

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin white lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from a deep purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct geometric shapes like triangles and polygons. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

The Great Believers

Written by Rebecca Makkai

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The Great Believers

The Great Believers

By Rebecca Makkai

The Great Believers Review

FINALIST FOR THE PULITZER PRIZE IN FICTION

WINNER OF THE ANDREW CARNEGIE MEDAL

The Great Believers

The Great Believers Book

WINNER OF THE LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK PRIZE FOR FICTION

WINNER OF THE STONEWALL BOOK AWARD

The Great Believers

The Great Believers Summary

SHORTLISTED FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD

The Great Believers

The Great Believers Synopsis

Soon to Be a Major Television Event, optioned by Amy Poehler

The Great Believers

The Great Believers Quotes

A dazzling new novel of friendship and redemption in the face of tragedy and loss set in 1980s Chicago and contemporary Paris

The Great Believers Interview

In 1985, Yale Tishman, the development director for an art gallery in Chicago, is about to pull off an amazing coup, bringing in an extraordinary collection of 1920s paintings as a gift to the gallery. Yet as his career begins to flourish, the carnage of the AIDS epidemic grows around him. One by one, his friends are dying and after his friend Nico's funeral, the virus circles closer and closer to Yale himself. Soon the only person he has left is Fiona, Nico's little sister.

The Great Believers Yale

Thirty years later, Fiona is in Paris tracking down her estranged daughter who disappeared into a cult. While staying with an old friend, a famous photographer who documented the Chicago crisis, she finds herself finally grappling with the devastating ways AIDS affected her life and her relationship with her daughter. The two intertwining stories take us through the heartbreak of the eighties and the chaos of the modern world, as both Yale and Fiona struggle to find goodness in the midst of disaster.

The Great Believers Characters

The Great Believers has become a critically acclaimed, indelible piece of literature; it was selected as one of New York Times Best 10 Books of the Year, a Washington Post Notable Book, a BuzzFeed Book of the Year, a Skimm Reads pick, and a pick for the New York Public Library's Best Books of the year.

Only giving this five stars because I'm married to the author's husband.

The Great Believers Wikipedia

In a weird way, I feel that this is the sweeping gay masterpiece that *A Little Life* should've been. It's a nice long read about a close-knit group of gay friends and their straight allies that jumps back and forth between the height of the AIDS crisis in Chicago and present day Paris. Makkai does a pretty clever thing here by drawing parallels between the Lost Generation from WWI and survivors of the AIDS crisis. Ordinarily, when I read books that go back and forth between two narrators I tend to have a favorite, but in this case I didn't. Both Fiona and Yale's parts address the central question of what happens to our communities when they are ravaged? Who carries on the memories? What does it mean to take on the burden of that mantle? And how do families "biological and chosen" reconcile with lives that can be simultaneously too short and too long?

To say that I loved this book would be both an understatement and a misrepresentation. I can't say that it was the best book that I've ever read or the one that moved me the most. Some parts like Yale's almost aggressive *vet* or Claire's tenuously grounded animosity towards her mom troubled me from a craft perspective, but I somehow love it all the more for its flaws. It's almost like that friend who you know is kind of a boar but you enjoy spending time with anyway. I loved the flaws here. I was in the world fully.

If you liked this, make sure to follow me on Goodreads for more reviews! ...more

I'm between 3.5 and 4 stars, rounding up.

At the start of *The Great Believers*, Rebecca Makkai's beautifully poignant yet meandering new novel, it is 1985, and Yale Tishman and his partner, Charlie, are preparing for the memorial service for Nico, a friend who has recently died of AIDS.

The gay community in Chicago where they live has been devastated by this recently discovered disease, as have gay communities across the country. The sense of loss they feel is just beginning to hit them, as they I'm between 3.5 and 4 stars, rounding up.

At the start of *The Great Believers*, Rebecca Makkai's beautifully poignant yet meandering new novel, it is 1985, and Yale Tishman and his partner, Charlie, are preparing for the memorial service for Nico, a friend who has recently died of AIDS.

The gay community in Chicago where they live has been devastated by this recently discovered disease,

The Great Believers

as have gay communities across the country. The sense of loss they feel is just beginning to hit them, as they begin hearing more and more about people getting sick, more people living in denial and fear, more people simply disappearing.

As much as the disease and people's attitudes towards it affect him, Yale has other things to focus on. As the development director for a university art gallery, he stumbles on an unexpected windfall: an elderly woman wants to bequeath her collection of 1920s artwork to the gallery. But uncertainty about the artwork's authenticity and familial outrage at the potential value of a gift that could be given to strangers causes Yale and his colleagues more stress than anticipated, at a time when emotions are running high in his relationship with Charlie as well.

With the disease circling ever closer, Yale finds his life changing in many ways, and he begins relying more and more on Fiona, his friend Nico's younger sister. Fiona is wise beyond her years, and finds herself acting as a companion of sorts, and ultimately, power of attorney, for many of her late brother's friends. It's a role that impacts her greatly.

"The thing is, the disease itself feels like a judgment. We've all got a little Jesse Helms on our shoulder, right? If you got it from sleeping with a thousand guys, then it's a judgment on your promiscuity. If you got it from sleeping with one guy once, that's almost worse, it's like a judgment on all of us, like the act itself is the problem and not the number of times you did it. And if you got it because you thought you couldn't, it's a judgment on your hubris."

In a parallel storyline which takes place 30 years later, Fiona has traveled to Paris to try and find her estranged daughter, who had fled the U.S. after joining a cult. Fiona's relationship with her daughter has always been difficult, but she hopes to make peace with Claire. She stays with an old friend from Chicago, Richard Campo, a photographer who made his name in the 1980s taking pictures of those in the community affected by AIDS, many of whom were his friends and former lovers.

Surrounded by memories both photographic and anecdotal, Fiona is haunted by the ghosts of her friends. She comes to realize how much she sacrificed caring for and loving these men, sacrifices which affected her marriage, her relationship with her daughter, and her life. But given the chance, would she do it over again, or would she put herself and her own life first?

Parts of this book were tremendously moving and poignant, reminding me both of the movie *Longtime Companion* and, at times, Tim Murphy's gorgeous novel, *Christodora* (see my review), although this is very different. Makkai did a phenomenal job capturing the emotions, the fears, the culture, and the challenges of those infected with AIDS in the early days of the disease.

I enjoyed Fiona's character and her journey, but I could have done without her protracted search for her daughter and her interaction with another random character, although I like the way her modern-day storyline intertwined with Yale's. And while I loved Yale's character and could have read a book about him alone, I'll admit I could have done without the whole art thing, although it did set other plot points

The Great Believers

into motion.

I was fortunate to come of age after AIDS had been discovered so I understood the risks and methods of prevention much better than those who came before me. But that doesn't mean that life in the late 1980s and early 1990s weren't without fear and ignorance and prejudice toward those with the disease.

Makkai is a tremendously talented writer, and I've read a few of her previous books. While this book frustrated me at times, I still really found it compelling and emotional, and feel like Makkai did an excellent job examining a bleak time in the LGBT community.

See all of my reviews at itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com, or check out my list of the best books I read in 2017 at <https://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com/2018/01/the-best-books-i-read-in-2017.html>. ...more