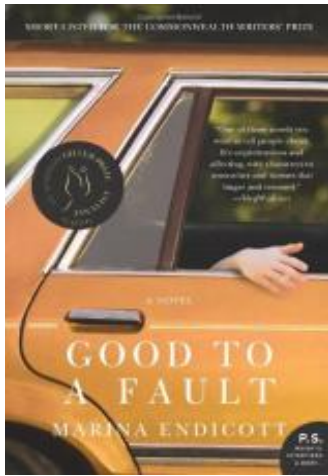


Good to a Fault

by Marina Endicott



About the Book

Shortlisted for Canada's prestigious Giller Prize, this "profoundly humane novel" (*Vancouver Sun*), wrings suspense and humor out of the everyday choices we make, revealing the delicate balance between sacrifice and self-interest, doing good and being good.

Clara Purdy is at a crossroads. At 43, she is divorced, living in her late parents' house, and near-ing her twentieth year as a claims adjuster at a local insurance firm. Driving to the bank during her lunch hour, she crashes into a sharp left turn, taking the Gage family in the other car with her. When bruises on the mother, Lorraine, prove to be late-stage cancer, Clara decides to do the right thing. She moves Lorraine's three children and their terrible grandmother into her own house --- and then has to cope with the consequences of practical goodness: exhaustion, fury, hilarity, and unexpected love.

What, exactly, does it mean to be good? What do we owe each other in this life, and what do we deserve? **Good to a Fault** is an ultimately joyful book that digs deep, with leavening humor, into questions of morality, class, and social responsibility. Marina Endicott looks at life and death through the compassionate, humane lens of a born novelist: being good, being at fault, and finding some balance in between.

Discussion Guide

1. *None of the words in church made sense to her. The Creed --- what part of that could she say she believed? Resurrection of the body, life everlasting, not those? She thought of her mother and father falling to shreds in their graves, and then, sharply, of Lorraine.?*

Throughout **Good to a Fault**, there seems to be a tension between faith, or religious sensibility, and the more institutionalized religion of church ritual and scripture. Do you think the novel moves towards reconciliation between the

two? How do you think attitudes toward faith and religion have changed in the twenty-first century?

2. Good to a Fault is told from a number of very different points of view. What is the effect of telling the story from a range of perspectives rather than from a single point of view?

3. Aside from a literal collision, what does the collision between Clary's car and the Dart represent? What differences are immediately apparent between Clary and the Gages?

4. What does Dolly get out of her wanderings throughout the neighborhood? What do books (whether stolen or bought) and reading offer her?

5. As time passes, Clary is alternately "worn out with all this eventful life" and increasingly dedicated to taking care of the Gage children. What is Clary's motivation in keeping the children? How does that motivation change or develop throughout the book?

6. What is Clary's initial reaction when Lorraine unexpectedly recovers? Why does Lorraine cut Clary out of the equation so suddenly?

7. Good to a Fault is peppered with quotations from poets --- Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dylan Thomas, in particular, figure prominently. How does their inclusion in the narrative enhance the book?

8. How do you define the concept of home? How has **Good to a Fault** altered that concept?

Author Bio

Marina Endicott worked as an actor and director before moving to London, England, where she began to write fiction. She now makes her home in Alberta. Her second novel, **Good to a Fault**, was nominated for the Giller Prize and won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best Book Award for Canada and the Caribbean.

Critical Praise

"A brilliantly balanced and engrossing work about illness, charity, and the very tenuous nature of goodness. Fans of contemporary fiction exploring the dangers of complacency and how domestic upheaval can lead to personal growth will enjoy; think Anne Tyler, Elizabeth Berg, and Anita Shreve. Highly recommended for all fiction collections."

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Publication Date: March 8, 2011

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial

ISBN-10: 0061825905

ISBN-13: 9780061825903