

## 2023-2024 BOOK SUMMARIES

**SEPTEMBER 19, 2023**

***Ordinary Grace*** by William Kent Krueger

From New York Times bestselling author William Kent Krueger, a brilliant new novel about a young man, a small town, and murder in the summer of 1961. "That was it. That was all of it. A grace so ordinary there was no reason at all to remember it. Yet I have never across the forty years since it was spoken forgotten a single word." New Bremen, Minnesota, 1961. The Twins were playing their debut season, ice-cold root beers were selling out at the soda counter of Halderson's Drugstore, and Hot Stuff comic books were a mainstay on every barbershop magazine rack. It was a time of innocence and hope for a country with a new, young president. But for thirteen-year-old Frank Drum it was a grim summer in which death visited frequently and assumed many forms. Accident. Nature. Suicide. Murder. Frank begins the season preoccupied with the concerns of any teenage boy, but when tragedy unexpectedly strikes his family--which includes his Methodist minister father; his passionate, artistic mother; Juilliard-bound older sister; and wise-beyond-his-years kid brother--he finds himself thrust into an adult world full of secrets, lies, adultery, and betrayal, suddenly called upon to demonstrate a maturity and gumption beyond his years. Told from Frank's perspective forty years after that fateful summer, *Ordinary Grace* is a brilliantly moving account of a boy standing at the door of his young manhood, trying to understand a world that seems to be falling apart around him. It is an unforgettable novel about discovering the terrible price of wisdom and the enduring grace of God.

**OCTOBER 17, 2023**

***The Innocent*** by David Baldacci

America's best hitman was hired to kill--but when a D.C. government operation goes horribly wrong, he must rescue a teenage runaway and investigate her parents' murders in this #1 New York Times bestselling thriller. It begins with a hit gone wrong. Robie is dispatched to eliminate a target unusually close to home in Washington, D.C. But something about this mission doesn't seem right to Robie, and he does the unthinkable. He refuses to pull the trigger. Now, Robie becomes a target himself and is on the run. Fleeing the scene, Robie crosses paths with a wayward teenage girl, a fourteen-year-old runaway from a foster home. But she isn't an ordinary runaway--her parents were murdered, and her own life is in danger. Against all of his professional habits, Robie rescues her and finds he can't walk away. He needs to help her. Even worse, the more Robie learns about the girl, the more he's convinced she is at the center of a vast cover-up, one that may explain her parents' deaths and stretch to unimaginable levels of power. Now, Robie may have to step out of the shadows in order to save this girl's life...and perhaps his own.

**NOVEMBER 21, 2023**

***The Story of Arthur Truluv*** by Elizabeth Berg

For the past six months, Arthur Moses's days have looked the same: He tends to his rose garden and to Gordon, his cat, then rides the bus to the cemetery to visit his beloved late wife for lunch. The last thing Arthur would imagine is for one unlikely encounter to utterly transform his life.

Eighteen-year-old Maddy Harris is an introspective girl who visits the cemetery to escape the other kids at school. One afternoon she joins Arthur—a gesture that begins a surprising friendship between two lonely souls. Moved by Arthur's kindness and devotion, Maddy gives him the nickname "Truluv." As Arthur's neighbor Lucille moves into their orbit, the unlikely trio band together and, through heartache and hardships, help one another rediscover their own potential to start anew.

Wonderfully written and full of profound observations about life, *The Story of Arthur Truluv* is a beautiful and moving novel of compassion in the face of loss, of the small acts that turn friends into family, and of the possibilities to achieve happiness at any age.

**JANUARY 16, 2024**

***Abide with Me*** by Elizabeth Strout

In the late 1950s, in a small New England town, Reverend Tyler Caskey has suffered a terrible loss and finds it hard to be the person he once was. He struggles to find the right words in his sermons and in his conversations with those facing crises of their own, and to bring his five-year-old daughter, Katherine, out of the silence she has observed in the wake of the family's tragedy. Tyler's usually patient and kind congregation now questions his leadership and propriety, and accusations are born out of anger and gossip. Then, in Tyler's darkest hour, a startling discovery will test his parish's humanity—and his own will to endure the trials that sooner or later test us all. Praise for *Abide With Me* "Strout's greatly anticipated second novel . . . is an answered prayer."--*Vanity Fair* "Deeply moving . . . In one beautiful page after another, Strout captures the mysterious combinations of hope and sorrow. She sees all these wounded people with heartbreaking clarity, but she has managed to write a story that cradles them in understanding and that, somehow, seems like a foretaste of salvation."--*The Washington Post* "Graceful and moving . . . The pacing of Strout's deeply felt fiction about the distance between parents and children gives her work an addictive quality."

**FEBRUARY 20, 2024**

***The Paris Architect*** by Charles Belfoure

An extraordinary book about a gifted architect who reluctantly begins a secret life of resistance, devising ingenious hiding places for Jews in World War II Paris.

In 1942 Paris, architect Lucien Bernard accepts a commission that will bring him a great deal of money—and maybe get him killed. All he has to do is design a secret hiding place for a Jewish man, a space so invisible that even the most determined German officer won't find it while World War II rages on. He sorely needs the money, and outwitting the Nazis who have occupied his beloved city is a challenge he can't resist.

Soon Lucien is hiding more souls and saving lives. But when one of his hideouts fails horribly, and the problem of where to conceal a Jew becomes much more personal, and he can no longer ignore what's at stake.

**MARCH 19, 2024**

***Evening Class*** by Maeve Binchy

It was the quiet ones you had to watch. That's where the real passion was lurking. They came together at Mountainview College, a down-at-the-heels secondary school on the seamy side of Dublin, to take a course in Italian. It was Latin teacher Aidan Dunne's last chance to revive a failing marriage and a dead-end career. But Aidan's dream was headed for disaster until the mysterious Signora appeared, transforming a shared passion for Italy into a life-altering adventure for them all . . . bank clerk Bill and his dizzy fiancée Lizzie: a couple headed for trouble . . . Kathy, a hardworking innocent propelled into adulthood in a shocking moment of truth . . . Connie, the gorgeous rich lady with a scandal ready to explode . . . glowering Lou, who joined the class as a cover for crime. And Signora, whose passionate past remained a secret as she changed all their lives forever. . . . From the New York Times bestselling author of *This Year It Will Be Different*, *The Glass Lake*, and *Circle of Friends*, comes a novel filled with Maeve Binchy's signature warmth, wit, and sheer storytelling genius--a spellbinding tale of men and women whose quiet lives hide the most unexpected things. . . .

**APRIL 16, 2024**

***The Possible World*** by Lierse O'Halloran Schwarz

A richly compelling and deeply moving novel that traces the converging lives of a young boy who witnesses a brutal murder, the doctor who tends to him, and an elderly woman guarding her long buried past.

It seems like just another night shift for Lucy, an overworked ER physician in Providence, Rhode Island, until six-year-old Ben is brought in as the sole survivor from a horrifying crime scene. He's traumatized and wordless; everything he knows has been taken from him in an afternoon. It's not clear what he saw, or what he remembers.

Lucy, who's grappling with a personal upheaval of her own, feels a profound, unexpected connection to the little boy. She wants to help him...but will recovering his memory heal him, or damage him further?

Across town, Clare will soon be turning one hundred years old. She has long believed that the lifetime of secrets she's been keeping don't matter to anyone anymore, but a surprising encounter makes her realize that the time has come to tell her story.

As Ben, Lucy, and Clare struggle to confront the events that shattered their lives, something stronger than fate is working to bring them together. (Continued)

An expertly stitched story that spans nearly a century—from the Great Depression through the Vietnam War era and into the present—*The Possible World* is a captivating novel about the complicated ways our pasts shape our identities, the power of maternal love, the loneliness born out of loss, and how timeless bonds can help us triumph over grief.