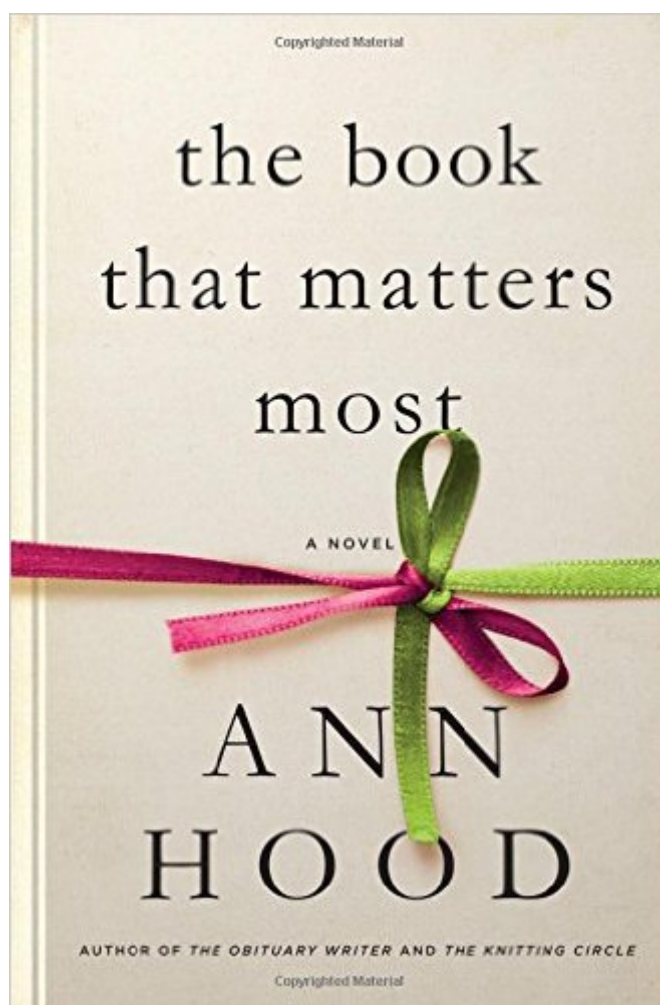


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The Book That Matters Most: A Novel



Synopsis

An enthralling novel about love, loss, secrets, friendship, and the healing power of literature, by the bestselling author of *The Knitting Circle*. Ava's twenty-five-year marriage has fallen apart, and her two grown children are pursuing their own lives outside of the country. Ava joins a book group, not only for her love of reading but also out of sheer desperation for companionship. The group's goal throughout the year is for each member to present the book that matters most to them. Ava rediscovers a mysterious book from her childhood—one that helped her through the traumas of the untimely deaths of her sister and mother. Alternating with Ava's story is that of her troubled daughter Maggie, who, living in Paris, descends into a destructive relationship with an older man. Ava's mission to find that book and its enigmatic author takes her on a quest that unravels the secrets of her past and offers her and Maggie the chance to remake their lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It was December when Ava Tucker decided to join the book group, at the invitation of her friend Cate. Her husband of twenty-five years, Jim, the man she had thought would be with her forever, had left her a few months before for the crazy *œyarn bomber*, *œ Delia Lindstrom. She wasn't sure if the worst part was who he left her for or the fact that he had. In Providence, R.I., the book group has special plans for the New Year. Each month, the members will choose a book that has especially mattered in their lives. Ava has chosen a book called *œFrom Clare to Here*, *œ by Rosalind Arden, a book she read in the early 1970s after the tragic deaths of her sister Lily and her mother Charlotte. Planning to enjoy the books, the first obstacle for Ava is finding even one copy of**

that book she loved so much. Or the publisher. Or even the author. Meanwhile, her daughter Maggie has dropped out of the art program she was attending in Florence and followed a boy to Paris, unbeknownst to the family. Alternate narrators take us through the year with Ava and Maggie, as each of them struggle with their choices. For Maggie, bad men and drugs are her downfall, among others, and for Ava, it is learning to let go of her marriage and to find the book and/or author of her chosen read for the upcoming month of November. *The Book That Matters Most: A Novel* also dips into the past, back to 1970, when Ava's mother Charlotte made her own unfortunate choices, and how those informed her life. A man named Hank Bingham, a police detective, also figured into her story.

In Ann Hood's *THE BOOK THAT MATTERS MOST*, a woman uses her love of books not only to rebuild her life after a failed marriage, but to put to rest a decades-old mystery that rocked her family to their core. For 25 years, Ava has led a happy, if perhaps a somewhat predictable, life with her husband, Jim, and their two children, Will and Maggie. Although Will has always been a golden boy, Maggie has given them some trouble over the years with various drunken nights, poor choices in men and other teenage rites. Still, Ava has always considered her family "normal" --- that is, until Jim reveals that he has been having an affair with a leggy yarn-bomber and is leaving Ava to start over with her. With Will abroad studying gorillas and Maggie taking a semester in Europe, Ava is left alone to take a highly coveted spot in her best friend Cate's book club. The group meets once a month and reads 10 books a year, with each year's books focusing on a certain theme. This year, Cate gleefully announces, they each will select the book that matters most to them. The choices vary from the obvious *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* and *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* to more surprising ones like *A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN* and Ava's selection, *FROM CLARE TO HERE*. In brief internal monologues, Ava recalls the summer that her little sister tragically passed away, only to be followed by their mother 10 months later in a grief-stricken suicide. That summer, Ava read *FROM CLARE TO HERE* --- the story of a mother who follows her child into the land of the dead, abandoning her other child to live a happy life free of her grief --- again and again and again. Although she has not thought of it much since, it is clearly the book that matters most to her.

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