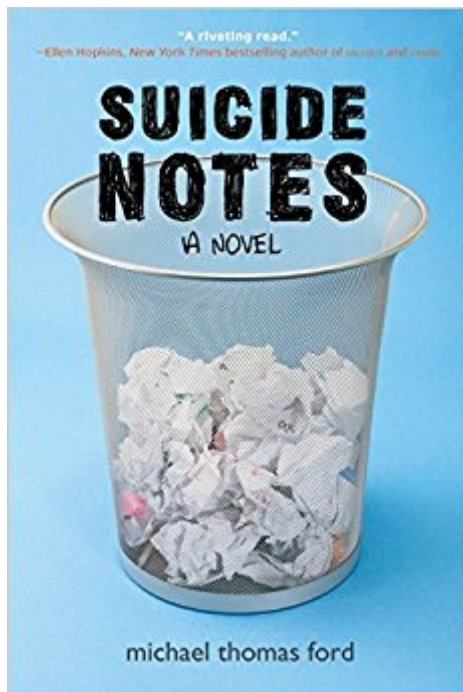


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# Suicide Notes



## Synopsis

An unforgettable coming of age novel for fans of *13 Reasons Why*, *It's Kind of a Funny Story*, and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Fifteen-year-old Jeff wakes up on New Year's Day to find himself in the hospital—specifically, in the psychiatric ward. Despite the bandages on his wrists, he's positive this is all some huge mistake. Jeff is perfectly fine, perfectly normal; not like the other kids in the hospital with him. But over the course of the next forty-five days, Jeff begins to understand why he ended up here—and realizes he has more in common with the other kids than he thought. *With a sprinkling of dark humor and a full measure of humanness, Suicide Notes is quirky, surprising, and a riveting read.* • Ellen Hopkins, author of *The You I've Never Known* and *Love Lies Beneath* “Like the very best teen novels, *Suicide Notes* is both classic and edgy, timeless and provocative.” • *Brent Hartinger, author of Geography Club* “Jeff's wit and self-discovery are refreshing, poignant, and, at times, laugh-out-loud funny.” • *School Library Journal* “Makes a powerful emotional impact.” • *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up • Jeff, the irreverent, sarcastic, and utterly terrified 15-year-old narrator, wakes up on New Year's Day in a psych ward with bandages around his wrists. He copes with his therapy by using extreme denial and avoidance, attempting to one-up his therapist, Dr. Katzrupus, or Cat

Poop, with flippant, deflective wordplay and outrageous stories of faux Sugar Plum Fairy fantasies. Jeff spends the rest of his time with the other teens, including suicidal Sadie the sociopath and the gay teen in jock's clothing, Rankin. While Sadie encourages Jeff's resentment toward the program, it is Rankin's actions that force Jeff to come to terms with his suicide attempt and his own sexuality. This is a story of warped self-perception, of the lies that people tell themselves so they never have to face the truth. Ford is most successful in his withholding of Jeff's secret, a disclosure not made until the last third of the book. While the book could be named *Gay Boy, Interrupted* due to many similarities to Susanna Kaysen's characters and depictions of the mental-health community, Jeff's wit and self-discovery are refreshing, poignant, and, at times, laugh-out-loud funny. Readers will relate to Jeff as a teen bumbling through horrible embarrassment and the shame that follows, and they will be inspired by his eventual integrity and grace.

—Kat Redniss, Brownell Library, Essex Junction, VT

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After Jeff, 15, wakes up in a psychiatric ward, he won't talk about why he slit his wrists. He lies to the therapist (whom he names "Cat Poop") and refuses to relate to the other teens in group therapy. He feels that he is not nutty like them, his parents are fine, nothing is bothering him, and he is "normal"; he just had one bad day. The therapy talk sometimes gets to be too much, but there is rising tension in Jeff's fast, irreverent, frank, first-person narrative: what is he holding back? He bonds with another patient, Sadie, and tells her about his best friend, Allie, and about Allie's cute boyfriend. When Jeff sees a jock masturbating in the shower, he feels attraction that is returned, and the two teens have sex. Long before Jeff confronts the truth, readers will realize that he is gay, and his denial is part of the humor and sadness many readers will recognize. Grades 10-12.

--Hazel Rochman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This was a story that I didn't expect to fall in love with. As a survivor of suicide loss, this is a very touchy subject for me. It was written so well that I honestly found myself invested in these characters! Masterfully done and poignant, a beautiful reminder that we may all have our demons to fight, but life is worth the battle! If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please get help! There has been a ton of progress in treatment, and it is not shameful! You are beautiful and your life is worth living!

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I started reading this novel yesterday and I finished it yesterday. That usually means I loved the novel and that is true in this case. *Suicide Notes* is an easy and entertaining read. It's a mix of all kinds of different things: it's funny, sad, entertaining, and maybe a little disturbing. But I think it paints a picture of troubled youth that is probably more realistic than not. As far as the issue of suicide goes, it's a very complex issue. A lot of people think about it in terms of black and white, but I think it's the very definition of gray. There are those who try to commit suicide out of momentary despair (like Jeff, the main character in the book), but there are also those who have severe depression, and then there are those that choose to end their lives for rational reasons. People who are terminally ill, people who feel that they've lived a good life and are ready to die, and then there are those who are just disillusioned with life (nothing brings any joy to them no matter how hard they try, so why stick around?). This novel did not deal with the complex issue of suicide in our society, but instead it focused on one teen's personal experience. Jeff's experience is not a universal example of why people try to kill themselves, but within the context of the novel, I think that's a good thing. While to some of us the reason for why he attempted suicide might seem a bit lukewarm, it is a fact that it does happen, especially among the teen population. Overall, I liked this novel. It was the story of one teen, and the whole book was from his point-of-view. Having said that, I also liked learning about some of the other characters that were in the psych ward with Jeff. I found Sadie to be an especially interesting character, and I wonder what kind of novel would this be if she had been the main character. All in all, a pretty good read. Recommended.

At fifteen, Jeff suffers from the same teen angst and insecurities as many others his age, unsure about some of his feelings and insecure about his sexuality. In his case, he kept these emotions bottled up until he attempted suicide, which resulted in his being assigned to forty-five days in a small adolescent psychiatric treatment facility, the setting for this book. Initially, Jeff avoids dealing with his own issues, and concentrates on his curiosity about his four fellow patients, with whom he must interact on a daily basis as part of his therapy. Then there are the daily group and private sessions with Dr. Katzrupus, not-so-affectionately referred to as "Cat Poop" by his young charges, who has little success initially in getting Jeff to speak about his feelings or why he tried to take his life. The forty-five days starts off seeming like an eternity, but, by the time it is all over, Jeff is stronger, more self-assured, but still somewhat insecure about returning to his "real life" on the outside. Michael Thomas Ford manages to create a well-written teen self-help book in a story format that will entertain his readers, through characters and feelings with whom they can identify. Family dynamics are shown in a realistic and unapologetic style, and the book is careful not to get

heavy-handed or preachy. Excellent read for young people dealing with family, social or coming-out issues. Five blue pills out of five.

There are too many kids in the world who choose Jeff's path, succumbing to the temptation of suicide at 15, confused about relationships, sexuality, and their place in the world. *SUICIDE NOTES* is a love note to those kids by author, Michael Thomas Ford, who offers a resounding message of hope in depicting one boy's journey of self-discovery. But what's marvelous about *SUICIDE NOTES* is the universality of Jeff's feelings. More kids than not don't attempt suicide, suffering silently instead, worrying about disappointing parents, failing to measure up, being abandoned by friends, and never fitting in. I worried about all those things. *SUICIDE NOTES* was a look back, suggesting how far I've come, and a reminder that, when doubts still occur, they can be viewed as invitations to once again look inside and discover a bit more. Craig Bennett Hallenstein is author of *THE DOLPHIN*, a psychological thriller set in New Orleans.

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