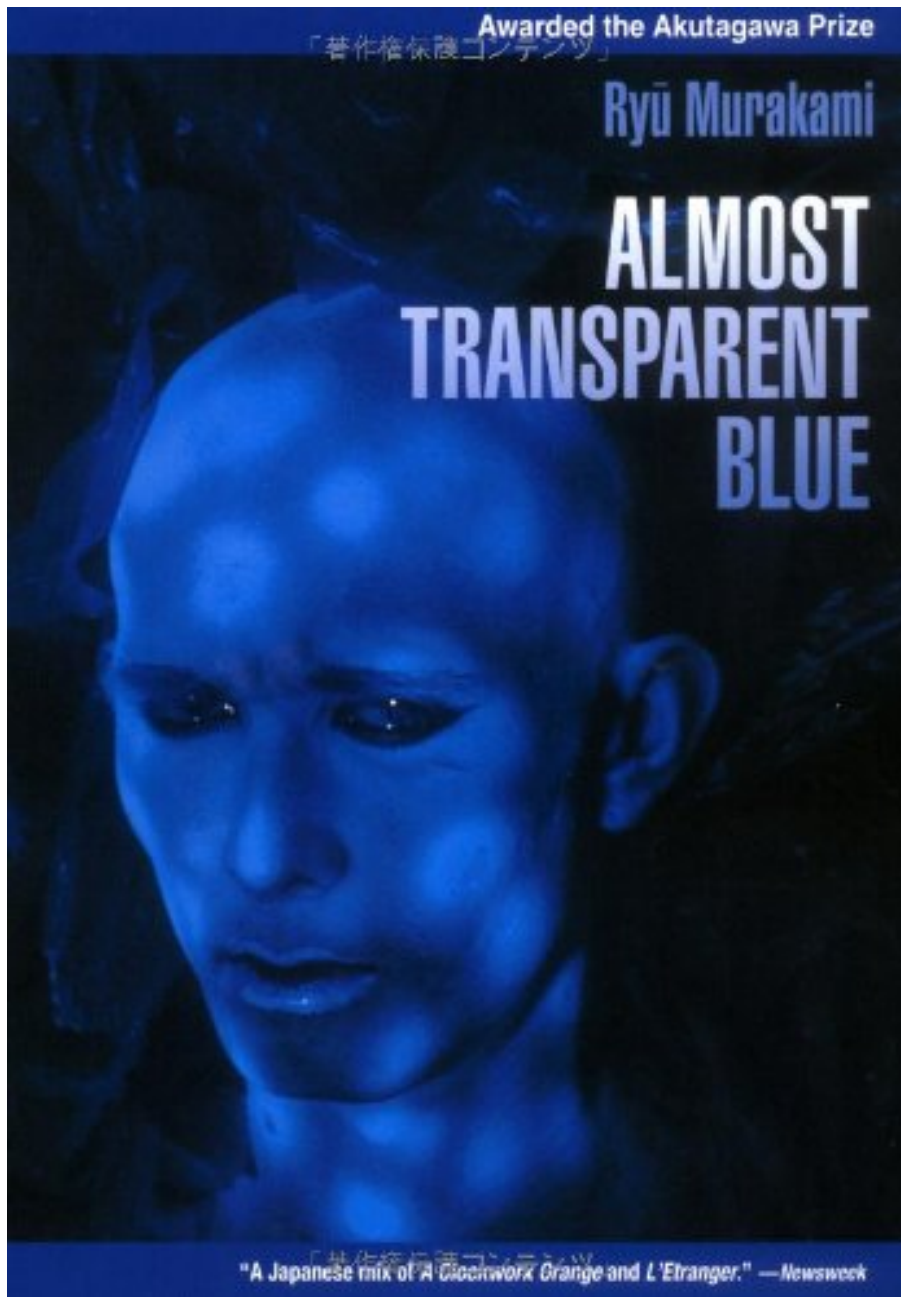


# ALMOST TRANSPARENT BLUE BY RYU MURAKAMI



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## Review

"A Japanese mix of *A Clockwork Orange* and *L'Etranger*."—Newsweek

"Bugs and mucus, cheesecake and semen, rain and runways—all lovingly described."  
—Washington Post

"Highly recommended for readers of the bizarre."—Antioch Review

"A violent book—sharply begun and slammed quickly to a finish."—Bestsellers

## Language Notes

Text: English, Japanese (translation)

## About the Author

RYU MURAKAMI was born in 1952. The only son of schoolteacher parents, he grew up in the port city of Sasebo in southwestern Japan. After graduating from a local high school, where he played the drums in a band called Coelacanth, he went to an art college in Tokyo. It was while studying there that he entered his first novel, *Almost Transparent Blue*, in a competition for new writers. Published in 1976, the book won a major literary award and sold over a million copies. Since then, he has worked for a publishing house, presented a weekly music and interview radio program, and hosted a TV talk show. His literary output includes two collections of stories *Run, Takahashi* (1985) and *Topaz* (1988), and the novel *Coin Locker Babies* (1980), which made its debut in English early in 1995. His roman a clef *69* appeared in English in 1993. He has also directed four movies based on his writing, causing a sensation at an Italian film festival when *Tokyo Decadence* was shown there in 1992. His latest film is set in the U.S. and Cuba.

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# ALMOST TRANSPARENT BLUE BY RYU MURAKAMI PDF

Almost Transparent Blue is a brutal tale of lost youth in a Japanese port town close to an American military base. Murakami's image-intensive narrative paints a portrait of a group of friends locked in a destructive cycle of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll. The novel is all but plotless, but the raw and often violent prose takes us on a rollercoaster ride through reality and hallucination, highs and lows, in which the characters and their experiences come vividly to life. Trapped in passivity, they gain neither passion nor pleasure from their adventures. Yet out of the alienation, boredom and underlying rage and grief emerges a strangely quiet and almost equally shocking beauty. Ryu Murakami's first novel, Almost Transparent Blue won the coveted Akutagawa literary prize and became an instant bestseller. Representing a sharp and conscious turning away from the introspective trend of postwar Japanese literature, it polarized critics and public alike and soon attracted international attention as an alternative view of modern Japan.

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- Dimensions: 5.20" h x .50" w x 7.40" l, .42 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 128 pages

## Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

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"But maybe we'd feel something after all..."

By Steven Reynolds

It's 1976, and a group of Japanese teenagers living near an American airforce base indulge their appetites for drugs, alcohol and bi-curious group sex. Like most sensual quests for liberation and vision, these only lead to the annihilation of consciousness and a confusing desire to escape back into bourgeois life. Getting high is one thing. Connecting with reality is something else. In 126 pages of orgiastic indulgence, drug-induced catatonia and suicide attempts, there are three moments of transcendence in which Murakami's case is made: the memory of a beautiful piece of music; the experience of almost being killed by an aircraft taking off; and the narrator's climactic desire to communicate a personal vision of the world, himself and their possible unity. Murakami's call for connection and creativity in the face of mortality and post-war nihilism is a familiar one in twentieth-century literature, but the way he goes about it is refreshing. Firmly realist in his approach, Murakami stays on the surface. Sticking with the physical details he refuses to burrow into the minds of most of these youths where he might have interpreted or psychoanalyzed their inner lives for us. Ironically, this works. Their own halting attempts at self-expression are so much more poignant, and so much more credible for being vague and incomplete. If the bulk of this narrative strikes you as tedious, pointless, repetitive and occasionally appalling, then Murakami has succeeded in capturing the reality of a life devoted to escapism. It's only in such a context that the moments of incipient self-awareness and transcendence can have such a powerful resonance for these characters, and for the reader.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Trippy

By C. E. Stevens

When *Almost Transparent Blue* came out in the late seventies, it was an important piece of literature and an important milestone in Japanese fiction. *Almost Transparent Blue* is not simply about drugs and sex; in fact the chilling but fascinating aspect of Murakami's writing style is how remarkably detached his protagonist is from the actions that he and the people around him are doing. This is a significant change from *Coin Locker Babies*, a book with similar themes, but much more proactive and passionate characters. This rift between what is real and surreal becomes more in focus as the story continues, and the book reaches its climax when the protagonist, in a self-induced semi-hallucinogenic state, realizes that the reality that exists in the surreal world (primary, the Bird's world) is much more real and urgent than the drugs and sex in the "real" world around him.

While this book is still relevant today, as there is still an unnamable but nevertheless constant pressure on the youth of Japan (and around the world), the context it exists in has changed quite a bit. Ryu's world is not quite the world of today, and *ATB* is beginning to show its age. Nevertheless, *Almost Transparent Blue* is a very enjoyable book, and by the end it becomes clear that it is a much deeper and mature book than first meets the eye.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Disturbing and beautiful!

By Kev

This book won the Akutagawa Award, changed modern Japanese literature, and is a favorite of Japanese college students (...or so I hear). This book makes *Requiem for a Dream* look like *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*. Seriously some of the descriptions get pretty intense, but nonetheless retain some sort of elegance. Murakami puts graphic scenes of sex and drug use next to scenes of quiet reflection (watching rain, childhood memories) to create a sense of youthful hopelessness. However, taken in the proper context, this book will leave you uplifted rather than depressed. One of my favorites.

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