



# The Pursuit of Cool

*Robb Skidmore*

Download now

Read Online ➞

# The Pursuit of Cool

*Robb Skidmore*

## **The Pursuit of Cool** Robb Skidmore

A novel that uniquely captures the 1980s, *The Pursuit of Cool* tells the story of Lance Rally and his turbulent college years. He faces pressure to live up to his super-achieving family and is fueled by grandiose ambition. He wants to become a success but is easily distracted and obsessed with pop culture. He also has a deeply romantic nature and though inept he is sincere and falls in love quickly. He discovers emotional complexities as relationships with a beautiful psych major and a feisty goth girl change him. Friendships with a punk rock actor and a subversive scholar challenge his world view. This coming-of-age journey is a funny and emotional ride through album covers, dance techniques, all-nighter revelations, and corporate internships gone bad. The story comes alive with music and movies which give Lance solace as he questions his beliefs and his heart gets crushed. He tries to capture that illusive quality, that magic of youth, the essence that is "cool."

## **Praise for The Pursuit of Cool:**

"With plenty of humor and a strong moral on the purpose of youth, *The Pursuit of Cool* is a strong pick for general fiction collections and those who want an original take on the college dynamic."

### **--Midwest Book Review**

"A skilled writer... A smart account of '80s college kids... the novel believably summons the '80s, complete with floppy disks, 9 1/2 Weeks on VHS and R.E.M. cassettes."

### **--Kirkus Indie Review**

"Skidmore has skillfully crafted a sympathetic protagonist whom readers root for... and the narration has an understated lyrical quality."

### **--Watch Me Bounce**

"An excellent job of taking a character and creating his time and place perfectly. A totally enjoyable flashback ride..."

### **--Dew on the Kudzu**

## **The Pursuit of Cool Details**

Date : Published April 16th 2012 by TMiK Press (first published February 21st 2012)

ISBN :

Author : Robb Skidmore

Format : Kindle Edition 410 pages

Genre : Fiction

 [Download The Pursuit of Cool ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Pursuit of Cool ...pdf](#)



**Download and Read Free Online The Pursuit of Cool Robb Skidmore**

---

# From Reader Review The Pursuit of Cool for online ebook

## Les Watts says

Great descriptions from Skidmore and you can really picture the whole life experience of Lance. I didn't particularly like him as a person but some of his pals were cool. Lance seemed to be a bit of a glass half empty sort of guy. Great chapter with Veronica though. Some places I laughed out loud. Great reference to Art, history, music and news which really put you in the time. There were some bands I don't know because I live in UK and remember another great bands of the time that didn't get a mention. However, a good story.

---

## Priscilla says

3.5 stars for this endearing coming-of-age story set in the 1980s at a fictional university outside Atlanta. Skidmore is confident storyteller who clearly cares about his protagonist, Lance, who is compelling and endearing in his confusion. Lance is an all around genuinely nice guy, a good kid. He's a dreamer. He loves to read. He loves movies. He can spend hours and hours listening to music. He's observant and slightly obsessive when it comes to going over situations (usually involving his girlfriend Lynn) in his head. He's constantly trying to figure out how to be. Recommended for anyone who has some connection to the 1980s, pop culture, or campus novels. You can read my full review here: <http://wp.me/pg3go-GE>

---

## Angela says

Everyone, including Lance, seems to have high expectations for his future but Lance seems to be unable to translate those expectations into actions. He struggles to fit in academically and socially. Ultimately his search to find his place in the universe through his friendships and romantic encounters is played out against a backdrop of 1980s pop culture references and changing musical scenes while academics and career prospects falter in the background.

I had a difficult time connecting with Lance. While I understood his lost feeling at entering college and sympathized with his difficulty finding his place in social situations, I did not understand his inability to move forward academically. He always seemed shocked by his low grades despite skipping class and failing to take notes. He was surprised when he looked at a calendar and realized exams were coming up and he had yet to crack open the textbook. Lance seemed to live with this dream that everything was somehow going to work out for him even though he put no effort into his future. I think Lynn, Lance's ex-girlfriend, sums it up when she says, "I realized something while listening to you. It is something I think I was grasping at when we were dating, but never quite realized. How to say this? It's... that you're nuts."

All of the characters in the book are well developed even as they seem iconic in nature. Lance is defined by and through his relationships with others, making the reader wonder if he had connected with other characters if the story would have taken an entirely different turn. Ultimately, Lance has 410 pages of collegiate life experiences to "find himself" yet he seems to know little more about where he is headed than he does at the beginning of the story.

(This review is based on the paperback version of this novel)

## Christine says

What a brilliant read. I was completely sucked into Lance Rally's world, wherein the Reagan-era college student struggles to determine what it is he really wants in life versus what a young man in the 1980's might be expected to want. I was reminded of *The Graduate* and *The Catcher in the Rye* as I read, although set in a different era with different expectations and challenges, and a far better soundtrack. The musical (and cultural) references in this novel felt like a guilty pleasure, as if I had commissioned a great talent to write a novel suited to me, and me alone. Robb Skidmore is a skilled writer and his characters are utterly unforgettable.

---

## Ashley says

*The Pursuit of Cool*, debut novel by Robb Skidmore, is that book that reminds you, perfectly, that everyone was as screwed up and off kilter as you were as a young adult. Set against a fabulous soundtrack from the 1980's, *The Pursuit of Cool* follows Lance Rally through his tumultuous college years.

From the book's summary, "Lance comes from a super-achieving family and is intent on being a big success. But he is also an inept, hopeless romantic, obsessed with pop culture, and prone to distraction. Friendships with a punk rocker and a subversive scholar challenge his worldview, and relationships with a beautiful psych major and a feisty goth girl change him. This coming-of-age journey is a funny and emotional ride through album covers, dance techniques, all-nighter revelations, and corporate internships gone bad. The story comes alive with music and movies which give Lance solace as he questions beliefs and his heart gets crushed. He tries to capture that illusive quality, that magic of youth, the essence that is "cool.""

Reading this book, I often felt I was spying on Lance, somehow privy to his innermost thoughts. Skidmore paints an awkward young man who just wants to fit in, whose bursts of confidence sometimes make him feel he is more than he actually is. At the same time, Lance is sympathetic, because he is everyone. He makes some bad decisions, he makes a fool of himself, he dreams big.

In fact, outside the excellent sonic backdrop Skidmore provides, Lance's big dreams were my favorite part of the book. There's a nostalgic quality to those dreams for anyone who's been to college. I remember thinking in university that we were definitely thinking the deep thoughts, changing the world in our late night study sessions; solving world crises over hash browns and grits after partying at fraternity court. And I remember the years before that, when I thought college would be deep thoughts and good parties and intellectual discussions all around. *The Pursuit of Cool* centers the reader right in that hopeful era of high expectations, and jaded reality.

I've mentioned it a couple of times, so I have to applaud Skidmore's use of music throughout the story. From the Clash to Joy Division, to Bauhaus, so much of the music I was too young to appreciate at the time but that I eventually discovered. It provides the perfect setting to Lance's experience, because if you've ever listened to these bands (and this is not an exhaustive list) you remember realizing how a song, a band, an album could indeed change your life.

At 410 pages, *The Pursuit of Cool* wasn't a fast read for me, but it was engrossing. I felt like I was on this journey with Lance, and I remember thinking "Wow! It was like this for everyone. I wasn't the only one struggling to find my niche." Because when you're that age, it seems like everyone has it easier than you-you're the only awkward one, pursuing the cool everyone else seems to have found effortlessly.

A great debut, and I can't wait to read more from Robb Skidmore.

---

### **Hilary (HilyBee) says**

A definite 1980s inspired novel, this novel will make you love the characters. Lance, a lovable college student who's trying to figure out what he wants to do in life, goes through college meeting people and living the typical college student life. He went to college with a \*study hard, work hard\* mentality and ended up with a different experience. He's such a lovable character! He reminds me of a mix between Ducky and Ryan from *Pretty in Pink*. The lovable male character who's kinda goofy and different, loved easily, intelligent, but has a depth that only a few people can truly see. I also enjoyed all of the supporting characters - LaCoss, Carson, Stephanie, Lance's parents... They were all great characters - very true to the 80s.

One of the best aspects of this novel is how Robb adapted the 1980s popular film feel into a moving, humorous, lovable novel that is still modern. It delicately balances the 1980s and the 2000s college life feel into one. I loved it!

I'm a fan of the 1980s films, but they aren't ones movies I typically watch over and over again until I'm going crazy. I can only see myself re-reading this book a couple more times. It has a familiar feel to it, because of the theme of a college kid trying to make his way through, but is still very different. I loved the different take on the college experience. Great book, and one I think is a great buy.

---

### **Christoph Fischer says**

"*The Pursuit of Cool*" by Robb Skidmore is great fun for anyone who grew up in the 80ies. Witty, thoughtful and with sharp observation Skidmore has written a story with great characters, a coming of age story, a campus story and about the spirit of the times. Very good.

---

### **Lauren says**

Very Entertaining, easy to get into. I loved the 80s theme and would definitely recommend this book to anyone who lived through the 80s. I loved the storyline and the characters as well! I will be looking forward to reading any other books by Robb Skidmore, because I loved this one!

---

### **Janet Cameron says**

If you grew up in the 80s, or even if you just remember your early twenties in college, this book brings it all

back. It's a great read for atmosphere and character. The characterisation of an impressionable young man trying to find his way in the world was exactly right. I knew someone like Lance in college; I think we all did. There doesn't seem to be a traditional plot in terms of rising action, cause and effect, climax and resolution, etc. Instead it plays like a series of episodes. But that appealed to me after a while, because it's what life actually feels like. My college years weren't one story, they were a lot of moments. I was sorry to say goodbye to these characters.

---

## Lee Libro says

Books come to me for review through many avenues, the most common of which are publishing house publicists, book tour companies and authors themselves. Occasionally, I pick up a book and decide to review it on my own. In the case of *The Pursuit of Cool* by Robb Skidmore, while I was working for him as his cover artist and interior formatter one peek into the story led me to read all 410 pages. Usually, this isn't the case with my formatting and book cover work. I just do my work, perhaps scanning through passages, but the design job at hand pre-empts me from doing a complete read.

Robb Skidmore's novel, *The Pursuit of Cool*, captured my attention by page 5 with his portrayal of youthful vulnerability in the form of his main character, Lance Rally, on his prom date. *The Pursuit of Cool* stirs up iconic images of the 1980s as we follow Lance Rally to college, but this is no ordinary pop-culture story. With an intensity of both feeling and wit, through the character of Lance Rally, Skidmore creates a vivid portrait of male coming of age in the 80s. The highs and lows of finding adult footing, becoming cool in the eyes of girls, his father, or of the world, are written viscerally to connect us with Lance Rally, even across the decades.

There's no question the 1980s provide the seasoning flavors of *The Pursuit of Cool*, complete with references to punk rock, moussed hair and the economic one-upmanship of a decade driven by yuppies. Indeed, the theme of the story pivots on that very pressure, for example, when Lance Rally falls in love with Lynn Van Oster, the most sought-after girl on campus. The balance to please or to be pleased is not just a battle of the sexes, but rather a matter of life choices and the pivotal theme of the book. The world of the 1980s may be the perfect setting for the unraveling of precepts through Lance's musical explorations and personal discoveries, but make no mistake, the story is not confined by the era.

As Rally confronts the thrilling and perilous business of negotiating relationships, sex and adulthood, the reader will clearly recognize aspects of their own awkward stages of youth or someone they know. We identify with Lance as he grows from innocent awkwardness to a more tempestuous awkwardness, first with the "it girl" on campus, Lynn van Oster and later with riskier trysts with the darker Veronica.

Skidmore's ability to portray male vulnerability through his main character is brilliant. Ultimately, *The Pursuit of Cool* captures the confusion of youth, its unfettered potential set up against the illustrious promises of the world of the 1980s. As we follow Lance on his collegiate journey to pursue cool, to be successful, or at the very least have a direction in life, the pursuit transforms. Lance's world pressurizes, eventually forcing him to the realization that uncertainty and the chaos that comes with it is not only OK, but liberating, and that is a message for all times.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who loves snappy writing, fully-fleshed characters blended with snapshots of pop 1980s culture. It will not only bring you back, but propel you forward. There's no doubt the 1980s influenced us all one way or another, but what we find in *The Pursuit of Cool* is that these influences

go deeper than just the style of a decade.

This page-turner has you “rallying” for Lance Rally. Admittedly, sometimes, he’s not such a likable character. At times he steers perilously close to the callous chauvinist you might have dated in college, but ultimately his story leads us to common ground, the ground of hope where opportunity lies in the unexpected, and where our futures unfurl in jagged half-truths instead of neat little packages delivered in the form of diplomas and referral letters.

---

## **Ronald Fischman says**

Ever need to revisit a time in your life that lives just out of the edge of imagination, in the haze of half-recalled images, song lyrics with ellipses at each end, and fragrances that blend together like the Tempera paint of out-of-control kindergarteners? You know the one – you are trying to tell the story to yourself and remember that it was more than the classes you cut, or job you lost, or the girl who dumped you? Several strategies come to mind, and fortunately for me, as a novelist and a book reviewer, most of them involve story-telling.

The Pursuit of Cool, a new novel by Robb Skidmore (TMIK Press, 2012), could be counted as a coming-of-age story about three kids who bond as suite mates as freshmen in college. By the same logic, you would call The Grapes of Wrath a travel journal. The place of the novel is AnyPrepTown, USA, but the time? It is SO ‘80’s, SO Reagan, SO age of greed, and SO tinged with the dissatisfaction that living a life dictated by what your image should be rather than who you are that it just might define the decade.

You remember the ‘80’s, right? Remember those big-hair rock-pop bands that MTV sold us? I thought so. But do you remember all the alt-music that came from bands with names like Siouxsie and the Banshees or the lyrical but almost painfully dark Bauhaus? No, I thought you might have forgotten them. I began the novel riding on memory lane, in that happy storytelling mode of “Oh, yeah, I remember where I was when I heard that.” At first, I found myself hating but envying the beach-bum gorgeous Ian Lacoss, identifying with the brilliant but socially maladroit Charles Boyd, and riding the narrative wave with the inner monologue of lead protagonist Lance Rally as they make their way through their first years of collegiate liberation from parental control. Soon, however, I was buried under the cultural references. I found that it was easier to read The Pursuit of Cool with my computer open, Goodsearch.com on one tab and Youtube on another, in order to do quick lookups. In fact, the book owns “cool:” defining it, bringing it into your eyes, ears, and even your nose, and piercing you with it if you allow.

The narrator hovers over Lance like a thought translator who has a point-of view only slightly more in-the-know than Lance himself. I am reminded of the role of Nick Calloway from The Great Gatsby. Nick’s “truth” about Gatsby changes – he asserts that Gatsby is a landed scion one moment and a self-made man in another – based on Calloway’s own evolving sense of reality. Lance asserts, through his narrator, an evolving sense of reality that shows a young man totally unprepared to confront a life that offers him his own independent choices. Through the first two-plus years of his college career, every interaction is about what his image is. This obsession with looking suave, sexy, caring, sympathetic, resilient – in a word, “cool” – is Lance’s way of confronting girls, friends, classes, alcohol, everything. Since his family gave him only one option of how to be in college – high GPA, Honors/Awards, Internships and all those other prerequisites to



the Top 10 MBA, it is not surprising that Lance is left to his own devices when his path veers off the Gordon Gekko indenture.

Weighing in at 410 pages, *The Pursuit of Cool* did get slow for me by around page 300, because this is not a plot-driven novel. In fact, by following the three boys becoming men and reacting to growing up with all things Reagan, the book is a long essay on the nature of “cool,” and whether such a thing is really attainable after all. For me, the essay was too long. I would have preferred to part with some of the exhaustive, encyclopedic cultural references in order to get to the point: how do the three characters deal with the disillusionment of trying to live someone else’s life? That having been said, Skidmore does a commendable job at underscoring the existential question of an important period of American history through the prism of the coming-of-age novel.

The author gave me a copy of the book in exchange for my unbiased review.

---

### **Kathy LaMee says**

This book takes me back! From the music to the clothes to the culture- this book completely took me back to the late 80's and my own college experience. While Skidmore's main character, Lance Rally, is a few years my senior, his college experiences and general outlook/ confusion on life as a young adult is easy to relate too. Skidmore is an excellent craftsman of vivid and realistic personalities. My biggest take away from this novel are the characters and the vibrant experiences he paints; you can literally taste the raw emotion.

The story itself follows Lance, a desperate and awkward man-boy intent on fitting in at school. He sets off for college, leaving behind his super high achieving family. Once there he experiences poor grades, horrific internships, and failed romances- as well as amazing late night conversations, fabulous music and mind-blowing drugs. For all of his failings and misguided adventures he learns life lessons and has moments of self discovery- which is what being a college student, or maybe just being a young twenty-something is all about.

My overall feeling was very 'Gatsby'. Lance gives me the impression of he himself feeling very much the interloper on this college life, and internships, he has manufactured for himself. He is caught between the expectations of others and his own self image and reality. The grandiose dreams of Lance and his friends took me right back to my own college days. Days when the world was right there waiting for you to either fix it or take it over. I agonized over watching Lance attempt to find the elusive 'cool'. Skidmore does an exceptional job of painting an accurate portrayal of the clumsiness and utter naivety we go through during this season of life. I enjoyed his debut novel, and will be on the lookout for future books. A copy of this book was provided by the author in exchange for an unbiased review.

---

### **Candi says**

This book kept me reading! It is a novel about a boy and I am not one, but I could really identify with all the main characters I met through his journey in those angst-ridden late-teen and early-20 years. I went through my very own "pursuit of cool" in the late 80's and early 90's so it was fun to reflect on the trends, styles and music of the time. Lance tells his own story and some of his fears and thought-processes are scarily familiar. He meets several characters who I remember from my own days - everyone else was always so cool! So I

know how Lance feels. I think most people will identify with him and see bits of themselves in him. I also experienced a little yearning/nostalgia for the "good old days" and a little bit of "boy if I knew then what I know now." Lance is a wonderfully flawed young man who I am fairly sure will turn out happy and successful but it was fun to meet him vulnerable and insecure in this novel. I really recommend this novel for anyone who enjoys a good character focused escape read.

---

## **Casee Marie says**

My full review on Literary Inklings

The Pursuit of Cool is a triumphant novel in author Robb Skidmore's depiction of the 1980s and its iconic musical scene as experienced through the bright eyes of a young man coming to understand himself. Skidmore pays impeccable attention to his writing skill, effortlessly crafting his engaging story through the language of truly expressive and vibrant prose. The era comes to life instantly from the book's opening scene at Lance's high school senior prom and the image holds steady, evolving as Lance's interest in pop culture evolves through the formative and life-changing college years. As Lance first experiences euphoria at the hands of a song from The Ramones so the reader feels the pull and the importance of music's meaning in the novel. Read more...

---

## **Karen Attaway says**

This is such a wonderful book and the best one I've read this year by far. I'm totally blown away by its 80's awesomeness. Complete with mohawks, blue eye shadow, parachute pants and big shoulder pads. The Pursuit of Cool is the essence of 80's cool with extremely intriguing & loveable characters you can't get out of your head.

It's very rare to find a book that will keep you up at night wondering what will happen next and this book does that and much more. The Pursuit of Cool is wonderful first novel by a top notch author. Highly recommended!

---