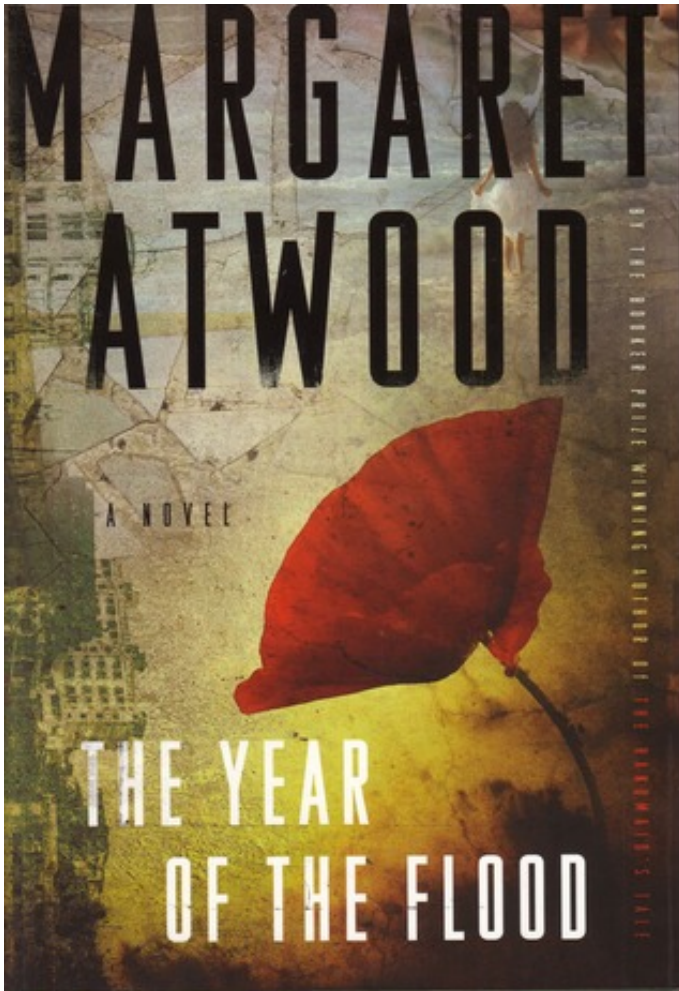

Margaret Atwood

The Year of the Flood (MaddAddam #2)



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Description

The long-awaited new novel from Margaret Atwood. "The Year of the Flood" is a dystopic masterpiece and a testament to her visionary power.

The times and species have been changing at a rapid rate, and the social compact is wearing as thin as environmental stability. Adam One, the kindly leader of the God's Gardeners--a religion devoted to the melding of science and religion, as well as the preservation of all plant and animal life--has long predicted a natural disaster that will alter Earth as we know it. Now it has occurred, obliterating most human life. Two women have survived: Ren, a young trapeze dancer locked inside the high-end sex club Scales and Tails, and Toby, a God's Gardener barricaded inside a luxurious spa where many of the treatments are edible.

Have others survived? Ren's bioartist friend Amanda? Zeb, her eco-fighter stepfather? Her onetime lover, Jimmy? Or the murderous Painballers, survivors of the mutual-elimination Painball prison? Not to mention the shadowy, corrupt policing force of the ruling powers . . . Meanwhile, gene-spliced life forms are proliferating: the lion/lamb blends, the Mo'hair sheep with human hair, the pigs with human brain tissue. As Adam One and his intrepid hemp-clad band make their way through this strange new world, Ren and Toby will have to decide on their next move. They can't stay locked away . . .

By turns dark, tender, violent, thoughtful, and uneasily hilarious, "The Year of the Flood" is Atwood at her most brilliant and inventive.

Insightful reviews

Violet wells: This was my first experience of Margaret Atwood and I'm afraid I don't really get what all the fuss is about. Perhaps this is her worst novel? The first two hundred pages, relentless exposition bereft of dramatic tension, bored me. It's one of those novels that plays catch up – starts at year twenty-five, then goes back to year zero and works its way forward. The two narrators, a kind of everygirl and everywoman, are members of a new age travellers cult, but essentially struck me as hackneyed soap opera characters. They experience a typical concatenation of female experience, most notably disappointment in love and abuse at the hands of male vanity and privilege. But Atwood had no revelations to pass on, nothing interesting to tell me about these experiences. Not once, until the final hundred pages, did I find myself looking forward to what might happen next. Not once was I able to empathise with her characters except in the most superficial way. As storytelling it just never got my interest until perhaps the last hundred pages when we finally arrive back at the beginning and move forward. The satire seemed to me suffocating so that everything else in the novel, especially the characters, had to play second fiddle to the fusillade of very predictable jibes at contemporary culture. Compared to masters of satire like Nabokov and Amis this struck me often as childish and indulgently self-pleasuring. The writing itself was okay but again largely uninspired. Yes, there were some nice touches (most of which have since been stolen by other writers of dystopian fiction and better employed). But too often it read to me like the literary equivalent of those sci-fi films before special effects existed and ultimately failed to tick any of my boxes. I'm afraid I won't be in any great hurry to read another Margaret Atwood novel.

Paquita Maria Sanchez: Throughout my adult life, every time I've set to fretting about something, if I have ever been composed of the proper combination of melancholy, apathy, and bitters to warrant the interest of my hovering mother, in a state of exasperation she always runs a line on me about perspective, about humbling myself by pondering the countless masses of people in the world who have it so much worse than me; that I should always feel grateful, and that thinking otherwise is simply being small-minded and self-obsessed. Though I agree with her in spirit, I am prone to try and win an argument for the sake of it (bad habit?), and always retort with something along the lines of "yes, let us follow that logic to its conclusion: there is only one, most saddest little person who has it the worst of all in the whole wide world throughout all of time, and only he or she is deserving of coming face-to-face with his or her reality, and finding it regrettable and sadness-worthy." This is, of course, not what she meant, but the conversation (which we have had a zillion times over the years, and which always concludes with two sets of hands in the air) always leaves me thinking about what that actual, worst-case-scenario could be. I think I have cracked it, folks: it is being a female in a post-apocalyptic scenario.

Of course, everyone has it rough when left to fight for basic survival in a wasteland after being pampered and defeated by the tough-loving arms of a convenience-based, desire-inventing, force-feeding, complex society for all of their lives. Well, most everyone. Though I make fun of them for their extreme lifestyles today, some of my old buddies who turned to some mutation of a freegan, survivalist mentality and started living in improvised homes in various woodland areas would be the first people I would actively seek out if the shit really went down and I had somehow managed to survive the initial death-move. You know, the folks who actually know how to build a fire with sticks and leaves, and can tell you which berries and mushrooms are poisonous rather than edible? "Hey, guys. It's been awhile. Sorry I cracked all those 'hippie militia' jokes about you. Heh."

Not fun for anyone, that whole "End of the World" thing, but *man* does having ladybits ever make shit worse. Not only are you shake-down-able, potentially threatening, and *edible* to the surviving crazies with nothing left to lose and absolutely no laws or fearful penalties or even mores governing their actions whatsoever, you are also, ummm, do I use a euphemism here? You're fuckable. Forcibly. As are men, naturally, but the threat to females is more visceral as the gender unfortunately oft-considered to be inferior, subservient, weaker, breakable, etc, particularly in the already deteriorated, woman-munching dystopia presented here before the mass deaths begin. I do not scoff at the plot twist in *28 Days Later*, I find it probable. I don't judge the Man's wife in *The Road* for her decision to wander out into the snowstorm, I sympathize with her. The women in *The Year of the Flood* have it so much worse, too. Though there are elements of survival-y empowered female inspiration here, they are gratuitously punctuated by personal violations which would send a shiver down von Trier's spine.

Even with gender aside, one of the recurrent nightmare themes in post-apocalyptic tales is that every human being you encounter you must fear, though your initial response may be "A human! To survive with! To communicate with! Shit, I'll even talk to him about football if it means I get to use my vocal chords!" This is ill-advised. Approach with caution. And a gun if you have one, because for some reason these post-apocalyptic tales seem to consistently contain the obstacle of a severe shortage of guns considering the limited number of surviving humans, which is unfathomable to me as an American who has spent the majority of her life in Oklahoma

and Texas. In this novel, of course, that is covered by the fact that the Totalitarian Corporate Regime in thinly-veiled control of society has done massive sweeps and disarmed almost all of its citizenry decades before "The Year of the Flood", The Flood being the genetically-engineered global pandemic which is the foundation of this story.

Sorry, I keep deviating from the trail, here. Being a woman on a decimated planet sucks, and that fact is one of the more glaring themes of this, the second book in what is to become Atwood's "MaddAddam Trilogy." To highlight this point, the story is told primarily from the perspective of two female survivors, women who had seen firsthand some of the scariest sides of power mixed with violence mixed with sexuality even before the world completely fell apart. I won't even go into why the human race was for the most part forcibly brought to extinction, as this is covered in the first novel, *Oryx and Crake*, told through the eyes of one of the main male characters who believes himself to be *the* remaining human on the ruins of this planet, and relates the tale of how he came to be so through a series of flashbacks. Let's just say that the fact that the girl you love and pay to bang has started banging your hotter, more sexually experienced, alcoholic "bad-boy" friend without making him pay for it may not be the best reason to...lash out on others, and...you're an asshole, Gene or Crake or whatever the fu...uh, yeah, that book's pretty good too, so you should just read it.

Themes also addressed in both novels are the rape of the earth by technological advancement, disregard of various animal species and the almost sexualized desire for massive quantities of their flesh as meals and fancy clothes to the point of wiping them out completely and destroying their habitats (even the strippers and prostitutes in the novel wear bird, lizard, and other animal costumes as a rule, just for one example), the potential threats and miracles behind gene-splicing and other scientific attempts to 'play god', the role (or lack thereof) of spirituality in rising above ravenous earthly desires, and the overwhelming and ever-increasing threat that is the governing powers of large corporations. It's the whole "Is the human race a parasite the earth will one day cure itself of? Should some human come around and maybe help the earth along in that regard?" argument. As this novel is what Atwood refers to as "speculative fiction" rather than some completely improbable sci-fi scenario, her hand offers up a light pat rather than a shove; she seems less preachy, and more questioning. Ever the Justitia, she asks rather than says, *speculates* rather than feigning the prophet, weighs it all in the scales while leaving each side swinging up, down, up, down like the ticking of a pendulum. This is one of the things that I particularly love about Atwood.

There is a final installment which as of now has no release date. The first two have ended--as installments are wont to do--with cliffhangers. I guess what I am feeling right now is the same thing that made me have to work until 4am at my old bookstore job just so those asshole kids could get their Harry Potter books the very second they came out. I feel almost as impatient for the next book as I do for the next season of Dexter. Damn you authors of serialized things and their shocking, open-ended finales! Also, good job!

Jennifer (aka EM): **a few hours later**

In light of Jason pointing out some glaring inconsistencies in my Atwood ratings, and upon further reflection (like this stuff matters): I'm going to drop O&C to a low 4 and raise this one to a

mid- to high 4. The reality is that, compared to lots of other stuff, they should both probably be 5, but we are hardest on those we love best.

It might be my current state of mind; it might be that I read this too close to [Oryx & Crake](#); or because I read it after O&C. It might be that I mostly read it in small chunks as I was drifting off to sleep and it, surprisingly, did not linger there in my sub-conscious. But I can't give this the 4-star "I *really* liked it" rating. **ETA: well, apparently I can.**

I liked it. It's Atwood in good form. But it's not more than that. **[ETA: or should I say, it's no less than that -- which is a lot]** So I'm giving it the same rating as I gave [Parable of the Sower](#), even though by any measure, *The Year of the Flood* is a far superior work. **[jakaem, sometimes you make absolutely no sense even to me:].**

ETA: ok, the rest of this can stand.

Here's my issue: I'm struggling to understand why Atwood conceived the two - *Oryx & Crake* and this one - together, but wrote them as separate books. The Jimmy character and story-line of O&C was weak--it could easily have been slashed and spliced onto this one (hehe -- that's an insidery pun for those who are playing the home game).

If you read in order of publication, which seems the sensible thing to do, O&C comes first. But that reading order means that O&C takes the edge off this one, dulling the horror and the tension of *The Year of the Flood*. All the cleverness and disconcerting detail which was only hinted at in O&C, is fleshed out (hehe) in *The Year of the Flood* within the latter's better story, richer characterization, and far more visceral descriptions of horror (Atwood is best, I find, when her horrific details jump out at you from behind a bush, not when they linger in the air like a bad smell).

Bottom line, I wish I had read this one first.

Top marks, though, to the God's Gardeners concept (and theme of environmentalism-as-a-religion). Its execution is classic Atwood: bitingly satiric, filled with obscure but meaningful detail, coherent but also ethically disorienting; fully and quirkily developed (how much do I love that the "hymns" were based on *The Hymn Book of The Anglican Church of Canada and The United Church of Canada*? And how much do I love this, from the Acknowledgements: "*Orville Stoeber of Venice, California, began composing the music to several of these hymns to see what might happen, and then got swept away. The extraordinary results can be heard on the CD, Hymns of the God's Gardeners. Anyone who wishes to use any of these hymns for amateur devotional or environmental purposes is more than welcome to do so.* (my emphasis -- OMG, Margaret, you are the QUEEN of the sardonic aside.)

Earthseed versus God's Gardeners: God's Gardeners massive WIN.

The Year of the Flood versus *Oryx & Crake*: objectively, the Flood wins; subjectively, the

reverse, but only because O&C won the toss.

Jason P: The yr of the Flood This was once a trip through, what I think, may possibly within the a ways (maybe distant) future, can grow to be like. i do know what you're pondering correct now, "oh, ya, certain Jay, no matter what - and monkey's will fly out of my butt!". Well, probably they will, i do not comprehend that, and neither do you! yet again to the novel..Margaret Atwood is, in my opinion, an enormous author. the easy yet valuable prose is helping the reader commute in the course of the eyes of the protagonist right into a scary, desolate, faraway from fact kind of a future. i am not more often than not one to get pleasure from dystopian novels, yet Atwood (besides the very fact she's an exceptional 'ol Canadian like myself) can rock out characters like not anyone else can during this genre. Again, enable me say that this is often simply my opinion, i have learn reports in this novel and never every body cherished it. that is fine, simply so long as you know, you are lifeless wrong. Experiencing this novel used to be like moving into a delorean, atmosphere your time-gauges for the not-so-distant future, and blasting away to pretty well the tip of all civilization. This destiny has locations that a few my like, yet such a lot will dread. in addition to that, the gene-splicing may well sound cool and hip, yet you are trying struggling with a type of monsters - pfft, yea, like you would survive. I enjoyed this novel and i am looking ahead to the final within the trilogy, Maddaddam. All in all, this ebook merits a 5 superstar score at least, if no longer more. fee it out, you will like it.

Michael: Disappointing to me for its wood characters, slow pace, pedestrian prose, , and useless conveyance of the tragedy of an apocalyptic plague. the basis of a privatization of police, then government, and a biotechnology long past awry to the purpose of hazard used to be rendered as a pretty fascinating starting place for the dystopia portrayed. the assumption of a eco-friendly faith in keeping with ecology, with a Saint Rachel Carson and Euell Gibbons, and representation of the function the sort of workforce may well play in surviving a cave in of industrialized society have been the main redeeming facets of the book. the numerous hymns incorporated also are an artistic contribution (set to track via others at [www.yearof the flood.com](http://www.yearoftheflood.com)). However, the unconventional didn't make me cry, nor chortle or smile with any darkish satirical humor, nor think enlightened in regards to the origins of company greed that's pushing civilization towards the mess projected here. That the last word plague is effected by way of a number of twisted participants on function wasn't very compelling. i did not anticipate to be overjoyed or entertained as with a standard pot-boiler, yet from a prize-winning author, I anticipate a extra lucrative mirrored image on human nature, the that means of life, and explication of the trail we're on.

Cecily: Trilogy This tale is parallel to "Oryx and Crake" (reviewed here: <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>), and has a number of characters in common, even though the writing sort and total layout is kind of different. Having learn both, i cannot come to a decision if it is larger to learn them in book order (O&C first) or not, yet it truly is definitely sturdy to learn them in speedy succession. As with O&C, it truly is concerning the characters; many elements are just ever in part explained, half approach through, leaving the reader certainly disoriented during this distopian world. The 3rd within the trilogy, MaddAddam (reviewed here:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>), simply fills in bits among those that do not actually need filling in. PlotIt tells of the run as much as and aftermath of "the waterless flood" within the close to future: a synthetic plague, which has burnt up lots of the inhabitants and broken the climate. It specialise in an eco-religious neighborhood (cult?) referred to as God's Gardeners. They foresee the flood and get ready for it, and within the interim, they're self-sufficient vegetarians, who scrounge scraps to reuse and recycle, and keep away from the corrupt CorpSeCorp (police) and companies that run society: "They view us as twisted lovers who mix foodstuff extremism with undesirable model experience and a puritanical angle to shopping. yet we personal not anything they want." LiturgyEvery 3rd or fourth bankruptcy is a sermon via Adam One, via the phrases of a hymn. the result's a curious mixture of anti-capitalist eco treatise and satire, Biblical-style liturgy, and end-of-the-world struggle for survival, with dashes of bathetic humour - yet overall, Atwood makes it work. WomenThe tale makes a speciality of resilient, unswerving woman characters: Toby, who escapes a variety of abuses to hitch the Gardeners as an adult, and Ren, who's taken from the secure luxurious of a company compound while her mom runs away with a gardener. The male characters are flat and within the historical past (even the leader, Adam One) or undesirable (Blanco), notwithstanding one way or the other it does not think like a feminist rant. Ren's sections are quite often stated within the first individual and Toby's within the first. Eco Survival etcAlthough it jumps round timewise, the 1st part of the ebook has lots of positive factors (and a few obscure angst), while the later sections are unrelenting debts of the lengths (and depths) humans will visit on the way to survive, even if they're uncertain whether it is worthy it: "This factor i am doing can hardly ever be known as living, as a substitute i am mendacity dormant, like a bacterium in a glacier. Getting time over with." The eco subject matter is obvious, yet actually, the exploration of cult mentality is extra primary and interesting, and it increases way more questions than it answers, exploring the various the reason why humans sign up for - and stay in - cults: no where/one else, fear, idealism, escape, drifting, genuine belief, loneliness, eager to be handled and never need to make decisions, even simply by accident. And of course, energy has a tendency to corrupt. The senior Gardeners (Adams and Eves) holiday and regulate their very own rules. For example, they've got (and use) a pc ("It's just like the Vatican porn collection... secure in our hands") and so they make unusually pragmatic alterations to their trust system, searching for purposes to justify them afterwards. Light within the DarknessIt avoids being miserable through having lots of mild humour and irony: a genetically-modified caterpillar has a adorable babyish face, making it demanding to kill, and on the finish of an earnest sermon, Adam One ends "I'm happy we've got all remembered our sunhats". For all their ideals, the Gardeners are eminently practical. one other remark of Adam One's is painfully ironic, "'Nothing undesirable may be performed to you.' yet given that Adam One inspiration even the main negative issues occurred for eventually first-class even though unfathomable reasons, X did not locate this reassuring." Atwood even issues out within the acknowledgement that readers are loose to exploit the hymns for "amateur devotional or environmental purposes"! it's also packed with punning portmanteaus: the exfernal world, rakunk (rat-skunk), SeksMart, AnooYoo Spa, garboil (oil from garbage), liobamb (lion-lamb). The EndThe finishing is particularly abrupt (very mild (view spoiler)[just a special view of the ultimate scene of O&C (hide spoiler)]) and after greater than 500 pages, i used to be nonetheless uncertain no matter if Atwood wishes me to accept as true with the Gardeners or to giggle at them. even though I are likely to like ambiguous endings, i used to be stunned and a little disappointed. However, a number of hours later, while i would particularly considered it, i believe it used to be tips on how to end. Edit: After first scripting this

review, i found this wasn't relatively the tip and that there has been going to be a 3rd book. Having learn that 3rd book, I reiterate the road above, "I imagine it [Year of the Flood] used to be how to end."Editor RequiredI imagine it will have benefited from a bit pruning - the extent of aspect approximately Gardener way of life and a few of Adam One's sermons, yet that is a small quibble approximately a superb and unique novel."Nature complete energy is greater than we will take... it's a powerful hallucinogen, a soporific for the untrained Soul. we are not at domestic in it. we have to dilute it... And God is the same. an excessive amount of God and also you overdose. God has to be filtered."Less reverently, and from a non-Gardener: "As quickly as you assert 'I'll be dead,' you have stated the note I, so you are still alive contained in the sentence. and that is how humans bought the belief of the immortality of the soul - it used to be a final result of grammar. And so was once God, simply because once there is a previous tense, there needs to be a earlier prior to the past, and also you retain going again in time until eventually you get to 'I do not know', and that is what God is."

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