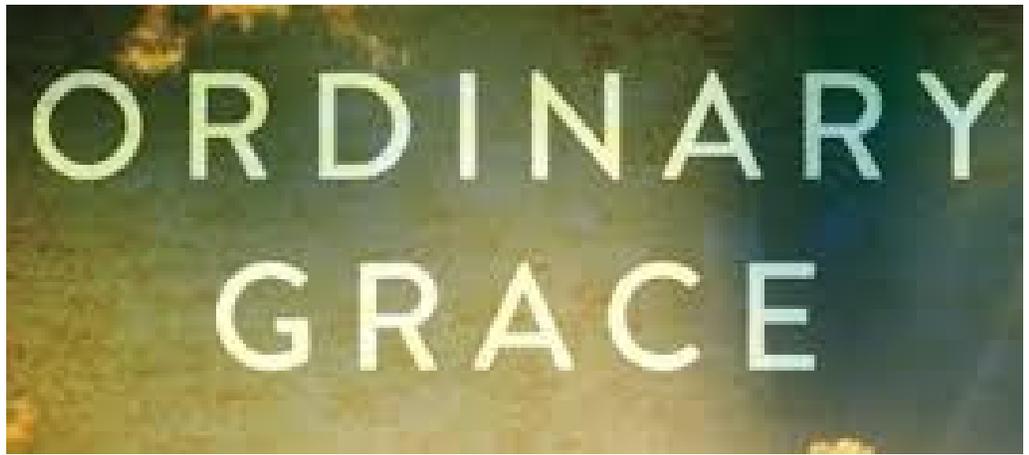


Book Club Kits!



About the Author:

William Kent Krueger is an American author and crime writer, best known for his Cork O'Connor series of books, ending with *Tamarack County* in 2013. The series is set mainly in Minnesota, USA. In 2005 and 2006, he won back-to-back Anthony Awards for best novel. Only one other author has done this since the award's inception in 1986.

Krueger has said that he wanted to be a writer from the third grade, when his story "The Walking Dictionary" was praised by his teacher and parents.

He attended Stanford University but his academic path was cut short when he came into conflict with the university's administration during student protests of spring 1970. Throughout his early life, he supported himself by logging timber, digging ditches, working in construction, and being published as a freelance journalist. He never stopped writing.

He wrote short stories and sketches for many years, but it was not until the age of 40 that he finished the manuscript of his first novel, *Iron Lake*. It won the Anthony Award for Best First Novel, the Barry Award for Best First Novel, the Minnesota Book Award, and the Loft-McKnight Fiction Award.

In 2013 he published his first stand-alone novel *Ordinary Grace*, referred to by *Publishers Weekly* as "elegiac, evocative....a resonant tale of fury, guilt, and redemption."

He lives with family in St. Paul, Minnesota.

<http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/9228-ordinary-grace-krueger?start=1>



Inside the kit:

- (8) book copies
- (1) book club guide

About the Book:

From Goodreads:

"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.

Suggested Reads:

Crandall, Susan
Whistling Past the Graveyard

Doig, Ivan
Last Bus to Wisdom

Slouka, Mark
Brewster

1. Talk about the characters, starting with Ruth and Nathan Drum, the narrator's mother and father. How would you describe them and, especially, their marriage?
2. What do you think of Emil Brandt and his sister?
3. How would you describe Gus? What is the bond between Gus and Nathan based on? What do you think was the event during the war that the two refer to obliquely as they sit together in the darkened church.
4. Discuss, in particular, Nathan's sermon after Ariel's death? What are its theological implications? Does Nathan answer the question of theodicy: if God is loving and all powerful, why do bad things happen to good people?
5. What prompts Frank, after his father's sermon, to go to Jake and tell him, "You're my best friend in the whole world. You always have been and you always will be"?
6. Why is Ruth so angry with Nathan after Ariel disappears? How would you respond to such a horrific loss: would you respond as Ruth does, in anger? Or would you be more like Nathan?
7. How would you define grace? What, specifically, does "ordinary grace" refer to in the story, and what is the larger religious significance of the term "ordinary grace"? Why is the grace spoken by Jake so extraordinary...and how does it affect members of his family?
8. Whom did you first suspect...and when did you begin to suspect the real killer? What "red herrings" (false clues) does the author put in the way to lead readers down the wrong path?
9. Much of the book has to do with young Frank's attempt to separate what he thinks he knows from what might (or might not) be the ultimate truth. Have you even been in a position of "knowing" something with certainty...and then learning that your judgment was wrong? How can we guard ourselves against false accusations?
10. What does Warren Redstone mean when he says to Frank, "You've just killed me, white boy"? Why does Frank let Redstone escape? Even Jake tells us...

How could I possibly explain my silence, my complicity in his escape, things I didn't really understand myself? My heart had simply directed me in a way my head couldn't wrap its thinking around....

Was Jake wrong to let Redstone get away? Should he have kept silent?
11. Talk about Karl Brandt and how he dies—an accident...or intentional?
12. What do you think happened to Bobby Cole? Why might the author have left that mystery unresolved?