

A Widow for One Year

By John Irving

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In **A Widow for One Year**, we follow Ruth Cole through three of the most pivotal times in her life: from her girlhood on Long Island (in the summer of 1958) through the fall of 1990 (when she is an unmarried woman whose personal life is not nearly as successful as her literary career), and at last in the autumn of 1995, when Ruth is a forty-one-year-old widow and mother (and she's about to fall in love for the first time). Both elegiac and erotic, **A Widow for One Year** is a multilayered love story of astonishing emotional force.

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A Widow for One Year By John Irving Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
John Irving fans will not be startled to find that *A Widow for One Year* is a sprawling farce-tragedy crawling with characters who are writers. In the opening scene, 4-year-old Ruth Cole walks in on her melancholy mother, Marion, who is *in flagrante* with 16-year-old Eddie, the driver for drunken Ted (Ruth's dad and Marion's estranged, womanizing husband).

Eddie spends the rest of his life obsessively writing novels like *Sixty Times*, his roman à clef about his 60 seductions by Marion. Ted is a failed novelist who gets rich and famous writing creepy children's stories based on tales he tells Ruth (such as *The Mouse Crawling Between the Walls*). Marion abandons Ruth, Ted, and Eddie and becomes a successful pseudonymous novelist. And Ruth becomes the most richly celebrated writer of them all because of her early training by Ted, who not only told her stories, but also helped her craft narratives to explain their home's many photographs of her brothers, who died in a gory car wreck the year before she was born. Grief over the boys is why Ruth's mother does not dare to love her.

Ruth, Irving's first female main character, works brilliantly, first as an imaginative, almost Salingeresque child coming to terms with her bewildering family, then as a grownup striving to understand her mother's motives--or at least to track her down. Ted is a mordantly funny caricature, interestingly sinister and plausibly self-justifying when most inexcusable. Eddie is a lovable schlemiel, yet not too sentimentally drawn. And what set pieces Irving can write! The story of the boys' death is horrific and effective in dramatizing the character of Ted, who narrates it. Ted's attempted murder by a spurned lover is as hilarious as the VW-down-the-marble-stairway scene in *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (which has been adapted by Disney Studios), though not quite on a par with the celebrated "Pension Grillparzer" episode in *The World According to Garp* (reissued in a 20th anniversary edition by Modern Library).

Irving has the effrontery to get away with practically any scene that comes into his head--Ruth winds up an eyewitness to a hooker's murder in Amsterdam, a Dutch detective starts tracking her down (just as Ruth is hunting Marion), and the multiple plot strands all converge in a finale that neatly echoes the opening scene. It's all done with the outrageously coincidental yet minutely realistic brio of Charles Dickens, with a sad, self-conscious jokiness like that of Irving's mentor, Kurt Vonnegut. --*Tim Appelo*

From Library Journal
The first half of Irving's ninth novel tells the story of Eddie O'Hare, a prep school student with literary aspirations who lands a job as a personal assistant to noted children's author Ted Cole in the summer of 1958. O'Hare spends most of the time in bed with Cole's wife, Marion. The second half of the book describes O'Hare's acquaintance, decades later, with Ruth Cole, Ted's daughter, who is also a successful writer. While researching her latest novel, Ruth witnesses the murder of an Amsterdam window prostitute. Irving tantalizes us with this promising subplot, then veers off in another direction. As in The World According to Garp (LJ 6/1/78), nearly every character in the book churns out reams of Irving-esque prose. It's hard to empathize with these dreary people, and their picaresque adventures seem to lack any thematic relevance. Instead of ending, the book simply runs out of steam. Still, there are legions of rabid Irving fans who will want to read every word he has written. For larger fiction collections.
-*?Edward B. St. John, Loyola Law Sch., Los Angeles*
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From Booklist

Irving should be required to do nothing more to secure his place as one of America's premier fiction writers. His latest novel, masterfully conceived and constructed, is a joy to read. As one who discerns and tells about life in fictional format, Irving is bested by few of his contemporaries; as one who draws strong, sympathetic, and real characters, particularly female ones, he is close to reaching the standards of Reynolds Price, who is arguably the best. Ruth Cole bears emotional scars from childhood and young womanhood that are, ironically, the impetus behind her distinguished writing career. (And Ruth is surrounded by a remarkably rich supporting cast.) The narrative is divided into three parts, each limning a pivotal period in Ruth's life. The summer of 1958 finds four-year-old Ruth, who is the daughter of a separated couple, Ted and Marion Cole (Ted a well-known writer of children's books), coming in on her mother while she is engaged in sex with Eddie O'Hara, Ted's 16-year-old assistant. Ruth understands that her mother is devoted, not to her or even to Eddie, but to her two brothers, both of whom died before Ruth's birth. Photos of the boys are her mother's hallowed possessions. The second section is framed by the year 1990, as Ruth, now in her thirties, enjoys critical and popular regard as a novelist. Still messy, though, are her relations with the opposite sex. The third section takes place just five years later, and Ruth finds her life enriched by love. As one excellently rendered scene follows another, each scene at once ribald, humorous, and tender, Irving achieves a nuanced depiction of overcoming familial and sexual dysfunction. *Brad Hooper*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffrey Lockwood:

Book is definitely written, printed, or highlighted for everything. You can learn everything you want by a e-book. Book has a different type. As you may know that book is important factor to bring us around the world. Close to that you can your reading skill was fluently. A publication A Widow for One Year will make you to become smarter. You can feel more confidence if you can know about every thing. But some of you think in which open or reading some sort of book make you bored. It is not necessarily make you fun. Why they may be thought like that? Have you looking for best book or appropriate book with you?

Doris Griffin:

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Jo Lee:

A lot of people always spent their very own free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them household or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent that they free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. In order to try to find a new activity that is look different you can read the book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book that you read you can spent the whole day to reading a publication. The book A Widow for One Year it is very good to read. There are a lot of people who recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. In case you did not have enough space

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Kenneth Kan:

In this period of time globalization it is important to someone to find information. The information will make a professional understand the condition of the world. The condition of the world makes the information easier to share. You can find a lot of recommendations to get information example: internet, newspapers, book, and soon. You can observe that now, a lot of publisher this print many kinds of book. Often the book that recommended to you personally is A Widow for One Year this reserve consist a lot of the information in the condition of this world now. That book was represented how can the world has grown up. The vocabulary styles that writer use for explain it is easy to understand. Typically the writer made some investigation when he makes this book. That is why this book appropriate all of you.

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