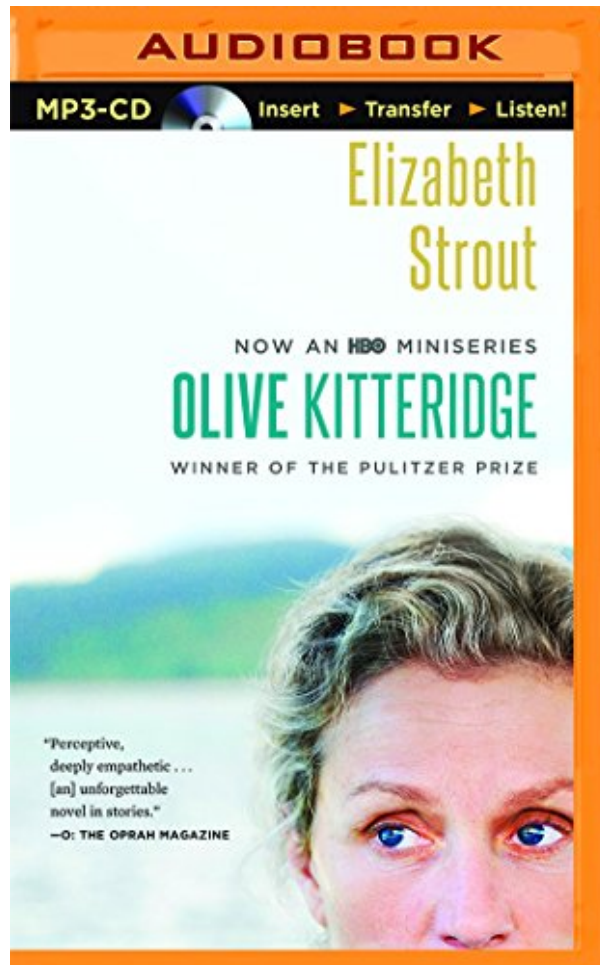


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Review

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OLIVE KITTERIDGE BY ELIZABETH STROUT PDF

2009 Pulitzer Prize Winner in the Letters, Drama and Music category
Now an Emmy-Nominated HBO Miniseries

At the edge of the continent, Crosby, Maine, may seem like nowhere, but seen through this brilliant writer's eyes, it's in essence the whole world, and the lives that are lived there are filled with all of the grand human drama—desire, despair, jealousy, hope, and love.

At times stern, at other times patient, at times perceptive, at other times in sad denial, Olive Kitteridge, a retired schoolteacher, deplores the changes in her little town and in the world at large, but she doesn't always recognize the changes in those around her: a lounge musician haunted by a past romance; a former student who has lost the will to live; Olive's own adult child, who feels tyrannized by her irrational sensitivities; and her husband, Henry, who finds his loyalty to his marriage both a blessing and a curse.

As the townspeople grapple with their problems, mild and dire, Olive is brought to a deeper understanding of herself and her life—sometimes painfully, but always with ruthless honesty. Olive Kitteridge offers profound insights into the human condition—its conflicts, its tragedies and joys, and the endurance it requires.

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- Formats: Audiobook, MP3 Audio, Unabridged
- Original language: English
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- Dimensions: 6.75" h x .50" w x 5.25" l, .18 pounds
- Running time: 10 Hours
- Binding: MP3 CD

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Snapshots of a Complex Woman

By Linda J. Sexauer

I am not normally a fan of short stories. While I appreciate the technical abilities of the short story writer, I find "shortness" troublesome. Generally, the longer a book is, the more appealing. Consequently, I was initially leery of the descriptions of Elizabeth Strout's newest novel, "Olive Kitteridge," which calls itself "a novel in stories."

All of the stories in this book occur in the town of Crosby, Maine. At the center of many of the book's stories is the person, Olive Kitteridge, a retired teacher. In the stories that don't feature Olive, her name may appear only once in an effort to tie it to the larger work. That the stories center on one town, and a limited number of that town's inhabitants, who also reappear from time to time, I did not encounter my usual problems with short stories. This book gently reminded me of what is best about short-stories: a brief slice of a life, a snapshot that tells a complete-enough story. In having all these stories bound together, one feels a bit like the proverbial "fly on the wall"; a fly who may spend most of, but certainly not all, it's time in one particularly interesting home (Olive's).

I especially enjoyed reading about Olive in her post-retirement years, the ways in which she deals with other people and herself. In many ways, I can identify with Olive, having doled out bits of malice in angering situations; or having been soft and tender-hearted during others. Like Olive, I too have been both fool and sage.

I really enjoyed "Olive Kitteridge." Olive is a complex person vacillating between viciousness and compassion. In the way all people are puzzles, so is Olive. In one story she does something deplorable, in another she potentially saves a life. People can never be fully known, merely experienced in bits and pieces, from which a general portrait may be formed. This book is a testament to the mystery that is humanity: why we do what we do, what motivates us, how even self-knowledge is warped and lacking, and how ultimately, all people are fundamentally incapable of seeing themselves as a whole. Olive also embodies hope: one is never too old for surprises.

Many of the "stories" in "Olive Kitteridge" are deeply profound and thought provoking. I will not be at all surprised when this book does very well. It's structure is unusual; it's message is penetrating and accessible and universal. Olive causes me to think of the many complex, and at times unlikeable, people in my own life in a different way. Strout is a master of revealing the many onion-like layers of interpersonal relationships. Halfway through "Olive Kitteridge" I went out and bought two of her other books. I am also tentatively considering reading some other short-story collections by authors whose novels I've loved.

Like any great book, "Olive Kitteridge" slightly shifts the way in which I look at the world and other people, and perhaps most importantly, myself.

331 of 356 people found the following review helpful.

My Heart Aches

By Brett Benner

These stories of small town life in Maine linked through one woman, Olive Kitteridge are so emotionally honest and resonated so deeply, I felt literally fragile after I finished. I bought the book knowing nothing about it besides the fact the stories were linked, based merely on how much I had loved her previous novel, 'Abide With Me'. I liked this even more. I adored the character of Olive so much, and could almost see her in front of me when she opened her mouth to speak. Strout is an exceptionally writer who mines human emotion for literary gold. Highly, highly recommended.

410 of 452 people found the following review helpful.

I've read all 3 Elizabeth Strout novels

By MystinaMarie

Having read all three Elizabeth Strout novels, I'd place Olive Kitteridge behind the other two. Do not get me wrong, Strout is still an exceptional writer, weaving you into each chapter and describing things beautifully.

You know that feeling when you're just starting a book? Getting acquainted with the characters? Trying to remember their names, their personalities, what they look like and the surroundings are just coming into focus? This entire book has that feeling because essentially each chapter is a different story. With the exception of Olive, you never hear about a character beyond one chapter. It's as if twenty books were collected, a chapter ripped from each, and placed in this single book. You're introduced, learn the character and are drawn to their story and then it's onto somebody else, never to return and find any conclusions.

I just did not like the separation between story lines. True, this is meant to be a small town collaboration, with Olive as the center character, but sometimes it was a stretch. One particular chapter only mentions Olive once, in a fragment of a sentence that just mentions Olive was the character's teacher in school. Sometimes it just didn't seem the connection was enough to warrant that particular character's inclusion of the story of Olive and ended up being more of a distraction than an addition.

There are also a lot of overlapping details and re-telling of facts. Each person knows Olive, so you hear numerous times her description and certain facts in her life, concerning her marriage or her son. At the end you are very connected to Olive and it is a wonderful character and story. I just have difficulty with the way

it is told, through the many unconnected characters you never re-visit with and the stark division in each chapter with no real flow or explanation in the jumps.

I do love Elizabeth Strout and her novels are very heart-felt and beautifully written. I am still a fan and will continue to read her future works. I just place this at the bottom of the three read so far. I'm glad I read it, but also glad that it was a library check-out and I didn't spend the \$25 because it's not a book I think I'd re-read often.

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