapman University. When she's not reading or baking cookies, she's indulging in her profound love of Swedish Fish, mechanical pencils, and hobbit-sized breakfasts. Julia lives in Huntington Beach, California, with her husband and daughter. Follow her on Twitter at @Jwaltonwrites.

This poignant and, at times, hilarious story of a young man diagnosed with schizophrenia was a great read! I thoroughly enjoyed the quick wit and honest portrayal of what can be a debilitating mental illness. Adam is a high school senior who takes an experimental drug to help manage his hallucinations. He refuses to actually speak to his therapist so each chapter is his written response to their sessions. I found the story unique and relatable and definitely look forward to reading more from Julia.

First page held on to me tightly. I cared so much for Adam, his mom and step dad. Glad that he found true friends.

GRADE: A-4.5 STARS Adam, a schizophrenic, is on a drug trial to keep his hallucinations away. He's starting a new school due to an episode where he previously attended. He refuses to talk to his therapist, instead writes letters in response to sessions. At first the meds do their job. Adam makes friends and sees only one persistent hallucination. But when the drug starts to fail, he risks losing everything. Julia Walton's debut novel is a good example of mental illness treated authentically in literature. She did her research. Understanding schizophrenia from a book is different from a knowledge from working with those with the condition. I thought I understood this mental illness until I worked with sufferers and realized book knowledge couldn't adequately portray schizophrenia. One of the hallmarks of the illness is disorganized thinking, particularly as the patient is

decompensating. A third person POV instead of an epistolary POV could have shown the gradual return of the symptoms. This is a minor criticism, Walton's work. Most readers won't know or care about this. **WORDS ON BATHROOM WALLS** captures the isolation of mental illness. Adam is abandoned by all his friends at his old school after he has an episode. His worry of being found out at his new school is very real. He also fears rejection from his stepfather, who is treating Adam differently since his diagnosis and whose mother thinks Adam should be locked up. Walton gave Adam such a strong, often humorous voice. He's able to find wry irony in his often painful situation. **WORDS ON BATHROOM WALLS** is a must read for those interested in mental illness. There are no perfectly happy endings and romance doesn't cure schizophrenia, just like real life.

This YA novel really took me by surprise! It's told in the first person by a high school senior diagnosed with schizophrenia in the format of letters to his psychologist (he refuses to speak during their sessions and instead, the chapters are his letters in response to the previous therapy session). This format helps the book set a surprisingly fast pace to it and makes a heavier topic for YA more engaging and actually even fun at times. There are moments when I actually laughed out loud, which I certainly did not expect! The book covers a lot of information, but the tone is kept remarkable light with its sarcastic and witty narrator. While the new school angle is typical for the genre, the treatment of mental illness and this focus makes this a fresh read. I really enjoyed it much more than I expected to! It's completely convincing and consistent from the point-of-view and the teen romance feels natural and unforced. I would definitely read more from Walton in the future!

The best way to describe my feelings towards this book is to shrug. This is a solid 3 star read. As much as I wanted to fall in love with this story of a boy dealing with mental illness as he fell in love with his dream girl, I couldn't connect. Since I finished reading, I've struggled with how to put into words why that connection was missing and it comes down to the plot, or lack thereof, or maybe just the whole mundane, guy has secret, cliché bullies, truth comes out, romance. It was all too familiar. And what irked me even further was the title. It's catchy, it's clever, it is barely in the story and while there could have been a serious, philosophical moment with the words, it fell flat, despite attempts to tie it in. And on top of that, it made the plot feel thrown together and nowhere near as cohesive or smooth as it could have been, but perhaps that was the point. Here's what I liked: I'm not a doctor. What I know about schizophrenia is pretty much the tripe, false portrayals in horror films or TV shows that make it seem like a dangerous, and deadly

sickness that turns people into serial killers or something. It's horrible, inaccurate, and even discussed throughout the story. Especially in relation to Sandy Hook. After the shooting, which happened during the timeline of this book, schizophrenia became something to be scared of. Knowing someone with the mental illness made people panic or at the very least feel apprehensive and on guard. Adam reflects on that and it's a huge part of why he never confides in his friends about his schizophrenia, because he doesn't want the looks, the doubts, the slow backing away and dissolution of friendships that has happened to him before out of fear. This is poignant and heartbreaking and a reality that needs to be called out and questioned. The stigma around mental illness and how it is perceived needs to be a discussion and unfortunately, like other timely issues, it is not. How schizophrenia is portrayed in the story may or may not be 100% accurate, the author does put a note in the back of the book addressing this, which I appreciated. Adam's hallucinations are each unique and reflect parts of himself that he's not in tune with, parts that he's scared of or tries to hide and they speak to him, try to guide him through hard choices and situations. They pop in and out of the story. They're memorable, but fleeting, and some are more solid than others. Adam's emotions and voice were strong. They were all over the place, but he was honest, his voice never wavered, and at times his letters were like a confession to himself. The structure. I think this is the only book I've read where the entire story is told through journal entries to a therapist. Because of the style, it's introspective, reflective, and full of genuine voice. You really get a feel for who Adam is, what he's going through, and his humor about the whole situation. Love doesn't save the day. So many times illness or some perceived flaw is solved simply by falling in love. It's become a dangerous trope. I liked that at the end of this story, nothing was really resolved or fixed because mental illness is not something that magically disappears because feelings trump everything. Drugs can help manage, but they fail, they lose effectiveness, and sometimes the side effects are life threatening. Maya is great for Adam, don't get me wrong. She listens to him. She befriends him when he felt so alone and scared on his journey and she sticks by him when things get weird. What more could you ask for? Here's what didn't work for me: The pacing, the plot. I was bored and what's weird is that I shouldn't have been. So many scenes were of your run of the mill, everyday life and while Adam's perception and snarky comments were entertaining, the incidents themselves were not. The enemy. The popular kids. The hot guy. So overdone and while there is some redemption it just didn't do

justice to the story. It was all too predictable. You could see that plot point coming from the moment you met the popular guy with connections because that's always the choice. I was hoping for something more unexpected because of the subject matter but I guess the popular kids will always be evil bullies. I wasn't sold on Maya or Dwight. They were just sort of there. Dwight especially has few scenes and while those scenes do give you a better picture of him, it feels like filler. For Maya the emotions were, and this could definitely be because of the style, lacking. Because everything is told from Adam's POV, how Maya really feels like seen through his gaze and it makes her feel aloof.

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