

DETAILED INFORMATION ON EACH OF THE GROUP B BOOKS

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B1 Type: Amateur sleuths: cozies, and/or traditional mysteries

The Murder of Mr. Wickham by [Claudia Gray](#), 2022 / MVLC: 23

Basics

- **Briefly:** In a whodunit set in Jane Austen's world of fiction, Mr. Wickham—one of literature’s most notorious villains—meets a sudden and suspicious end at a party on Emma's estate. Two young adult children of other Austen characters are the amateur sleuths.
- **Protagonists:** Jonathan Darcy and Juliet Tilney, young adult children imagined by Author Gray, whose parents appear as characters in the original Austen novels.
- **Setting:** In Donwell Abbey, County of Surrey as described in Jane Austen's Emma, but about 1825-30.
- **Context:** This is the first of, so far, two books in the Darcy and Tilney mystery series.
- **% of Amazon readers giving 5-star ratings:** 51%
- **Combined % of Amazon readers giving either 4 OR 5-star ratings:** 83%
- **Total all Amazon ratings this book:** 1,426

Long Form

“Had Jane Austen sat down to write a country house murder mystery, this is exactly the book she would have written.” —Alexander McCall Smith

The happily married Mr. Knightley and Emma are throwing a party at their country estate, bringing together distant relatives and new acquaintances—characters beloved by Jane Austen fans. Definitely not invited is Mr. Wickham, whose latest financial scheme has netted him an even broader array of enemies. As tempers flare and secrets are revealed, it’s clear that everyone would be happier if Mr. Wickham got his comeuppance. Yet they’re all shocked when Wickham turns up murdered—except, of course, for the killer hidden in their midst.

Nearly everyone at the house party is a suspect, so it falls to the party’s two youngest guests to solve the mystery: Juliet Tilney, the smart and resourceful daughter of Catherine and Henry, eager for adventure beyond Northanger Abbey; and Jonathan Darcy, the Darcys’ eldest son, whose adherence to propriety makes his father seem almost relaxed. In this tantalizing fusion of Austen and Christie, from New York Times bestselling author Claudia Gray, the unlikely pair must put aside their own poor first impressions and uncover the guilty party—before an innocent person is sentenced to hang.

“What a splendid conceit! ... Gray provides plenty of backstory and enough depth to her characters that even those who mix up their *Pride and Prejudice* with their *Sense and Sensibility* will delight in the Agatha Christie–style mystery.... There’s so much fun to be had in this reimagined Austen world—and the mystery is so strong—that one can only hope, dear reader, that more books will follow.” —Booklist (starred review)

Recommended by Leslie who read and enjoyed it.–Dick

No Awards for this Book from the 15 awarding groups as reported by [SYKM](#).

B2 Type: Amateur sleuths: cozies, and/or traditional mysteries**Clark and Division** by [Naomi Hirahara](#), 2021 / MVLC: 27

Basics

- **Briefly:** Aki Ito (F), just released from Japanese-American detainment at Manzanar, hopes to meet up with Rose, her older sister in Chicago. Instead, she learns, on arrival that Rose was killed by a subway train - a suicide. Aki does not accept that her sister would die that way and is determined to learn the truth.
- **Protagonist:** Aki Ito (F), young Japanese-American.
- **Setting:** Chicago, 1944 as WW2 fights toward the ending in '45.
- **Context:** This is Hirahara's first standalone. She has also written 11 other mysteries in 3 series.
- **% of Amazon readers giving 5-star ratings:** 40%
- **Combined % of Amazon readers giving either 4 OR 5-star ratings:** 74%
- **Total all Amazon ratings this book:** 1,547

Long Form

Twenty-year-old Aki Ito and her parents have just been released from Manzanar, where they have been detained by the US government since the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, together with thousands of other Japanese Americans. The life in California the Ito's were forced to leave behind is gone; instead, they are being resettled two thousand miles away in Chicago, where Aki's older sister, Rose, was sent months earlier and moved to the new Japanese American neighborhood near Clark and Division streets. But on the eve of the Ito family's reunion, Rose is killed by a subway train.

Aki, who worshipped her sister, is stunned. Officials are ruling Rose's death a suicide. Aki cannot believe her perfect, polished, and optimistic sister would end her life. Her instinct tells her there is much more to the story, and she knows she is the only person who could ever learn the truth.

"*Clark and Division* is a moving, eye-opening depiction of life after Manzanar. Naomi Hirahara has infused her mystery with a deep humanity, unearthing a piece of buried American history." —George Takei

"Part historical fiction, part thriller, all a deeply moving family story, set in 1944 Chicago against the backdrop of the shameful treatment of Japanese-Americans by the U.S. government. Hirahara's gifted writing is a master class in how to bring a historical epoch to life." —Sara Paretsky, bestselling author of the Chicago Detective V.I. Warshawski series

This is an Amateur sleuth, not a cop or paid investigator story. But I wouldn't call it a cozy -- not contrived like an Agatha or Kemelman story (and there is nothing wrong with either of those or I wouldn't have put the Rabbi book on the list). There is suspense in the book, but not like a thriller. It is more of a thoughtful, well researched, historical and traditional type of mystery. Like a literary mystery! I added it for variety under this "type." —Dick

Awards for this Book

- Bill Gottfried Memorial Lefty Award for Best Historical Mystery Novel
- Simon & Schuster Mary Higgins Clark Award
- Macavity Award for Best Historical Mystery Novel

B3 Type: Amateur sleuths: cozies, and/or traditional mysteries***Friday the Rabbi Slept Late*** by Harry Kemelman, 1964 / MVLC: 4 CWC: 40

Basics

- **Briefly:** Rabbi David Small is surprised when the local police chief informs him that the body of a young murdered woman was found in the grass, on the synagogue property. And the woman's purse was found in the Rabbi's car parked nearby!
- **Protagonist:** Rabbi David Small, near the end of his first year as Rabbi in a newly built synagogue.
- **Setting:** 1964, Barnard's Crossing (fictional, but definitely Essex County, perhaps Marblehead where the author lived), Massachusetts
- **Context:** This the first of 11 Rabbi Small cozy mysteries written between 1964 and 1996 (also the year the author died at age 88).
- **% of Amazon readers giving 5-star ratings:** 47%
- **Combined % of Amazon readers giving either 4 OR 5-star ratings:** 83%
- **Total all Amazon ratings this book:** 3,083

Long Form

Rabbi David Small, the new leader of Barnard's Crossing's Jewish community, can't even enjoy his Sabbath without things getting stirred up in a most unorthodox manner: It seems a young nanny has been found strangled, less than a hundred yards from the Temple's parking lot -- and all the evidence points to the Rabbi. Add to that the not-so-quiet rumblings of his disgruntled congregation, and you might say our inimitable hero needs a miracle from a Higher Source to save him....

"A new rabbi for Barard's Crossing has a bit of an issue. Rabbi David Small might be implicated in a mysterious murder, all this while his contract with the temple is up for renewal. A young nanny has been found strangled, with her handbag in the rabbi's car. Using his experience from arguing with his fellow students, the young rabbi comes to several conclusions helping the police pinpoint the murderer. ...

"I realize that the book was written almost 60 years ago, the society was different. The book could almost be a time capsule, especially the way husbands and wives talk to one another.

"I enjoyed the logic Rabbi Small used to solve this mystery. This, of course, will never fly in real life, but if I wanted that I'd look out my window instead of settling down with a book.

"The strength of this novel is the look into the cultural society of Jews in suburbia during the 1960s, and the characters' struggles with ethical, as well as religious issues throughout.

"One of my favorite characters was police chief Hugh Lanigan. Here we have an open-minded police officer, who is efficient and capable. I don't know why I was expecting a bumbling keystone cop but I'm glad I didn't get it.

"The book was enjoyable, even though it was a bit dated. I am not going to judge a 60 year old novel based on today's standards, it's simply a period piece for enjoyment." --An Amazon reader review

I have heard of this cozy series for years - an American Father Brown type of story. Looking into it during research for this list, I discovered that the setting was SE Essex County; Salem, Lynn, and Gloucester are mentioned in the book. The author lived in Marblehead. Apparently more than 7 million copies of the Rabbi Small books have been sold. Reading this book, a number of things about it have kept my interest: the puzzle,

the Rabbi's character, the locale- for sure, and the elements of Jewish American life, at least for some adherents. Also, at 208 pages, a quick read! –Dick

Awards for this Book

- 1965 Edgar Award for Best First Novel
- Finalist 1965 Gold Dagger Award [UK]

B4 Type: Amateur sleuths: cozies, and/or traditional mysteries

The Thursday Murder Club by [Richard Osman](#), 2020 / MVLC: 48

Basics

- **Briefly:** Four residents at a retirement home complex have formed a "murder club" that meets on Thursdays as a "recreational" activity group. They discuss some cold case files they got ahold of. There are unscrupulous real estate issues related to their retirement home that keep popping up - and then a murder. The retirees in the "club" do not agree with the steps the police take to solve the crime, so they decide to investigate on their own.
- **Protagonists:** The four members of the "murder club" led by Elizabeth Best (who may have worked for a British Intelligence service). They divide up tasks according to their talents and report back to one another.
- **Setting:** Contemporary Kent, England
- **Context:** This the 1st in a series of 3 books to date, featuring the retirees at an upscale retirement home who have formed the Thursday Murder Club.
- **% of Amazon readers giving 5-star ratings:** 53%
- **Combined % of Amazon readers giving either 4 OR 5-star ratings:** 83%
- **Total all Amazon ratings this book:** 132,000

Long Form

The Thursday Murder Club is a group of residents of Coopers Chase, one of the U.K.'s most attractive retirement communities set in rural Kent. They meet each week to discuss cold cases and come up with new avenues for investigation.

There is the exuberant Elizabeth Best, who hints of her background with British Intelligence, and who is able to talk herself into or out of any situation. Joyce Meadowcroft is a former nurse and has such a pleasant personality that one might underestimate her talents and abilities. She is the Dr. Watson of the group and chronicles their actions. "Big Red" Ron Ritchie is an infamous labor agitator and, when forceful speech is required, he's their man. Finally, there is former psychiatrist/therapist Ibrahim Arif, the stat geek of the Thursday Murder Club. Together they cultivate a reluctant ally in the local Police Department.

The owners of Coopers Chase, the unscrupulous Ian Ventam and his builder/junior partner Tony Curran, have acquired adjoining land and plan to build an addition to Coopers Chase. Just one problem – the location is a cemetery full of bodies of the nuns who previously lived on the property where Coopers Chase now sits. Permission has been granted to move the bodies, but the locals and residents are up in arms about it.

When a murder occurs, the Thursday Murder Club springs into action and inveigles their way into the police investigation. [Of course,] the four amateurs out-investigate the police at every turn.

The first half of the book often had me chuckling out loud with its subtle and not-so-subtle British humor. But things get serious in the second half, which is time for some brilliant detection by our lovely band of retirees.

10 Nominated books. Vote for no more than 5.

I'm so pleased that this first mystery is such a big hit. It is a perfect book to read anytime, but especially during a pandemic. It lifts the spirit with its ingenuity, wit and warm characters. The author is a famous TV celebrity in the U.K., but he's also a darned good writer....

Here's hoping we'll see more of this august group of amateur sleuths in follow-up traditional mysteries.

-- George Easter, editor of Deadly Pleasures

A New York Times bestseller - Soon to be a major motion picture from Steven Spielberg at Amblin Entertainment

"Witty, endearing and greatly entertaining." —Wall Street Journal

This book was on last year's ballot but didn't make it onto the final reading list. Since then, both Joan and Wendy have read the book and recommended it for our reading. Right. Now, you have another chance to read it! –Dick

Awards for this Book

- Finalist 2021 Anthony Award for Best First Novel
- Finalist 2021 Barry Award for Best Paperback Original
- Finalist 2021 Edgar Award for Best Mystery
- Finalist 2021 Lefty Award for Best Debut Mystery
- Finalist 2021 Macavity Award for Best First Mystery
- Finalist 2021 Thriller Award for Best Novel

B5 Type: Amateur sleuths: cozies, and/or traditional mysteries

The Maid by [Nita Prose](#), 2022 / MVLC: 128

Basics

- **Briefly:** A highly professional maid at a boutique hotel in New York City likes her work, but when a wealthy guest is murdered in his bed, and the police begin to suspect her of the murder, she must find a way to clear her name and get things back to normal. An unusually told, twisty tale.
- **Protagonist:** Molly Gray, is the hotel maid, and the likeable, neurodivergent narrator of the story.
- **Setting:** Contemporary New York City
- **Context:** This the author's first novel.
- **% of Amazon readers giving 5-star ratings:** 48%
- **Combined % of Amazon readers giving either 4 OR 5-star ratings:** 81%
- **Total all Amazon ratings this book:** 73,115

Long Form

Molly Gray is not like everyone else. She struggles with social skills and misreads the intentions of others. Her gran used to interpret the world for her, codifying it into simple rules that Molly could live by.

Since Gran died a few months ago, twenty-five-year-old Molly has been navigating life's complexities all by herself. No matter—she throws herself with gusto into her work as a hotel

maid. Her unique character, along with her obsessive love of cleaning and proper etiquette, make her an ideal fit for the job. She delights in donning her crisp uniform each morning,

stocking her cart with miniature soaps and bottles, and returning guest rooms at the Regency Grand Hotel to a state of perfection.

But Molly’s orderly life is upended the day she enters the suite of the infamous and wealthy Charles Black, only to find it in a state of disarray and Mr. Black himself dead in his bed. Before she knows what’s happening, Molly’s unusual demeanor has the police targeting her as their lead suspect. She quickly finds herself caught in a web of deception, one she has no idea how to untangle. Fortunately for Molly, friends she never knew she had unite with her in a search for clues to what really happened to Mr. Black—but will they be able to find the real killer before it’s too late?

A *Clue*-like, locked-room mystery and a heartwarming journey of the spirit, *The Maid* explores what it means to be the same as everyone else and yet entirely different—and reveals that all mysteries can be solved through connection to the human heart.

“A masterful, charming mystery that will touch your heart in ways you could never expect. The endearing, unforgettable Molly reminds us to challenge our assumptions about one another, and shows us how meaningful it is to feel truly seen in the world. More than a whodunnit, *The Maid* is layered—Prose makes us consider how far we’d go for the people we love, and what we owe ourselves above all else. This is the smart, quirky, uplifting read we need.” –Lis Jewell, New York Times bestselling author of *The Family Upstairs*

“It’s impossible not to love Molly, an endearing, eccentric hotel maid.... Like any cozy whodunit, clean appearances may in fact hide a few smudges. The twists and surprises keep coming until the very last page of this delightfully fresh debut.” –Louise Candlish, bestselling author of *The Other Passenger*.

I read this book a few months ago, because I chose to read all six of the "Finalist" books for the 2023 Barry Award Best Debut Novel, since I have the opportunity to vote for the winner. I have read 5 of the books, including this one. At the moment this strikes me as the best of the best entries. So I nominated this book for our group's list too. – Dick

Awards for this Book

- 2022 Ned Kelly Award for Best International Crime Novel
- Finalist 2023 Edgar Award for Best Mystery
- Finalist 2023 Barry Award for Best Debut Novel
- Finalist 2023 Anthony Award for Best First Novel
- Finalist 2023 Anthony Award for Best Hardcover

B6 Type: Humorous mysteries

Skinny Dip by Carl Hiaasen, 2004 / MVLC: 25+

Basics

- **Briefly:** Part serious commentary on environmental issues; part series of dark comedic incidents in Florida. A bumbling marine scientist hopes to get rich helping ruthless agribusiness tycoons; his wife finds out what he's up to, so he tries to murder her. She survives a push into the Atlantic and is now out to get him with the help of a former, down-on-his-luck cop.
- **Protagonist:** Mick Stranahan, former cop and current loner. He rescues a woman who was thrown off a cruise boat to die by her husband, Chaz. Chaz was up to no good, helping

- agribusiness tycoons in their illegal pollution activities. Mick and Chaz's "dead" wife will try to put a stop to it all.
- **Setting:** Florida
- **Context:** This the 1st of 15 standalone books, all humorous mysteries.
- **% of Amazon readers giving 5-star ratings:** 57%
- **Combined % of Amazon readers giving either 4 OR 5-star ratings:** 85%
- **Total all Amazon ratings this book:** 3,260

Long Form

Chaz Perrone might be the only marine scientist in the world who doesn't know which way the Gulf Stream runs. He might also be the only one who went into biology just to make a killing, and now he's found a way—doctoring water samples so that a ruthless agribusiness tycoon can continue illegally dumping fertilizer into the endangered Everglades.

When Chaz suspects that his wife, Joey, has figured out his scam, he pushes her overboard from a cruise liner into the night-dark Atlantic. Unfortunately for Chaz, his wife doesn't die in the fall.

Clinging blindly to a bale of Jamaican pot, Joey Perrone is plucked from the ocean by former cop and current loner Mick Stranahan. Instead of rushing to the police and reporting her husband's crime, Joey decides to stay dead and (with Mick's help) screw with Chaz until he screws himself.

As Joey haunts and taunts her homicidal husband, as Chaz's cold-blooded cohorts in pollution grow uneasy about his ineptitude and increasingly erratic behavior, as Mick Stranahan discovers that six failed marriages and years of island solitude haven't killed the reckless romantic in him, we're taken on a hilarious, full-throttle, pure Hiaasen ride through the warped politics and mayhem of the human environment, and the human heart.

Hiaasen's signature mix of hilariously over-the-top villains, lovable innocents, and righteous indignation at what mankind has done to his beloved Florida wilderness is all present in riotous abundance.... Hiaasen's books are so enjoyable it's always a sad moment when they end. — Publishers Weekly

Another delirious romp through the swamps of South Florida from the irrepressible Carl Hiaasen.... A corker, chock-full of belly laughs and blistering truths. —Booklist (starred review)

To me, a lot of the books that win awards for humorous mysteries remind me of sit coms -- not funny or even just fun. If you like this type of crime fiction, help me start a list for future consideration. This is the best I could offer without going back to Evanovich. —Dick

Awards for this Book

- Finalist 2005 Dagger Award

B7 Type: Literary Mystery

November Road by [Lou Berney](#), 2018 / MVLC: 27

Basics

- **Protagonist:** Frank Guidry, a loyal street lieutenant to New Orleans mob boss Carlos Marcello, is now on the run because he knows too much about the assassination of JFK.

10 Nominated books. Vote for no more than 5.

- **Briefly:** There is suspense as he is pursued by fellow gangsters, but surprising changes as he meets, assists, and becomes involved with a woman-in-need along the way.
- **Setting:** November 1963, on the road between Oklahoma and Las Vegas, and beyond.
- **Context:** This is one of two standalones by the author in addition to a three book series about a grand theft auto con man, now out of prison, trying to turn his life around. Berney likes the dilemma of the offender who is trying to do the right thing.
- **% of Amazon readers giving 5-star ratings:** 48%
- **Combined % of Amazon readers giving either 4 OR 5-star ratings:** 83%
- **Total all Amazon ratings this book:** 3,459

Long Form

Frank Guidry's luck has finally run out.

A loyal street lieutenant to New Orleans mob boss Carlos Marcello, Guidry has learned that everybody is expendable. But now it's his turn – he knows too much about the crime of the century: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Within hours of JFK's murder, everyone with ties to Marcello is turning up dead, and Guidry suspects he's next. With few good options, Guidry hits the road to Las Vegas, to see an old associate – a dangerous man who, maybe, hates Marcello enough to help Guidry vanish.

Guidry knows that the first rule of running is "don't stop," but when he sees a young housewife on the side of the road with a broken-down car, two little girls, and a dog in the back seat, he sees the perfect cover for his escape from the hit man on his trail. Posing as an insurance man, Guidry offers to help Charlotte reach her destination, California. If she accompanies him to Las Vegas, he can help her get a new car.

For her, it's more than a car – it's an escape. She's on the run too, from a stifling existence in small-town Oklahoma and a husband who's a hopeless drunk.

It's an American story: two strangers meet to share the open road west, a dream, a hope – and find each other on the way. Charlotte sees that Frank is open-minded and kind; he discovers that she's smart and witty. He learns that she's determined to give herself and her daughters a new life; she can't know that he's desperate to leave his old one behind.

Another rule: fugitives shouldn't fall in love, especially with each other. A road isn't just a road, it's a trail, and Guidry's ruthless and relentless hunter is closing in on him. But now Guidry doesn't just want to survive, he wants to really live, maybe for the first time.

Everyone's expendable, but now Guidry can't just throw away the woman and children he's come to love. And it might get them all killed!

This book, a literary mystery, won top awards in 2019, as you can see below. I have not read it, and I'm relying on the incredible awards. To me, it does look interesting and worth a chance. –Dick

Awards for this Book

- 2018 Hammett Prize
- 2019 Anthony Award for Best Novel
- 2019 Barry Award for Best Novel
- 2019 Lefty Award for Best Mystery
- 2019 Macavity Award for Best Mystery
- 2020 Steel Dagger Award
- Finalist 2019 Thriller Award for Best Novel
- Finalist 2020 Barry Award for Best Novel of the Decade
- Finalist 2020 Gold Dagger Award

B8 Type: Literary Mystery

The River We Remember by William Kent Krueger, Sep 2023 / MVLC: A LOT - TBD

Basics

- **Protagonist:** Sheriff Brody Dern, a WW2 hero, must solve the murder of Jimmy Quinn, a wealthy land owner found floating in the river.
- **Briefly:** But the case has stirred the passions and suspicions of many others in town, as well as anxieties that their own dark secrets might unravel during the investigation. Will there be resolution and healing?
- **Setting:** In 1958, in the fictional small town of Jewel, northwest of Minneapolis.
- **Context:** This is the third *standalone* Krueger has written. His first, *Ordinary Grace*, had one of the highest MBC average scores in the history of the group. Krueger is also the author of the 19 book series featuring Sheriff Cork O'Connor in northern Minnesota. We read Book #1 of that series, *Iron Lake*, last August ('22) which yielded a group average score of 90. These considerations all contributed to my nominating this literary mystery for next year. –Dick

Long Form

In 1958, a small Minnesota town is rocked by the murder of its most powerful citizen, pouring fresh fuel on old grievances in this dazzling standalone novel from the New York Times bestselling author of the “expansive, atmospheric American saga” (Entertainment Weekly) This Tender Land.

On Memorial Day, as the people of Jewel, Minnesota gather to remember and honor the sacrifice of so many sons in the wars of the past, the half-clothed body of wealthy landowner Jimmy Quinn is found floating in the Alabaster River, dead from a shotgun blast. Investigation of the murder falls to Sheriff Brody Dern, a highly decorated war hero who still carries the physical and emotional scars from his military service. Even before Dern has the results of the autopsy, vicious rumors begin to circulate that the killer must be Noah Bluestone, a Native American WWII veteran who has recently returned to Jewel with a Japanese wife. As suspicions and accusations mount and the town teeters on the edge of more violence, Dern struggles not only to find the truth of Quinn’s murder but also put to rest the demons from his own past.

Caught up in the torrent of anger that sweeps through Jewel are a war widow and her adolescent son, the intrepid publisher of the local newspaper, an aging deputy, and a crusading female lawyer, all of whom struggle with their own tragic histories and harbor secrets that Quinn’s death threatens to expose.

Both a complex, spellbinding mystery and a masterful portrait of midcentury American life from an author of novels “as big-hearted as they come” (Parade), ***The River We Remember*** is an unflinching look at the wounds left by the wars we fight abroad and at home, a moving exploration of the ways in which we seek to heal, and a testament to the enduring power of the stories we tell about the places we call home.

Awards for this Book? - TBD, probably a handful.

B9 Type: Literary Mystery***To Kill a Mockingbird*** by Harper Lee, 1960 / MVLC: many

Basics

- **Briefly:** The story is best known for Atticus Finch's defense of Tom Robinson, a poor black man, in a false charge of rape, and a stacked deck of prejudicial factors in the trial.
- **Protagonist:** Atticus Finch, one of the best know protagonists in all of American literature- also the narrator's father. He is the moral hero and model of integrity for many in the legal profession. As narrator, his daughter Jean Finch (Scout), is a secondary protagonist calling attention to issues of class, courage, compassion, and gender roles in the Deep South through minor characters and subplots.
- **Setting:** During three years (1933–35) of the Great Depression in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama.
- **Context:** This the main literary work of Harper Lee. It's sometimes classified as a Southern Gothic novel. But there is a crime in the story, so it is also "crime fiction." Because the novel also includes deep characterization and introduces ideas and themes that provoke discussion and even self-reflection, among other things, it certainly fits the "literary mystery" designation. At the same time there are many excellent courtroom scenes and the main character is an attorney, so that can indicate the book can also cohabit the legal drama "type."

Long Form

Scout Finch is a young girl growing up in a small Alabama town during the 1930s. Tensions mount in Maycomb, Alabama, as Scout's father, Atticus Finch, prepares to defend Tom Robinson, a Black man falsely accused of raping a white woman. Then during the trial, Atticus mounts a compelling defense for Tom and accuses Bob Ewell, the father of Tom's accuser, of domestic abuse. Though his children are deeply shaken by the outcome of the trial and the events that follow, Atticus urges them not to lose their empathy and their faith in others.

The story itself is a vehicle for illustrating social issues like racial and other prejudice, moral complexity, and the loss of childhood innocence.

Ashamed to say, I have never read it (I've seen the movie!). Somehow I remember a small group in my sophomore English class reading it, but I was not among them. Most of you have probably read it as a teenager, unless you are older than me. Is this a book you'd like to revisit as an adult to see what you think of it now? Discuss as an adult?

–Dick

Awards for this Book

- 98 weeks on the NY Times best seller list
- Pulitzer Prize
- and many more

B10 Type: Literary Mystery***What Comes After*** by [Joanne Tompkins](#), 2021 / MVLC: 33

Basics

- **Protagonist:** There are two, Isaac and Lorrie, both living as neighbors along the coast, each having had to deal with the violent death of a son; one was murdered by the other who then killed himself.
- **Briefly:** After violent crimes, how do people "move on"? What comes after?
- **Setting:** Contemporary coastal area of Washington State.
- **Context:** This is the author's first book, a standalone literary crime fiction novel.
- **% of Amazon readers giving 5-star ratings:** 46%
- **Combined % of Amazon readers giving either 4 OR 5-star ratings:** 79%
- **Total all Amazon ratings this book:** 2,171

Long Form

After the shocking death of two teenage boys tears apart a community in the Pacific Northwest, a mysterious pregnant girl emerges out of the woods and into the lives of those same boys' families—a moving and hopeful novel about forgiveness and human connection.

In misty, coastal Washington State, Isaac lives alone with his dog, grieving the recent death of his teenage son, Daniel. Next door, Lorrie, a working single mother, struggles with a heinous act committed by her own teenage son. Separated by only a silvery stretch of trees, the two parents are emotionally stranded, isolated by their great losses—until an unfamiliar sixteen-year-old girl shows up, bridges the gap, and changes everything.

Evangeline's arrival at first feels like a blessing, but she is also clearly hiding something. When Isaac, who has retreated into his Quaker faith, isn't equipped to handle her alone, Lorrie forges her own relationship with the girl. Soon all three characters are forced to examine what really happened in their overlapping pasts, and what it all possibly means for a shared future.

With a propulsive mystery at its core, *What Comes After* offers an unforgettable story of loss and anger, but also of kindness and hope, courage and forgiveness. It is a deeply moving account of strangers and friends not only helping each other forward after tragedy but inspiring a new kind of family.

"Nail-biting wallop of a debut ... a thoughtful, unexpectedly optimistic tale." –The NY Times

"I thoroughly enjoyed it--good writing, good character development with themes of abandonment, redemption, kindness, soul searching and creating a new family from tragedy. [It's a literary mystery where] it's all about character development unfurling with the mystery being secondary. It would make for a good discussion about the characters and their motivations, [even though] the mystery is given away about 3/4 of the way through the book. It is not the traditional type of book we do, but ... overall, I'd say it's a good book." –Leslie

Suggested as a popular "literary mystery" by Maddy, read by Leslie who found it to be a worthwhile read (see her comments above), that's how it got onto the nomination list. –Dick

Awards for this Book

- Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Fiction 2022 - Finalist
- Washington State Book Award for Fiction 2022 - Finalist
- Edgar Award, Best First Novel by an American Author 2022 - Finalist