

**From the Stacks**  
**By Julie Orf**  
**Dunklin County Library**

An unreliable narrator or an open-ended resolution are ways of inducing recurring thoughts of a novel. The reader must actively engage with the text in a way that other books may not demand. Critically evaluating the situations in the pages to figure out what on earth is going on and drawing your own conclusions is a game designed by the author. Sometimes the narrator is deliberately lying, sometimes he or she misunderstands the situation, perhaps drunkenness, forgetfulness, or another condition that makes readers doubt the version of events presented. Some plots are not resolved. Readers get to the last page without knowing definitely what happened. Some readers relish the challenge of deciding for themselves while some close the book feeling only frustration.

This psychological mystery, *Elizabeth is Missing* by Emma Healey, features a deeply unreliable narrator, but not for the usual reasons. The story focuses on Maud, an 81-year-old woman whose dementia is rapidly worsening. She's convinced her friend Elizabeth is missing, but because of the dementia, no one believes her—not the police, or her son, or her well-meaning daughter. But in moments of clarity, Maud becomes convinced that another life is at stake, and she has to untangle the mystery before she runs out of time.

The murder of Columbia Jones, a highly successful novelist, at the height of her career is the centerpiece of J.T. Ellison's thriller entitled, *A Very Bad Thing*. Her death, initially a mystery, is investigated by police, who uncover details of her "illicit past" and multiple individuals with motives to kill her. The story follows her daughter and publicist, Darian, as well as a persistent reporter and a frustrated cop, as they unravel the truth behind Columbia's death and the secrets she kept, which threaten to devastate many lives.

The police say it was suicide. Anna says it was murder. They're both wrong. Last year, Tom and Caroline Johnson chose to end their lives, one seemingly unable to live without the other. Their daughter, Anna, is struggling to come to terms with her parents' deaths, unwilling to accept the verdict of suicide. Now with a baby herself, Anna feels her mother's absence keenly and is determined to find out what really happened to her parents. But as she digs up the past, someone is trying to stop her. Clare Mackintosh's suspense novel, *Let Me Lie*, is an emotional, complex thriller.

On a hot summer day in 1935, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis witnesses a moment's flirtation between her older sister, Cecilia, and Robbie Turner, the son of a servant and Cecilia's childhood friend. But Briony's incomplete grasp of adult motives and her precocious gifts, she brings about a crime that will change all their lives. As it follows

that crime's repercussions through the chaos and carnage of World War II and into the close of the twentieth century, *Atonement* by Ian McEwan engages the reader on every conceivable level, with an ease and authority that mark it as a masterpiece.

Karen Joy Fowler's emotionally gripping novel, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, is about a most unusual family. Meet the Cooke family: Mother and Dad, brother Lowell, sister Fern, and Rosemary, who begins her story in the middle. She has her reasons. "I was raised with a chimpanzee," she explains. "I tell you Fern was a chimp and already you aren't thinking of her as my sister. But until Fern's expulsion...she was my twin, my funhouse mirror, my whirlwind other half and I loved her as a sister." As a child, Rosemary never stopped talking. Then, something happened, and Rosemary wrapped herself in silence.