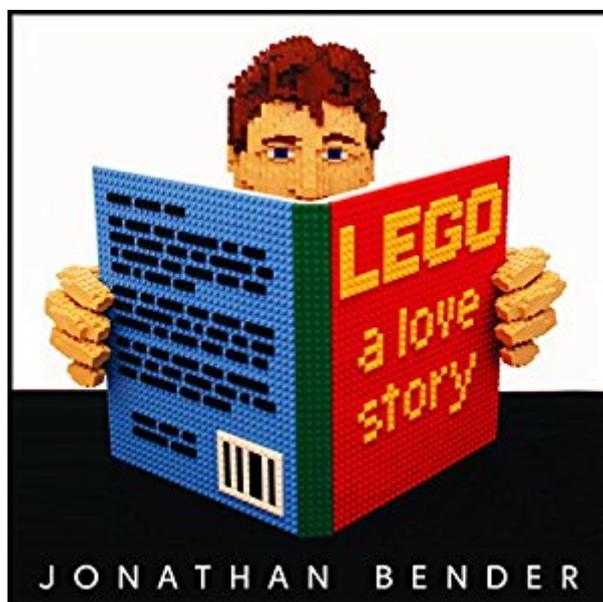


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# LEGO: A Love Story



## Synopsis

An adult LEGO fan's dual quest: to build with bricks and build a family. There are 62 LEGO bricks for every person in the world, and at age 30, Jonathan Bender realized that he didn't have a single one of them. While reconsidering his childhood dream of becoming a master model builder for The LEGO Group, he discovers the men and women who are skewing the averages with collections of hundreds of thousands of LEGO bricks. What is it about the ubiquitous, brightly colored toys that makes them so hard for everyone to put down? In search of answers and adventure, Jonathan Bender sets out to explore the quirky world of adult fans of LEGO (AFOLs) while becoming a builder himself. As he participates in challenges at fan conventions, searches for the largest private collection in the United States, and visits LEGO headquarters (where he was allowed into the top secret set vault), he finds his LEGO journey twinned with a second creative endeavor: to have a child. His two worlds intertwine as he awaits the outcome: Will he win a build competition or bring a new fan of LEGO into the world? Like every really good love story, this one has surprises and a happy ending. The book: Explores the world of adult fans of LEGO, from rediscovering the childhood joys of building with LEGO to evaluating LEGO's place in culture and art Takes an inside look at LEGO conventions, community taboos, and build challenges, and goes behind-the-scenes at LEGO headquarters and LEGOLAND Tells a warm and personal story about the attempt to build with LEGO and build a family Whether you're an avid LEGO freak or a onetime fan who now shares LEGO bricks with your children, this book will appeal to the inner builder in you and reignite a love for all things LEGO.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book has a fantastic cover that initially drew me to it. The idea of an adult man reconnecting with a childhood love of building bricks was also fascinating. It's billed as a memoir, or at least that was what I thought it was, and has elements of a "project memoir" wherein the author delves into a certain subject or theme with a goal in mind. In this case, Jonathan Bender wanted to research AFOLs (adult fan of LEGO) as well as become one himself. But I would call *LEGO: A Love Story* more of a researched book than a memoir. Yes, Bender shares some of his personal experiences, and the story is told through his eyes as he joins LEGO conventions and tours the headquarters in Denmark and the U.S. headquarters in Connecticut, but in general it's a feature about AFOLs and the history and future of the LEGO company. I did learn a lot about legos. First off, you never call them "legos." LEGO is the brand, and should only be used as an adjective as in "LEGO building blocks" or "LEGO kits," or in reference to the company itself. After reading 300 pages of correct usage, I'm probably a convert and will be annoyed by everyone else's incorrect use from here on out. I think that this book would definitely appeal to adults who play with or collect LEGO, but also to anyone who remembers LEGO fondly from their childhood. Reading this book made me happy that my son's collection is steadily growing, and honestly makes me look forward to tackling bigger projects with him. This book could definitely be a popular Father's Day gift -- from a grown son who remembered building LEGO with his dad, or to a new father who has the opportunity to legitimize his LEGO play once again. But then again, the whole idea behind *LEGO: A Love Story* is that LEGO can appeal to adults in a completely unique (and legitimate) way.

This book is an exploration of AFOL (Adult Fans of Lego) and their relationships with each other and the LEGO company. This storyline is meshed with the authors own exploration of LEGO as an adult and the struggles of his wife and himself to conceive a child. He neatly mirrors the issues of LEGO as a child's toy and LEGO as an adult interest with his own life. The author, Jonathan Bender, travels to LEGO conventions, to the LEGO headquarters and to such places as Legoland in order to explore how adults relate to LEGO. He describes the politics behind the relationship of the Lego company to its' adult fans and the manner in which many adults acquire and use Lego. The book is sometimes very funny but also in some ways depressing and a little hard to understand if you are not a die hard Lego fan. For example, apparently when Lego changed the grey and brown brick

colors to slightly different shades this created an outrage in the adult Lego community. I suppose that unless you are very invested in Lego, this seems rather hard to comprehend and a little dispiriting. I had thought perhaps that my own son, 14 years old and a fan of Lego, might be interested in the book. However, it is really written for adults. There are some photos, but not many, and the book really would not appeal to kids as a good part of it is devoted to the authors relationship with his wife and their attempts to start a family. Overall, an interesting book if you are an adult fan of Lego. I would not call myself an AFOL, although I have been known to play with my kids collection (especially Mindstorms), so I am not entirely neutral about Lego. In summary, a good book about Lego for adults, if you have some interest in Lego yourself.

Early in *LEGO: A Love Story*, I found myself wondering about author Jonathan Bender's narrative. It is easy to grasp the themes of his book; exploration of the world of Adult Fans of LEGO (AFOL), from the conventions to the build challenges to the interesting people that make up the LEGO community; a well researched look inside LEGO, from the corporate headquarters to the LEGOLAND amusement parks; a personal odyssey as one person attempts to rekindle his love of LEGO and building with bricks while trying to build something more - a family. However, the early chapters seemed choppy. Bender's central idea within a chapter made sense, but he would include some passages that did not seem to fit. Suspect editing is how I rationalized the early chapters because once I started on the latter half of the book, it flowed much better and I was rewarded with a much better book. A book that rekindled my own fascination with LEGO bricks, love of building, and a need to share the LEGO experience with my own in-house LEGO builder, one whom has not succumbed to the Dark Ages (the period of time when a person does not play with LEGO bricks, usually starting at age 13. Many do not recover from this period and never build with LEGO bricks again.). Contents: Acknowledgements; Back to School; I Need a Playroom; My First Con; Stealing from a Thief; Color Changes Everything; Brick Separation Anxiety; Pink Skulls; Everything a Princess Could Wish For; I Go On a Playdate; I Give My Wife a Beach House; The Stranger Side of Building; A Man and his Museum; It's Okay, I Work Here; Becoming a Brickmaster; Danish Rocky and a Real Star Wars Expert; A Guest in LEGO's House; Protectors of the Brand; Good Luck, Boys, That Thing is Heavy; Building Blind and the Dirty Brickster; Children Not Included; Kate the Builder; You Can Go Home Again; There is no "I" in LEGO; Miniland Dad; Epilogue; Index

The first half of *LEGO: A Love Story* is the author's reintroduction into the LEGO world; connecting with AFOL's, visiting LEGO conventions and museums, interviewing LEGO artists and master builders, and learning to build. It is a world not unlike others where adults gather around a common interest but

this one includes the author's own feeble attempts at building. Thankfully, Jonathan Bender is not a master builder, there is a lot of comedy to mine from his early attempts and, unbelievably, he includes pictures of his early builds. Bender may not be proud of his horse, but at least he has the humility to include a picture of it. It is a testament to would-be LEGO builders everywhere that, yes, there is someone worse than you. However, once you gaze upon it, you cannot help but go looking for your long forgotten LEGO bricks; after all, \*I\* can build better than that. I think that is what drives the early chapters of the book, Bender is recalling his own childhood, and through him, the reader is as well. The common element of most childhoods is the LEGO brick. The early chapters, while very good at moving the narrative along, seemed to lose focus on the overall message of a chapter; thoughts and anecdotes were inserted in apparently haphazard fashion. It is as if Bender did not want to leave any of his notes on the cutting room floor. However, that particular issue does not permeate the latter chapters. Tight editing and excellent insights result in a very enjoyable chronicle of one person's immersion into LEGO. While LEGO: A Love Story is, of course, focused on AFOL's, LEGO, and the building of a family, it is the interaction between LEGO and the AFOL's that provides valuable insight into any community outside of a corporation. Whether the community is involved in a particular software, hardware, car club, or whatever, it is fascinating to see how LEGO uses, ignores, promotes, and watches the fans of their product. This book had the desired effect on one reader; the need to build something using LEGO bricks. Also, there will be some summer trips involving a certain museum in Ohio and a LEGO convention. It cannot be helped - this book will reawaken the child in you. Disclosure: Obtained from: Bookstore Payment: Purchased

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