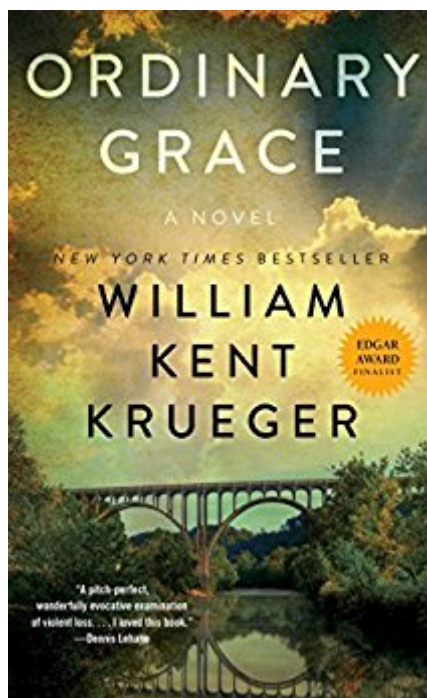


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Ordinary Grace: A Novel



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERWINNER OF THE 2014 EDGAR AWARD FOR BEST NOVELWINNER OF THE 2014 DILYS AWARD A SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL BEST BOOK OF 2013

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.

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Customer Reviews

Ordinary Grace is a novel that tells the story of a young boy, Frank Drum, who is coming-of-age in 1961. During the summer of '61, Frank and his younger brother, Jake, learned the hard truths about death in various forms: accidental, natural, suicide, and murder. Frank was 13 years old during this time and the story is told from his point of view. Yes, the book is written in first person (you all know how I feel about that) and it worked. The way the author, William Kent Krueger, wrote the story made you feel as if you were sitting in your living room having a conversation with Frank about his summer. The author wrote with wonderful imagery throughout the novel and the reader felt as if he was right there feeling the breeze on their face or smelling the river. The story keeps the reader engaged with Frank and Jake's antics that wound up placing them in precarious positions and involving them knee deep in the active investigations. Frank's father, Nathan, is a preacher, and throughout the novel the reader learns about what ordinary grace is from the way he handles every situation, no matter how bad, in life to how he drew strength from his faith in God. The characters in the story are well developed and have unique personalities that are relatable. From past loves to current loves to love lost, each person in the book handle each situation differently. Some shut down, others got angry, and some just crumbled under the loss and fear. From cover to cover, the reader will want to keep on this journey no matter how heart-wrenching it may be. William Kent Krueger wrote the novel so that no one can really figure out the mystery of who-dun-it until the very end.

This is a story to which everyone of a "certain age" can easily relate. The story has a beautiful simplicity that reflects the earlier time it so accurately depicts. It is filled with the genuine, often flawed, characters that inhabit most small towns and whisks the reader back to a time when a real treat was attending a 10 cent movie or enjoying a cold drink or a chocolate sundae at the corner drug store. It is now 40 years after the fateful summer of 1961 and Frank Drum, son of a Methodist minister, is taking a retrospective look at that time in the small Minnesota town where he and his brother Jake experienced the events that have defined the men they have become. Ordinary Grace, is an extraordinary coming-of-age novel that is at times reminiscent of Stephen King's THE BODY

(or if you are a movie buff rather than a reader, the movie STAND BY ME) and Harper Lee's TO KILL A MOCKING BIRD as it documents the strength of a father, the depth of friendship and the horrors of misfortune while capturing small town life and the profound and enduring bonds of sibling love. Krueger has a talent for drawing the reader in with the beautiful word pictures he paints and captures the deeply layered aspects of every situation without making them convoluted. His writing is simple without being simplistic, poignant and expressive without being maudlin, and manages to be touching and inspiring without resorting to lecturing and moralizing. Beautifully imagined, William Kent Krueger has infused his narrative with an aura that, while not overtly religious, does serve to remind us that we are never alone and that time will indeed serve to heal those devastating events that may alter the course of our lives and ultimately help us grow in wisdom and shape lives that are filled with ORDINARY GRACE. While this story is straightforward and uncomplicated it carries a message and an energy that rings true presenting the reader with things to ponder while providing moments of introspection that remain long after closing the cover on the final chapter. This is one of those books to savor again and again.

Frank was certain he knew what happened and who was responsible until he found out he was wrong... more than once. Don't we all do that sometimes? The people in this story see the events from different points of view. And many assume a possible truth is an absolute. The behaviors of the various individuals are not unusual; we can observe them around us if we pay attention. As I read this book, I recognized how easily we too often can make decisions and act with incomplete and possibly inaccurate information. Hopefully, I will learn to be more careful in my decisions and actions after recognizing what happened to these individuals. Learning through observations can be less stressful than learning through experience. I recommend this story to gain that wisdom.

I've read several books by this author, but I think this by far my favorite. It is a stand alone, while many of his other books are part of a series. The story is told in the first person by the oldest son of a small town preacher. There are several deaths in town over a short period of time. Some hit at the heart of the family, while others seem unrelated. The story follows the family as they search for the ordinary grace to see them through. It is one of the most touching books I've read in a long time.

Page turning and exhilarating, Krueger takes the reader through the stages of one of life's journeys -death. We cannot run away or hide. However, this book gives us a glimpse of how families cope while entertaining us with a great story line.

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