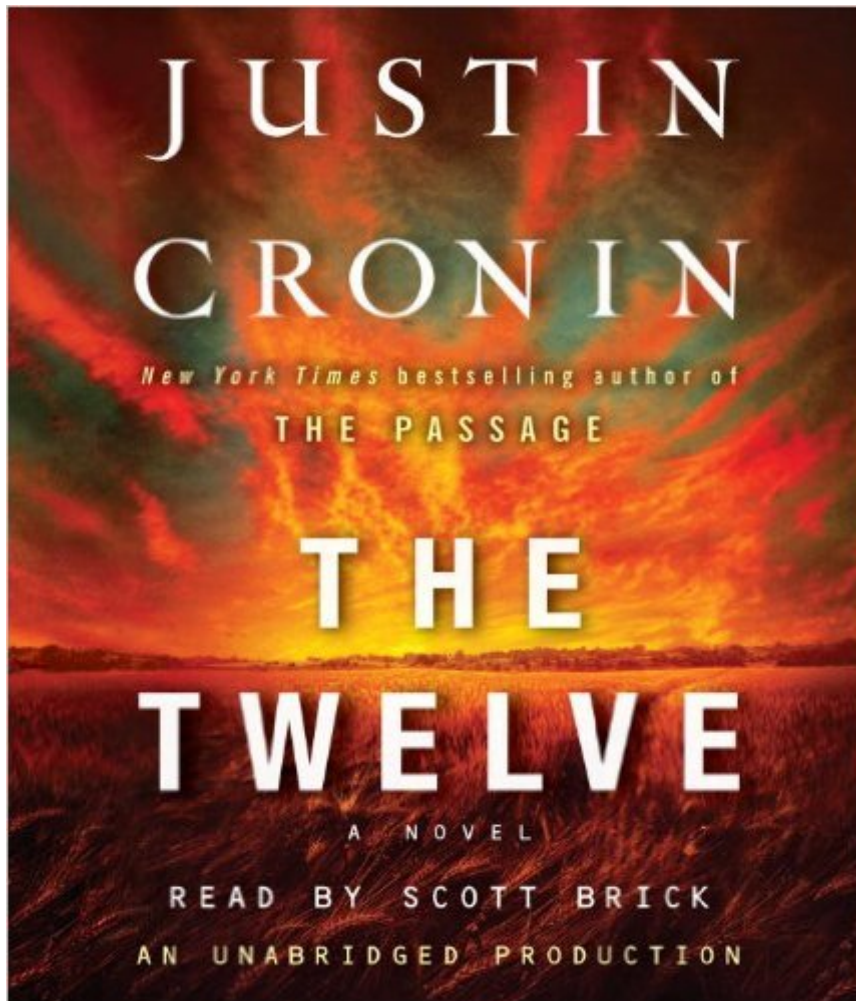


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The Twelve (Book Two Of The Passage Trilogy): A Novel



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERThe end of the world was only the beginning. In his internationally bestselling and critically acclaimed novel *The Passage*, Justin Cronin constructed an unforgettable world transformed by a government experiment gone horribly wrong. Now the scope widens and the intensity deepens as the epic story surges forward with . . . **THE TWELVE** In the present day, as the man-made apocalypse unfolds, three strangers navigate the chaos. Lila, a doctor and an expectant mother, is so shattered by the spread of violence and infection that she continues to plan for her child's arrival even as society dissolves around her. Kittridge, known to the world as "Last Stand in Denver," has been forced to flee his stronghold and is now on the road, dodging the infected, armed but alone and well aware that a tank of gas will get him only so far. April is a teenager fighting to guide her little brother safely through a landscape of death and ruin. These three will learn that they have not been fully abandoned and that in connection lies hope, even on the darkest of nights. One hundred years in the future, Amy and the others fight on for humankind's salvation . . . unaware that the rules have changed. The enemy has evolved, and a dark new order has arisen with a vision of the future infinitely more horrifying than man's extinction. If the Twelve are to fall, one of those united to vanquish them will have to pay the ultimate price. A heart-stopping thriller rendered with masterful literary skill, *The Twelve* is a grand and gripping tale of sacrifice and survival.

Praise for *The Twelve*

- "[A] literary superthriller." *The New York Times Book Review*
- "An undeniable and compelling epic . . . a complex narrative of flight and forgiveness, of great suffering and staggering loss, of terrible betrayals and incredible hope." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*
- "The Twelve is even better than *The Passage*." *The Plain Dealer*
- "A compulsive read." *San Francisco Chronicle*
- "Gripping . . . Cronin [introduces] eerie new elements to his masterful mythology. . . . Enthralling, emotional and entertaining." *The San Diego Union-Tribune*
- "Fine storytelling." *Associated Press*
- "Cronin is one of those rare authors who works on two different levels, blending elegantly crafted literary fiction with cliff-hanging thrills." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

THE TWELVE, which is the second book of Cronin's towering trilogy, can be read as a complete book, whereas the first book stopped abruptly, like a gasp. However, I urge you to read THE PASSAGE first, because the epic as a whole is a finely calibrated accretion of history, plot and character. The Twelve refers to the twelve "parent" or original virals, the death-row-inmate subjects-turned-virals from "Project Noah," who must be liquidated in order to save the world. The thrust of this book is the hunt of the twelve by Amy, Alicia, Peter, and company. "All eyes." Two words commonly spoken by the First Colony Watchers, starting in Book one--survivors of the end of the world as we know it. I shiver when I read it now, this sober siren call of fellowship to signal strength and vision, to defeat the virals. It carries an additional, deep and tacit message now--that I honor you, comrade (lover, brother, father, mother, friend, sister, soldier, daughter)--go bravely and stay safe. And keep your eyes forward, against the last remaining light of the day. Cronin's weighty trilogy, a hybrid of mainstream and literary fiction, isn't just a story about these photophobic vampiric virals, identified variously as dracs, smokes, flyers, jumps, and glowsticks. Rather, it is a portrait of humanity in extremis. Virals, caused by a military experiment gone awry, are a malignant, violent force of annihilation. But what reserves of strength keep us fighting? How do people live in a post-apocalyptic world? Is another end coming? Or a beginning? Is the world even worth saving? THE TWELVE, like THE PASSAGE, has as much anthropology, eschatology, psychology, and philosophy, as it does gore, battle and horror.

I liked this book, but it was hard to love it. For starters, the characterization is pretty weak. Major characters like Peter don't appear until late into the book, and even then they have nothing to do until the story's climax. Amy seems to wander in and out of the book and almost all the major changes that happen to her are physical--other than numerous chapters devoted to her

remembering Wolfgast lovingly and some vague references to her maturing there's not a lot that is made clear about her internal state of mind. Besides this, there are numerous characters added to the story that just don't get enough page time to really flesh them out--Tifty Lamont, I'm looking at you. Possibly the best developed characters are Guilder, Sarah, and Lila--however, even they needed more time and attention. Lila, who is wonderfully fleshed out as a character who cannot cope with reality, has a huge change in character in the final chapters of the book. This transformation never felt earned or believable--it was as though Cronin needed to tie up some loose ends and having her instantly come back to sanity was way too pat on his part. Secondly, the plot is convoluted and lacks focus. The Passage had the characters joined together on a quest to travel eastward. That's simple, but rewarding enough. The Twelve has the characters scattered about, with no clear mission. And again the novel begins with Cronin deciding to the story of year zero, but from new perspectives. The problem with this decision is that a lot the characters he introduces have no real bearing on the rest of the novel. Characters like Wolfgast were necessary in the last book since their POV not only showed humanity's collapse, but because his relationship to Amy defines her as a person throughout that book in the second.

Justin Cronin's "The Twelve" is the middle offering of his planned trilogy examining a post-apocalyptic view of America, its devastated future and how the spirit of mankind perseveres through horrifying unknown challenges. I strongly urge those who have not read "The Passage" to read it first, yet, if you did read it, it is not necessary to reread it to follow the events in "The Twelve". "The Passage" was a very long novel depicting both pre-apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic stories covering a period of about 100 years. Military scientists experimented with viruses on 12 condemned criminals in an effort to create uber soldiers as weapons of war. Inevitably, a screwup occurred and the 12 subjects become soulless vampirelike super creatures called "virals" who quickly multiplied and threatened the existence of the world. "The Passage" then fast forwarded almost 100 years and became a post-apocalyptic epic fantasy that focused on one "Colony" of survivors who struggled to survive each day while remembering as much of the "old world" as possible. "The Twelve" continues this epic tale following the cliffhanger at the end of "The Passage". Cronin again mixes and matches as he skips back and forth through time filling in gaps and fleshing out the backstory first presented in "The Passage". New characters are introduced, good and bad, and old character arcs are resolved and/or expanded in a variety of ways as mankind's survivors split into somewhat predictable groups--those who work hand in hand for their personal survival with the Virals in new communities like "The Homeland", those who try to reestablish governmental order

and societal restructuring in Kerrville etc.

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