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11-22-63: A Novel

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Synopsis

On November 22, 1963, three shots rang out in Dallas, President Kennedy died, and the world changed. What if you could change it back? In this brilliantly conceived tour de force, Stephen King - who has absorbed the social, political, and popular culture of his generation more imaginatively and thoroughly than any other writer - takes listeners on an incredible journey into the past and the possibility of altering it. It begins with Jake Epping, a 35-year-old English teacher in Lisbon Falls, Maine, who makes extra money teaching GED classes. He asks his students to write about an event that changed their lives, and one essay blows him away: a gruesome, harrowing story about the night more than 50 years ago when Harry Dunning’s father came home and killed his mother, his sister, and his brother with a sledgehammer. Reading the essay is a watershed moment for Jake, his life - like Harry’s, like America’s in 1963 - turning on a dime. Not much later his friend Al, who owns the local diner, divulges a secret: his storeroom is a portal to the past, a particular day in 1958. And Al enlists Jake to take over the mission that has become his obsession - to prevent the Kennedy assassination. So begins Jake’s new life as George Amberson, in a different world - of Ike and JFK and Elvis, of big American cars and sock hops and cigarette smoke everywhere. From the dank little city of Derry, Maine (where there’s Dunning business to conduct), to the warmhearted small town of Jodie, Texas, where Jake falls dangerously in love, every turn is leading, eventually of course, to a troubled loner named Lee Harvey Oswald and to Dallas, where the past becomes heart-stoppingly suspenseful - and where history might not be history anymore. Time-travel has never been so believable. Or so terrifying.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"11/22/63", Stephen King’s latest, might just be his greatest. Seriously. At least as far as "mainstream" fiction or "literature" goes. Yes, it is built around a well-used SF trope, time travel, but really, the portal to the past that Jake Epping is shown in the back of an aluminum diner is only the launch mechanism for this fantastic journey. There are no monsters here, at least none that aren’t human, and little or no horror in the supernatural sense that King’s constant readers have come to know, love and expect. Even SK’s other "straight" fiction, "Misery", "Dolores Claiborne" and "The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon" come to mind, had elements of the supernatural and/or flat-out horror. Not this time.But that doesn’t mean that 11/22/63 is boring. Quite the contrary. Although it might seem that it would be tough to build suspense around a conclusion that seems to be inevitable, this turns out not to be the case. Big time. I just finished playing hooky from work for a day when I read the last 400 pages non-stop (except for a couple of bathroom breaks), because I just couldn’t stop. I just kept pressing the advance button on my Kindle.The adjective that first comes to mind in describing 11/22/63 among SK’s oeuvre is, oddly enough, "mature". I have read every novel and anthology that King has published, plus a large number of single short stories, starting with "Carrie" in a borrowed paperback back in the late 1970s. I have never before thought of describing his work in any of them, many good, some great and a few clunkers (some of which I have reviewed as such), as mature. But that is the first, best word that comes to mind in describing 11/22/63. There were others too; exciting, romantic, bittersweet and, as with all SK’s stuff, well-written.Lee Harvey Oswald and the Kennedy assassination were obviously very well-researched, clear from the details in the text even before one gets to the afterword that describes some of the sources and methods used. The lead-up to the day of the assassination is described in great detail, along with Oswald’s relationship to his family and associates, all matters of historical record (at least according to the sources cited by SK, with which most of the readers who did not like the novel disagreed emphatically). But I should point out that the facts concerning the Kennedy assassination are actually not the main focus of the novel.The world of 1958-1963 is described in wonderful detail, through the eyes of Jake as he gradually sheds his early 21st century armored shell and falls in love with a small Texas town and Sadie, its new young librarian. Their love story is the centerpiece of the novel and is told with great depth, sensitivity and believability. I’m old enough to have experienced lots of the stuff that Jake encounters in 1958 (albeit as a child) and it jives with and jogs my recollections and induces a feeling of longing for older, simpler times. For King’’s "Constant Readers", there are easter egg cameos from "It" and "The Langoliers" that I recognized. Knowing SK, there may well be others.The ending is not predictable (if you say you saw it all coming you are

either lying or should be a best-selling novelist) and is surprisingly satisfying. To those who say King doesn’t know how to end his novels, I say, read this one.Very Highly Recommended for all (even those who think they know but don’t "like" Stephen King).J.M. Tepper

Jun 07, 2017Susan Watters Mumford rated itit was amazingI took my time reading this book because I wanted to pay attention! I was in utero when JFK was assassinated. For me, there is no "I remember exactly where I was" when he was shot moment. As usual, Stephen King does a bang up job of bringing you up close and personal to the action. Granted, this is a time-travel tale in which he took certain liberties with history, but he did keep it as close to reality as possible.I was full on emotional at some points with tears rolling down my face, which honest to the Big Guy, really is no surprise while reading a King book. He doesn’t do a whole lotta love, but the love angle was quite touching, Honey.Jake Epping ~ George Amberson was an admirable hero. He just melded into the story like one of my big brothers. Easy to trust, like, talk to, maintained a cool-head. Smooth, Honey.Loved Sadie. I am NOT tall, but I fall UP stairs. I am NOT graceful, but I trip over a SHADOW. I am NOT bizarre, but I believe in DREAMS, Honey!I abhorred Lee Harvey Oswald. Really? Why would I? He is of no consequence to my life now, then, ever. But, I did. I hated that sniveling little bastard. Not for the reason the whole world hates him - for assassinating JFK. I hated him for laying hands upon his wife. I did not have one drop of sympathy for the fool.Loved the book. Loved the story. Always love Mr. King’s writing. Loved the ending, Honey. Glad you listened to Joe.

No, this isn’t a book about surfing and yes, I did paraphrase the title from an old ’60’s song of the same name.What this book is, however, is s compendium of wonderful America in the Sixties imagery that centers around a well-crafted love story and doing the right thing, even when doing so hurts.I am not a horror story fan by any means, but as a teacher of American History I cannot help but be impressed by the wonderful descriptions of American life from a bygone era that are here. Every decade has warts, and the Sixties were no exception. However, King has crafted a novel that makes "fifty-something" people like me wish he were able to have experienced something as simple as a root-beer float sans preservatives or a small-town sock hop without the presence of drugs or the potential for deadly violence.I was born in the early 1960’s, and can barely remember Kennedy getting shot, but I started reading from the time I picked the book up after its delivery and I didn’t put it down again until I finished it, except, of course, for my work schedule and meal breaks. The book is well over a thousand entertaining pages in length and is worth a good, careful read. The modern theme of time travel is the main thread that brings the novel together, but if you allow yourself to get

immersed in such down-to-earth characters such as George Amberson/Jake Epping or Sadie Dunhill, you will soon discover that you can relate to them in a big way.The book is not a historical novel written as a step-by-step account of the Kennedy Assassination. It is a work of fiction. The assassination serves as a continuing literary catalyst for George's/Jake's overall mission: to save the world by preventing Kennedy from getting shot. Does he do it? What might the global situation have been if JFK had survived 11-22-63? Find out for yourself, toward the end of a very enjoyable adventure. Bottom line: Buy the book, it's surely worth it. If you happen to have lived during 1958-1963, buy the book and enjoy a thought-provoking time of reminiscence. If you are like me and are too young to have lived during the times described in the novel but enjoy a good suspense yarn steeped in actual historical events, get it and read it anyway. You may find yourself wishing you had been part of what America was like 50 years ago.A post-script: the miniseries based on the book is currently airing on Hulu. I don't yet know how the miniseries will handle the ending of the book, but you'll like the way the book ends!

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