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The hour i first believed

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Jump to ratings and reviewsWally Lamb's two previous novels, She's Come Undone and I Know This Much Is True, struck a chord with readers. They responded to the intensely introspective nature of the books, and to their lively narrative styles and biting humor. In The Hour I First Believed, Lamb travels well beyond his earlier work and embodies in
his fiction myth, psychology, family history stretching back many generations, and the questions of faith that lie at the heart of everyday life. The result is an extraordinary tour de force, at once a meditation on the human condition and an unflinching yet compassionate evocation of character. When forty-seven-year-old high school teacher Caelum
Quirk and his younger wife, Maureen, a school nurse, move to Littleton, Colorado, they both get jobs at Columbine High School. In April 1999, Caelum returns home to Three Rivers, Connecticut, to be with his aunt who has just had a stroke. But Maureen finds herself in the school library at Columbine, cowering in a cabinet and expecting to be killed,
as two vengeful students go on a carefully premeditated, murderous rampage. Miraculously she survives, but at a cost: she is unable to recover from the trauma. Caelum and Maureen flee Colorado and return to an illusion of safety at the Quirk family farm in Three Rivers. But the effects of chaos are not so easily put right, and further tragedy ensues.
While Maureen fights to regain her sanity, Caelum discovers a cache of old diaries, letters, and newspaper clippings in an upstairs bedroom of his family's house. The colorful and intriguing story they recount spans five generations of Quirk family ancestors, from the Civil War era to Caelum's own troubled childhood. Piece by piece, Caelum
reconstructs the lives of the women and men whose legacy he bears. Unimaginable secrets emerge; long-buried fear, anger, guilt, and grief rise to the surface. As Caelum grapples with unexpected and confounding revelations from the past, he also struggles to fashion a future out of the ashes of tragedy. His personal quest for meaning and faith
becomes a mythic journey that is at the same time quintessentially contemporary -- and American. The Hour I First Believed is a profound and heart-rending work of fiction. Wally Lamb proves himself a virtuoso storyteller, assembling a variety of voices and an ensemble of characters rich enough to evoke all of humanity. 2500 people are currently
reading 29803 people want to readWally Lamb is the author of six New York Times bestselling novels: I'll Take You There, We Are Water, Wishin' and Hopin', The Hour I First Believed, I Know This Much Is True, and She's Come Undone. His latest novel, The River is Waiting, will be released in May of 2025 through Marysue Rucci Books, an imprint of
Simon & Schuster.Lamb also edited Couldn't Keep It to Myself and I'll Fly Away, two volumes of essays from students in his writing workshop at York Correctional Institution, a women's prison in Connecticut, where he was a volunteer facilitator for twenty years. Lamb lives in Connecticut with his wife, Christine, and they have three sons. Displaying 1 and they have th
- 30 of 6,882 reviewsDecember 6, 2008It truly pains me to give this book only two stars, but after struggling through it, I can't bring myself to give it more. There are definitely redeeming qualities about this novel, and ultimately I ended up getting something out of it. But it was so hard to push through, and it was such a disappointment to me after
loving his previous two novels. This book is just SO all over the map, and after awhile it lost me. Bottom line, I just didn't much care about the characters. Everything ends up coming together in the end...a bit too neatly for my taste, actually...but it was a case of too little, too late for me. I've read rave reviews of this book, so clearly others do not
agree with me. But personally, I would not recommend it. November 27, 2008When an author asks you to go on a 700+ page journey, the trip should be enjoyable and/or the destination should be fulfilling. Unfortunately, I don't feel that "The Hour I First Believed" really offers either a good trip or a satisfying final destination. Rather, it is joyless, self-
indulgent, and exposition-heavy. Lamb too often tells rather than shows in this book, and the telling is a little over-done. Also, the dialogue given to the teen characters and an early chapter written from the POV of the narrator at 8 years old are not only unbelievable, but almost cringe-worthy. As evidenced in his first two novels, Lamb is a fantastic
writer and a superb storyteller. His latest, however, just didn't do it for me. November 13, 2008Unbelievably good. I never thought I'd say that about a book that incorporates Columbine, prison, drug addiction, Hurricane Katrina and troubled youth but it's the truth. I had to stop and sit and think after I finished this long book. After thinking for
awhile, I realized that I would always think of Caelum Quirk, the main character and narrator, as a good friend even if he doesn't actually exist. June 7, 2018This was second time round that I read The Hour I First Believed and is no less a disquieting read for me; first read in 2008 and again nearly six years later. I think that the the blurb is detailed
enough so I will forgo an outline of the story. Lamb does what I most love in a novel; he takes real people and events and fashions a fictional story alongside these very real moments in time. The catalyst of the story is the Columbine shooting massacre of April 1999 but it also covers marriage disharmony, prescription drug dependence, the Civil War,
post traumatic stress, the advent of women's prisons, family history, evacuees of Hurricane Katrina, modern women's prisons, the war after 9/11 and it's resultant casualties of death and disability. The novel at some 700 pages is indeed lengthy but necessary to fully examine all the facets of life that it covers. While
some may skip reading the thesis purloined from Caelum's family history, I loved the historical information it contained. On a personal note, The Hour I First Believed did make me ponder again on the need the tighter gun control, the disparity of equality between whites and non-whites, and the casualty of war. Lamb's facility with the written word is
as always brilliant; he captures moment and emotion beautifully and honestly. In this novel, life is complex, messy, rarely fair and often unexpected. It is an intense and esoteric novel and doubtless one I will read again. 4.5 * favourite-authors literary-
fictionAugust 4, 2020The Hour I First Believed? By Wally Lamb? Yeah, I read it. Hey, I didn't say it was great or anything. In fact, it seems like Mr. Lamb was really inspired by that show. Law and Order? Yeah, you know the one where they use crappy dialog to push forward bizarre plot points and explain complex technical stuff so the audience
doesn't feel dumb cause they're not lawyers? Even though real people probably wouldn't talk like that in some ways. (You know, I felt totally validated by the couple of direct Law and Order references after I first made this observation.) The tone was often grating. Lacking in eloquence. Know what I mean? This
book is about the Columbine High School massacre, Hurricane Katrina, domestic and sexual abuse, adultery, the Iraq War, drug addiction, alcoholism, child abduction, a women's prison, mummified babies, Mark Twain, a miraculous Mary statuette in a Catholic bakery, post traumatic stress disorder, Nikola Tesla, stroke victims, cameos from both of
Lamb's previous novels, brain aneurysms, 19th century abolitionism, vehicular manslaughter, enough genealogy to make the Mormon Church drool, and characters named Ulysses and Velvet. So you might think the only thing missing was the kitchen sink, right? Wrong. It's lacking in a few major ways: not nearly enough UFOs, vampires, werewolves,
subtlety, or sense of irony. It could also have used a strong, heavy-handed editor to reign in Lamb's rambling, messy prose, pointless character back stories, diary entries, and a laughably bad and unfortunately lengthy women's studies dissertation prospectus. But you see, somewhere in this sprawling tome there's a really great book. Lamb knows how
to jerk tears, set a scene, create suspense, elicit empathy for his characters, and provoke a few thoughts. Unfortunately, he goes off the deep end in melodrama, tragedy, and annoying tangents. And yet, like Oprah, I still have a soft spot in my heart for good ole Wally Lamb and his writing. This book is so bad, it's actually kinda good. March 9,
2015 post-trau matric stress dis or der (n.): a condition of persistent mental and emotional stress occurring as a result of injury or severe psychological shock, typically involving disturbance of sleep and constant vivid recall of the experience, with dulled responses to others and to the outside world. This book made my mind spin round and round; I'm
still trying to connect all the dots days after finishing it. Caelum Quirk and his wife Maureen suffer damaging effects after the Columbine shootings, where they are both employed. The events of that day have far-reaching consequences, and Caelum is forced to retreat back to his hometown farm in Connecticut. There among his family's heirlooms and
childhood memories, Caelum's ancestors speak to him, and in the process help him come to terms with his identity and history. It's said that history often repeats itself, and the ironies of past meeting present, although hard to follow at all times, was skillfully crafted. It took me about a month to get through this book, and in the meantime had read
The Good Soldiers, which touched a lot on PTSD, a common theme throughout this book as well. A great novel! Hefty in size and theme, but well crafted. It's like a well lit, professionally taken picture of a headless puppy. Don't read it, unless you consider
gratuitous constant tragedy to be the definition of depth. Believe me, this is the worst example of the McDeep conceptual space that is so tedious in today's writing and general media. In it, the main character witnesses (I kid you not): Columbine PTSD in a loved one Vicarious suffering over KatrinaLoss of limb in IraqViolent Suicide/MurderTeen sexual
damageDead babies (not abortion -- actual dead babies)Sexual Predation by a parentSexual Intimidation by an authority figureDrunken Vehicular Manslaughter of an honors studentSelf mutilationImprisonment of a loved one due to cerebral hemorrhageAn unmarked baby graveyard (no, that's not the dead babies)
this is extra) A gratuitous last SENTENCE statement of "that's the hour I came to believe" Give me a break. Don't read this book unless you're a pathetic little over-spoiled goth girl with a fetish for sad. November 6, 2008 In the afterword to The Hour I First Believed, Wally Lamb says his long career in teaching influenced his decision to center his new
book on the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, in which Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 12 students and one teacher - I could and did transport myself, psychically if not physically, to Littleton, Colorado. Could I have acted
as courageously as teacher Dave Sanders, who sacrificed his life in the act of shepherding students to safety? Would I have comforted Columbine's 'collaterally damaged' victims?...."The depth and scope of Harris and Klebold's rage, and the twisted
logic by which they convinced themselves that their slaughter of the innocent was justified, both frightened and confounded me. I felt it necessary to confront the 'two-headed monster' itself, rather than concoct Harris- and Klebold-like characters. Were these middle-class kids merely sick, or were they evil? What might their words and actions, their
Internet spewings and videotaped taunts, tell us about how to prevent some future tragedy?...."Why all this rage? Why all this rage? Why all these deaths and broken-hearted by his inability to answer them, because this 723-page book, which starts off with its focus
on Columbine, devolves into a loose, baggy social-historical novel that spans two centuries and somehow manages to address at length such disparate issues as the Civil War, the advent of women's prisons in America, Hurricane Katrina and the Iraq War. The specters of Harris and Klebold, so stark and affecting in the early pages of this book, recede
with every tangential plot line. The tenuous thread tying this all together is middle-aged English teacher Caelum Quirk, a thrice-married Connecticut native whose gravestone should probably read, "Romeo has nothing on me. Here lies fortune's foe." Example: His alcoholic father died when Caelum was 14, because the old man was fishing on a
railroad bridge, passed out drunk, got hit by train, lost both legs, and bled to death. Here, as in Lamb's two previous novels, She's Come Undone and I Know This Much Is True, messy, star-crossed lives are the norm, not the exception. When the novel opens, Caelum and his third wife, Maureen, have relocated from Connecticut to Littleton, where
Caelum is an English teacher at Columbine and Maureen is a school nurse. Back in Connecticut, their marriage had been foundering. Maureen had cheated on Caelum, and he got revenge by attacking his wife's lover; in turn, Caelum lost his teaching job. Hoping to revive their marriage (and to escape the gossip of small-town Three Rivers), he and
Maureen move to Littleton. Why there? Because Maureen wants to be close to her father, who's remarried and lives in Denver -- and who, after Maureen's mother died, used to sneak into his 11-year-old daughter's room and masturbate before her...This is among the first of many confounding plot developments in this novel - twists that complicate the
narrative, but ultimately distort to little purpose and generate no sympathy for the characters. Previously Caelum and Maureen resided on the Quirk family farm in eastern Connecticut, a two-hundred acre tract that also contains a fifty-acre maximum-security women's prison. The story behind the prison (not to mention its convenient location, right
down the road from the family's house) will play an enormous, exasperating role in the second half of the novel. The Quick Correctional Institute is named in honor of Caelum's beloved aunt, Lolly, was the last family member to work at the prison. His
mother died of lung cancer when he was 30, so Lolly is the only family he has left. Lolly's also the only family member who consistently showed him love - and that includes his father, mother and grandparents, all of whom contributed to Caelum's jaded personality. In the beginning of The Hour I First Believed, the protagonist certainly doesn't believe
in much, least of all God. In April 1999, Lolly suffers a stroke, so Caelum returns to Connecticut to take care of his aunt. While he's gone, Harris and Klebold go on their rage-fueled rampage. "They'd been planning it for a year, hiding their intentions in plain sight on paper, on videotape, over the Internet. In their junior year, one had written in the
other's yearbook, 'God, I can't wait till they die. I can taste the blood now.' And the other had answered, 'Killing enemies, blowing up stuff, killing cops! My wrath will be godlike!'" When the attack starts, Maureen is in the library, site of the worst carnage. As Harris and Klebold mock and antagonize their victims, asking them if they believe in God.
Maureen hides in a cabinet. Caelum, back in Connecticut and watching the harrowing footage on television, has no idea if she's alive or dead, so he races back to Colorado. Maureen survives the library scene, but she's a shell of her former self. She suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. She can't sleep. She has headaches and nausea. Certain
smells and loud noises trigger flashbacks. On a trip to Home Depot, the scent of the lumber department reminds her of the library cabinet, where she'd hid and prayed, "Afraid," she says, "I'm always afraid," she becomes addicted to medication, Caelum, meanwhile, starts drinking more than usual, Back in Connecticut, his aunt has died,
so the farm now belongs to Caelum. Due to a stipulation in the deed, the property near the women's prison cannot be developed. It has to remain a farm. Nevertheless, Caelum decides that the safety of the estate - far away from Littleton and everything Columbine-related - is the best thing for his wife. Regrettably, the move does nothing for the
momentum of this novel, which soon sinks beneath rediscovered family letters and diaries (many of them included in the book); uninteresting questions about Caelum's actual parents; and schmaltzy plot developments, e.g., a husband and wife, refugees from Hurricane Katrina, come to live on the farm, and the wife, a post-graduate women's studies
major at Tulane, writes her master's thesis on Caelum's ancestors, in turn helping Caelum understand his past and (perhaps) himself. In the author's note at the beginning of this novel, Lamb says he had the title, The Hour I First Believed, before he knew the story of Caelum Ouirk. "(T)hat title served as the carrot before the horse, me being horse.
What would Caelum come to believe, and what hour would it happen? It took me nine years to find out."In retrospective, that makes sense, because this novel doesn't read like it was a process of discovery. It reads like someone working backwards (and the long way 'round) from a rather trite conclusion. November 19, 2008Say what you will about this
book; in my opinion it's a tour de force. The author covers a wide range of topics starting with the Civil War, abolitionism, the power of love, and so much more that it's difficult to quantify. I'm sure this will become an Oprah book and all that jazz, but still, reading a book like this one wonders
how an author can do it. The main character is a sort of sad sack who always feels something askew in his life, from an unloving mother, an alcoholic father, and some might find the Columbine section gratuitous, but as the author
says at his Afterword, he wanted to pay tribute to those who lost their lives there. Although this book is "pop fiction", I suppose, still I would recommend it. It's a long read with many different aspects, and ultimately, it's fascinating. February 1, 2009For those in my book club, you will hear this in person eventually so just ignore. Here goes ... Why is it
that in an era of 'Green' being the new Black, of ADD being the new normal, and 'fast and snippy' the new 'slow and steady,' do otherwise talented authors suddenly feel the need to knock down innocent trees and waste our time in a most achronistic fashion? With Lamb's new book, he successfully joins the ranks of Russo and Sittenfeld (and I am sure
others) who follow up perfectly wonderful and sharp novels with tomes that looked as though they swallowed the entire Harry Potter collection. Do they not know that as soon as Amazon drops one of these craters at our doorsteps, that as we lug these phone books onto the train with bags filled papers to mark, we are inevitably going to question the
value of about two thirds of the sentences let alone chapters?? DOES NO ONE EDIT ANYMORE????So that's the first thing. The length. It made it so that when WL switched narratives to incorporate past letters or whatever I felt a huge relief as if this was a commercial and I could now skip the next fifty or so.As to the story itself, or I should say
stories, which was a big problem: Fair or not, I need to compare this with I Know This Much is True if only to highlight where this one fell short. IKTMT had an incredibly likeable and human protagonist, Dominick, who was your classic 'tries really hard and sometimes gets it right." He was charming in a disarming sort of way and this sarcasm was
endearing and funny. You wanted him to succeed. This guy, Caelum Quirk, however, aside from a stupid name (and I point this out becasue, hey, man, you get to CHOOSE. Dr. Smiley? I mean, did Barney have a gun to your head??), is just bitter. His sarcasm is neither funny nor endearing. He is in fact more flawed than 'likeably human' and
seems to deserve what he gets.WL chose to have cameo walk ons via previous literary characters that I am sure if you did it was like, dude, give it up. If this is a weak attempt to get your spin off some audience excitement, then, well, that's just sad. This story centers around the Columbine
massacre, yet that isn't even the main plot. I find it surprising that an author would think that conjoining five different plots, each of which could be a novel, was a good idea. In fact, it was a bad one. The book ends up being depressing, heavy and overly intense with too much to take in. Just as in IKTMT, he weaves in a whole complicated identity
quest/mystery for Caelum to figure out that frankly I could not have been invested enough TO care. But instead of maxing out his story line he had isntead done some character development I would have been invested enough TO care. But instead it just felt like a chore. I give it two stars because it was certainly not the worst book on my list nor did it have zero
redeeming features - but the flaws far outweighed the positives, and ultimately it disappointed me to see the few flaws in IKTMT come full force in this work, ala Bridget JOnes' sequel, and not reveal much of the positive. March 28, 2009This was not an easy book to read. For all the effort I put into it, Wally Lamb should have been standing on the last
page offering me a sash, a trophy, and large sums of money. It kind of turned into a joke as every night I would tell my husband what the new plotline was. Some of the subjects were: Adultery, Columbine, PTSD, Drug Addiction, Murder, Womens prisons (In great detail), buried corpses (in greater detail) and a paper about civil war times (in
Columbine tragedy, but it worked. Not many authors could combine the two with such sensitivity. I thought his character development absolutely perfect. I do admit that some of the thesis was a bit long and tedious. But that did not prevent me from giving the novel 5 stars. fiction knocked-my-socks-offCym & Her Books April 8, 2023Book 22/100 for
the 2023 Goodreads Reading Challenge. The book I chose for the prompt "A book set in the decade you were born" for the 2023 Popsugar Reading Challenge. The book follows a teacher from the high school from before the shooting to years afterwards a fictional recounting of the Columbine school from the high school from the hi
and how the trauma continues to impact his life. Based on the social climate in the US right now, I thought it would be an appropriate read and I am sad to say that society has not evolved too much in the 20+ years since this happened. As someone who works in an addictions medicine clinic, I understand and see on the daily how trauma can lead to
serious substance (mis)use. And, in my opinion, it was poignant that the individual with the addiction was a registered nurse who became misguided after experiencing one of the most horrific ordeals in recent history. Stories like this are so rare, and substance use and addiction is generally portrayed as only happening to one specific demographic
(BIPOC). There are an array of themes throughout the book that I would like to highlight: the abuse of individuals who are incarcerated & the history of prison reform; substance misuse by people impacted by traumatic events such as war or school shootings; intergenerational trauma; suicide; war; motherhood; marriage; chaos theory; grief. Lots of
weighty subjects over the span of 700+ pages. So saying that, this was a freaking LONG ASS BOOK. I definitely skimmed through sections because they were a snooze fest. I think I skipped most of the parts about the MC's childhood and the letters written by his great-great-(great?)-aunt. And guess what? It did not subtract from the story lol.
Heartbreaking story that could have been condensed. 3.5 stars rounded up. September 2, 2018What? I never wrote a review? Maybe I read it before a Goodreads addict.... haha...But this story is page turning. It's $1.99 Kindle special if you missed it. April 27, 2016The oldest (and perhaps worst) writing advice you can get is "write what you know." If
everyone did that, our bookshelves would be packed, even more than they already are, with self-indulgent memoirs about drug abuse, horrible childhoods, crappy parents, or, in my case, video games, cheap beer, and the great existential dilemma of whether to walk down to Sonic to get a chilli dog (on the one hand, it might rain, and I'll get wet; on
the other hand: chilli dog). Perhaps the better advice is to write about what interests you. If you're Tolkien, and you like language and myth, you should create a world filled with midgets and talking trees (or whatever an Ent is). If you're Hemingway, and you like booze and bullfighting, you should craft a novel about day-drinking in Madrid. Here are
some of the things that interest Wally Lamb: Columbine; PTSD; Hurricane Katrina; geneaology; alcoholism; parents; and women in prison. In The Hour I First Believed, Lamb writes about all these things and more. He uses the story of 47 year-old English teacher Caelum Quirk and his wife Maureen as a washline on which to hang discussions on these
various topics. The novel is told in the first person by Caelum, who is looking back on his life from some vague present time. Despite the fact that he is reminiscing about events that have already happened, Caelum can't seem to help himself from ladling on the foreshadowing ("What day is today...?" "Today is April 19..."), the flashbacks, and pointless
memory lapses (seriously, if you're going to the trouble of telling this story, maybe you should take the time to remember that Meg Ryan was the lead actress in Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides, how do you name-drop the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen Proof of Life. Besides how do you name the little-seen
words, Caelum is just about the worst party guest you can imagine. Oh, great, Caelum's here! And he's drunk again! Hope you have time for seven hours of sophistry, circumlocutions, masturbation jokes, belligerence, and possibly physical violence! Caelum's tale begins in Colorado in 1999. He is an English teacher and his wife is a school nurse. They
both work at Columbine High School. While Caelum is giving assignments, grading papers, and buying the occasional pizza from Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, his wife becomes a mother-figure to a troubled young girl named Violet Hoon. In the early going, Caelum also tells us a bit about his past: the anger management; the failed marriages; the
domestic violence; the alcoholism. This, combined with his pedantic tone, makes him a real joy to follow. Lamb supplements Caelum's ramblings with email snippets, newspaper headlines, letters, old journal and diary entries, and a lengthy excerpt from a PhD thesis. If you thought placing a PhD thesis into a novel would make it interesting, well,
you're wrong. Here is where I come clean and admit that it was the Columbine angle that brought me to this book. As I attempted to explain in my review of Dave Cullen's Columbine (, I have a deep, perhaps pathological interest in Columbine. So, of course, I was immediately put in a bad mood when Caelum, the narrator, leaves Colorado to attend to
a sick relative in Three Rivers, Connecticut. It's as though the potential controversy of novelizing Columbine scared Lamb from the massacre. While away, the attack occurs. Maureen is in the library, though she survives by hiding in a cabinet. Caelum rushes back to Colorado to be with her. What follows is alternately engrossing and frustrating
Maureen develops PTSD, which Lamb effectively dramatizes. Eventually, Caelum and Maureen flee back to Three Rivers, where the Quirk family farm is located (the farm is right next to the Quirk sarrival in Three Rivers, where the Quirk family farm is located (the farm is right next to the Quirk family farm is located).
book. At the start of the second section, there are four pages set seven years in the future. Lamb fills those four pages with enough ambiguous statements and potential mysteries to make me eager to plunge onward. It's an effective strategy. And also kind of cheap. Why would a narrator do this? I can only surmise it is to anger me. Let me tell you a
story, but first let me jump seven years in the future, and when I am done there, we shall leap seven years back. And if you haven't punched me in the neck, we shall have our yarn! My chief annoyance with The Hour I First Believed is its narrator, Caelum. First off, I don't like him as a person. That, in and of itself, is not a bad thing. I'm all for fully
realized, complex human characters, which Caelum definitely is. The problem, though, is that I didn't enjoy being in his head. It is an ugly, self-pitying place. While everyone around Caelum definitely is. The problem, though, is that I didn't enjoy being in his head. It is an ugly, self-pitying place. While everyone around Caelum definitely is.
With all the thwarted dreams, lost homes, death and dying, Caelum maintains an intense focus on himself. Fine, I get it, your past isn't what you thought. But know what? You're 47 years-old. Get over it. I'm barely interested in your over-educated middle class white man's tragedy. This isn't a Blink 182 song. On the plus side, I now understand the
genius behind the bland, first person narrator (such as Dickens' Pip, and Melville's Ishamel); if you're looking out someone else's eyes, that person should be a cipher, because that person's eyes, and your own, will eventually merge. Further, I despised Caelum's voice. It is an uncomfortable combination of half-baked Hemingway, with short, verb
heavy sentences, and a Kevin Smith-style pop culture dump. Much of the book is a terse Caelum narrating what he's doing: "watched some t.v."; "ate a sandwich"; "read a magazine." He does not spare you his onanism ("After I'd ejaculated the anger out of me, I lay there with my puddle of regret..." To which I say, eww). An unfortunately typical
paragraph comes when Caelum is in the airport: I got up, grabbed a seat closer to the TV. CNN Sports. Tim Crouch had gone number one in the NFL draft. The Eagles had nabbed McNabb. Darryl Strawberry was in trouble again. The next few pages are dedicated to an untimely discourse on Jerry Springer. I don't see the point of this writing, unless
you are trying to prove the details you can glean from a Lexus Nexis search. (Another issue I had, solely my own, was my ability to envision Caelum as Lamb, per the author's photo on the back flap. This was unfortunate, since Lamb looks like California's 30th
District Representative Henry Waxman. Picturing Henry Waxman in his "puddle of regret" is the seed of a nightmare). Despite my annoyance with the narrator, and despite some horrific dialogue (the scenes set in Caelum's college lit class play like the worst ever episode of Head of the Class), Caelum and Maureen's stories are fascinating. Lamb
draws you into their lives, and into the lives of the people who orbit them. The problem, though, especially as the book nears the end, is that Lamb - via Caelum - keeps veering away from the stories. I didn't like Caelum's friend
Alphonse, and with the old drunk Ulysses. Instead of focusing on these people as the climax neared, Lamb keeps inserting long excerpts from a PhD thesis on Caelum's illustrious ancestor, Lydia. Now, Lydia's story is theoretically interesting - suffragette, abolitionist, Civil War nurse, corretions officer - but I frankly didn't care about her at all. She isn't
a character, but a ghost. The problem, though, is that Lamb does care. A lot. To the point of obsession. The tension, then, is between the potboiler aspects of the novel, which had me flipping pages, and Lamb's overarching themes, which he attempts to weave with endless callbacks to Caelum's complicated familial history. How does it all end? Anti-
climatically. All the mysteries eventually sputter. The twists come with a dull thud. The last page, and the last lines, are obvious. This is a really ambitious work that tries to encompass the whole of post-9/11 America. Unfortunately, the tie binding everything together is an aging, self-involved, didactic English teacher who, in my mind, looks like a
famous member of Congress and who plays with himself more than a 14 year-old boy. August 1, 2012I picked up this book with some trepidation: first, I wasn't sure how much I wanted to read about the whole tragedy and was afraid to revisit that
Secondly, I've read Lamb's two other novels and liked one but hated the other. Well, I got about 60 pages in and decided to drop this book because long ago I'd given up my neurotic need to finish a book once I've started. Lamb's narrator, Caelum Quirk, is extremely unlikeable, but that's not why I stopped reading. Unlikeable characters, when written
 well, can be as fascinating as someone you love. But Lamb's need to draw out every mundane detail, ostensibly to build momentum up to the terrible moment, made me crazy. I kept thinking, "Really, ten pages devoted to an airport experience? Twenty pages of a childhood flashback?" I just wanted to get back to the story!Lamb is compared to
Dostoevsky in the book flap and by pure volume I can see the similarities. But big thick books with tiny words do not necessarily make classics. February 4, 2019Wally Lamb creates characters who become real as they are revealed on the page. When thinking about the book between readings, it was like revisiting acquaintances I was getting to know
intimately. There are twists and turns, history that is revealed and unraveled like the labyrinth that he alludes to in the novel. It's a book that took ten years to write, and these pages contain those ten years. Not only is does it delve into the family history of the characters for the past century, it revisits the occurrences that have shaped the past decade
of our country's history; in this way, just by reading, you also become a character. There are moments of repetition in the story-perhaps needed, in a book this long, and which jumps around this much, but a bit much for certain points. Overall, a moving and intriguing book. February 26, 2009 Ahhh! Don't bother! Too long! Too many plots and
characters, and it just drove me crazy. I like this author alot. I've heard him interviewed, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories, and I give him credit for trying to address the Columbine thing, but there were just way too many other stories and it is a constant.
great story is buried in Wally Lamb's avalanche of a novel, The Hour I First Believed, but only the most determined readers will manage to dig it out. The author -- twice blessed by Oprah, for She's Come Undone and I Know This Much Is True -- can be a captivating storyteller, and he has built this story on one of the most shocking acts of violence in
modern history. Sadly, though, his new novel becomes so burdened by diversions, delays, tangents and side plots that the whole rambling enterprise grows maddening, the kind of book you want to throw across the room, if only you could lift it. The narrator is a middle-aged English teacher named Caelum who's trying to hold together his third
marriage. When he discovers that his wife, Maureen, is cheating on him, he attacks her lover with a pipe wrench. This is, from start to finish, a novel about the effects of anger, the torrent of destruction that's easily triggered and difficult to repair. Hoping to remake their lives after Maureen's adultery and Caelum's prosecution for assault, they move
to Colorado and get jobs at Columbine High School. In April of 1999, when Caelum flies back to Connecticut to check on his sickly aunt, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold enact their deadly rampage. Caught in the school's library, Maureen hides in a cabinet listening to students being taunted and slaughtered. Lamb doesn't provide the sort of
psychological insight into the perpetrators that we got from Richard Russo's and Lionel Shriver's novels about school shootings, but he knows just how to let the details of a tragedy unfold without decoration or commentary. He's a master at the kind of direct, unadorned narrative that brings these events alive in all their visceral power. The most
terrifying section of The Hour I First Believed is essentially a docudrama of the Columbine massacre, describing the actual events, naming the real victims and heroes and providing chilling excerpts from Klebold's and Harris's journals and videotapes. Lamb's depiction of the aftermath is equally wrenching: parents waiting all night in the gym for lists
of the dead, the sound of hundreds of cell phones ringing in uncollected backpacks, the sight of such a happy place transformed into a morgue. In many ways, this horrendous incident is a natural subject for Lamb. He's long been interested in the lingering effects of trauma and the process of emotional recovery, and it's a relief to see that his
treatment bears none of the shiny optimism associated with his famous talk-show patron. Although Lamb is too earnest for satire, The Hour I First Believed makes ironic references to Dr. Phil, Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul and the whole recovery industry that's grown up in the last couple of decades. As Caelum attends funerals, memorial
services and counseling meetings after the massacre, he hears the full symphony of recovery theology, but he remains bitterly skeptical. "Maybe there was something to this 'power of prayer' stuff, and maybe there wasn't," he says. "But I resented the white-haired woman, shilling for God among the walking wounded." At the main funeral, attended by
70,000 mourners, including Amy Grant, Billy Graham's son and Al Gore, Caelum can't shake his resistance to their healing messages. When the crowd is exhorted to shout, "Columbine is love," Caelum complains, "Too
             . . she's talking to sufferers, not psych majors. "The most moving example of the difficulty of recovering from psychological trauma is Caelum's wife. "Mo's one of the collaterally damaged." Overwhelmed by flashbacks and panic attacks, she can't return to
work or handle the basic tasks of daily life. Caelum tries to do whatever she needs, but she remains either zoned out or combative, at constant risk of overdosing on tranquilizers. Caelum struggles to understand what's happening to her as she alternately pushes him away and begs for his affection. In hopes of providing her
with a more peaceful setting, they move back to his family's farmhouse in Connecticut and try to start over. Maureen can't shake her demons, though. Alone and despairing, Caelum throws himself into researching the massacre, hoping to gain some understanding of his wife's condition, but the sheer volume of competing theories only depresses him
more. This portrayal of a couple dealing with the asymmetrical effects of trauma is Lamb at his best, wholly sympathetic, deeply moving. If only the author had a powerful novel about two people determined to care for each other despite unfathomable challenges. But as the story moves further
along, its focus blurs and the relationship at the center fades away. How much more disaster does a novel require, you may ask, than the deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer, apparently, is much, much more disaster does a novel require, you may ask, than the deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer, apparently, is much, much more disaster does a novel require, you may ask, than the deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer, apparently, is much, much more disaster does a novel require, you may ask, than the deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer, apparently, is much more disaster does a novel require, you may ask, than the deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer, apparently, is much more disaster does a novel require, you may ask, than the deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer, apparently, is much more disaster does a novel require, you may ask, than the deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer are deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer are deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer are deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer are deadliest high school shooting in America? The answer are deadliest high school shooting in America.
War, the Iraq War, Katrina, vehicular manslaughter, gang rape, kidnapping, dismemberment, alcoholism, suicide (by gun, by train), child abuse, self-mutilation, drug addiction, bankruptcy and infanticide: a menu of misery that could fill Oprah's schedule for a decade. What's surprising, though, is how this second half of the novel fails even as
melodrama. It gets bogged down in the history of a women's prison that one of Caelum's relatives started more than 100 years earlier. Clearly, this subject is important to Lamb -- he's spent years teaching female prisoners in the York Correctional Institution in Connecticut -- and there's fascinating material here about the counterproductive ways we
punish people, but he seems strangely unwilling to provide much insight into the lives of the women inmates. Instead, in a move that ruins the engaging domestic storyline, Maureen is pushed off stage when Caelum discovers in his attic a collection of 19th-century letters that mention everybody from Mark Twain to Harriet Beecher Stowe to Nikola
 Tesla. Herein begins an exceedingly tedious mystery about the real identity of Caelum's late mother. He gives the old letters to a feminist scholarly document are dumped into the novel, with deadening effect. Even Caelum complains about how boring
this is. Trying to read his friend's dissertation, he says, "I shifted the pillows, glanced over at the clock radio. Only nine twenty-three? God, it felt more like midnight." Rarely have I felt such empathy with a character. "I fought it for as long as I could, attempting over and over to get to the end of that same sentence. Then I surrendered to sleep."But I
still had more than 100 pages to go. And then his "Afterword." And then his "Afterword." And then his "Afterword." And then his "List of Sources Consulted." And then his "List of Sources Consulted."
other brushes with violence and sadness, random secrets from the past, etc. It just seemed to complicate what could have been a fantastic book. But having to wade through so much back story (and side story) and dealing with the fact that neither main character is particularly sympathetic made this less powerful. However, there's no denying Lamb's
ability to tell a stroy. November 25, 2008Loved it! I love this author. Easiest 750+ page book I've read in a long, long, time. He keeps you interested, jumping from Columbine tragedy, to Katrina tragedy, to mental illness, etc. Lots of twists & turns; you never know what's gonna happen to the poor main character & his wife next. historical-fiction
relationshipJanuary 1, 2009It took Wally Lamb nearly a decade to come up with this book. A decade! I think he was traumatized by some events and under great pressure to get the next novel out, giving us The Hour I First Believed. Lamb takes the major events from the decade: Columbine, Hurricane Katrina, Iraq War, throws them into a literary
blender with his leftover women's prison stories, adds a dash of Civil War and slavery, and blends. Sadly, it does not mix well. A chunk of fiction here, some non-fiction there. It is often unpalatable. Particularly bad is when he writes from the child's point of view. Even worse was how he throws in a reference to a character in another one of his
books.Lamb gets points for his perfectly executed portrayal of PTSD, and the foolishness of the Iraq war.I hope this was cathartic for him. Maybe he feels better, got some things out of his system and shattered the decade long writer's block. Come back to us, Wally!May 4, 2013As my choice of 3 stars says, I liked this book but didn't love it.In essence
this is a book about the aftermath of violence: What do people do to thrive, or cope--or not? There are some very powerful aspects to this book: everything from Columbine to life in a women's prison. The first half are dramatized more than the events in the second half. I think that's because the events in the first half are dramatized more than the second half. I think that's because the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the second half. I think that's because the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the second half. I think that's because the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the events in the first half are dramatized more than the events in the events half are dramatized more than the events half are dramatized mo
half. By this I mean, a lot of the action in the second half isn't experienced by the characters. I got a little impatient with one catastrophe after another occurring. Each one didn't receive the in-depth "aftermath" treatment it could have because too soon another catastrophe
occurred. There were parts of the book that I found myself skimming, and I never got lost. I think at 700+ pages, this book is over-written. But that's very Wally Lamb; he likes to weave a bunch of seemingly unrelated things together. His novels are like quilts--and there were times I snuggled in, and times I was over-heated and wanted to throw it
off.*I WROTE THE FOLLOWING WHILE I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF READING THE BOOK...What strange serendipity...The other morning I woke up early, before the alarm, and sat in bed reading this novel, which is centered on the shootings at Columbine. Half an hour later, the clock radio (which is our alarm) turned on--and what comes out of the
radio but a news program interviewing twin girls who'd been at Columbine on that day. The program was about the "ten year anniversary" of the event. One of the sisters said that it has taken ten years for Columbine to transform from the definining moment of her life to just one aspect of who she is. November 7, 2012I am definitely on the fence with
this one. I was deeply moved by the first half of the novel. The second half is what weighs more heavily on my reason for giving a 3 star rating. I actually considered giving it a 2 star rating but I didn't think that would be fair for anyone who plans on reading the book. Most 2 star ratings are associated with bad writing, a meandering synopsis, or
general dislike of the book overall. I did not find this book fell into all of those categories, only some. Caelum and Maureen Quirk are both teachers at Columbine High School during this time, that date is indelibly seared into our brains. We can probably remember
 where and who's class we were in when news of the Columbine Massacre happened. The regional tragedy rattled the nerves of everyone. Maureen Duirk is unfortunately trapped in the library during the massacre. It is where the most blood is shed by the hands of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. Because of this devastating event, Maureen has post
traumatic stress disorder. And her husband is burdened with picking up the pieces of their lives. The first half of the book is extremely engaging and strikes a chord with any reader. It is graphic and detailing in the events of the massacre. Wally Lamb includes desturbing dialogue and knowledge of the two gunmen's actions and intentions. All this is
being told from Caelum Quirk's point of view. His extremely flawed point of view. His extremely flawed
Maybe it's because I can understand Caelum's reasoning and only have his point of view to go by. Maureen is written to be almost pathetic. But Caelum is no saint. He's mean, angry, and frustrating. Although I liked him, I still wouldn't want to be his friend. Overall the book is extremely moving. I couldn't stop reading during the first half of the book.
The second half was torture for me. I hung in there for the sake of it and don't really feel like it was put over the top for me like Lamb's other novel I Know This Much is True. I look forward to reading more from this author. He's my go-to if I need a hefty tome that tugs at my heart strings. I will probably re-read this book in the distant future just to
see what I may have missed or find other redeeming qualities in it. I recommend this book to anyone who's a fan. I don't suggest this book to be read as an introduction to this author. Try the other two. January 12, 2009The book is not without merit, and there's no question that Wally Lamb is a gifted writer. There were parts of the story that had me
riveted, and that dealt with important contemporary issues. When Lamb stays focused, the effect can be mesmerizing. The big flaw, in my opinion, is that this is two novels blended into one. There are two distinct, well-developed, very compelling plots in the book. The mistake was in trying to combine them into one story, thus diluting and obfuscating
both stories. And then, of course, there's the fact that Lamb seems to just love to see his words on the page, so there are long nowhere-going diversionary trips along the history of Bavaria and the brewing company!!!) I think there is great value in
using fiction and myth to explore and heal our collective psychic wounds and broken hearts with regard to recent national and worldwide events. I think this could have been much more effectively done if Lamb had placed that particular story in a novel of its own, told in a more straightforward fashion.all-fiction america domestic-and-relationship-
fictionOctober 20, 2012whoa. I have to shake my head sometimes. I have to shake my head sometimes are described in a row in which Connecticut is mentioned significantly. That in of itself is
startling to me; Connecticut is a small state and close to my home state of Maasachusetts. But I rarely read about it. While the main character doesn't go to prison in Connecticut, he barely avoids it after attacking his wife's lover (I don't usually like to give the plot away, but this occurs on pg. 11 of a book that is more than 700 pages long, so it's not
really giving anything away.) And his family had been running a women's prison on part of their farm his whole life. Finally, his wife ends up spending the last two books I read (Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison and Defending Jacob) had Connecticut prisons featured
in them. Just a coincidence, I suppose, but it is very strange. This book seems to be about everything, though. The story weaves its way from computer viruses and extra-marital affairs to anger management and public service, to women's prisons and lesbian life partners, to abused and troubled children, to the Columbine tragedy and prescription drug
abuse, to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the issue of adolescent cutting, to internet businesses to the decline of small-town stores, to the Civil War and the way in which the story covers so many aspects of our lives. I had a hard time with this book. I consider myself an avid reader and
I'm rarely without a book. When I start reading a story, I usually stick with it pretty doggedly until I finish. That's not what happened with this book. I read some of the children's
chapter books that our girls have already read and I wanted to read (since I try to read everything that they do). I read several magazines and newspapers, trying to clear out the clutter in my house. But I just couldn't seem to go back to the book. Until this morning, when everyone else in my family was asleep, I sat at my kitchen table and bawled my
eyes out as I read the transcripts of that terrible day's events. Now I think I understand my hesitation, my almost dread of reliving that day, even though I only heard about it on the news like most people. Pretty hard to take. Overall, I thought this book was a compelling read, despite the fact that it took me almost two weeks to read it. Considering
that I usually end up reading two books a week, it's a lengthy read for me. I see the book as a summation of over 100 years of American tragedy, controversy, and angst. By the time I reached page 600, I was weary, feeling like I'd survived an emotional upheaval as well. But still, I pushed on... And the ending was somewhat cathartic, but as I turned
the last page, I felt drained. I think I am in need of some brain candy, some light and humorous reading to lighten the load of the last few books I read. interesting quotes: "Order breeds habit, okay? But chaos breeds life." (p. 149)"Like it or
not, in both nature and capitalism, there will always be the powerful and the weak." (p. 430) "Let Miss Beecher attack her wrinkles. I shall attack injustice. There is no short supply of either!" (p. 542) "It made me glad then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen: Blaine the Swindler or Cleveland the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen: Blaine the Swindler or Cleveland the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen: Blaine the Swindler or Cleveland the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen: Blaine the Swindler or Cleveland the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen: Blaine the Swindler or Cleveland the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen: Blaine the Swindler or Cleveland the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen: Blaine the Swindler or Cleveland the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen: Blaine the Swindler or Cleveland the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now that women do not vote, for whom would I have chosen the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "Each then and now the Fornicator?" (p. 677) "
of us passed individually through the birth canal when we came into this world, and each of us will be alone once again at the hour of our death. 'From dust we shall return.' What matters is how, in the interim, we treat each other." (p. 701)2012 education-school germany-german March 20, 2013I have just finished "The hour I first
believed" and I am sitting in front of the computer with contradictory feelings. As a declared fan of Lamb's former novels, I still think he is a genius in portraying the human soul. His grasp of emotional intelligence and his skill in exposing human nature and its inner ups and downs, are masterly laid out to the reader in both a crude and tender way.
The same as in his previous novels, you end up knowing each character as if it was a real human being, with its own flaws and limitations. Having said that, I also have to admit that if this had been my first novel by Lamb, I might not have been so taken up with the author. The formula doesn't work as much as it does in "I know this much is true" or in
"She's come undone". With Lamb's last work, I had to force myself to keep on reading as there where some tedious passages difficult to absorb. The story of Caelum Quirk, a teacher at Columbine High School at the time of the shootings in April 1999, and his wife Maureen,
who also works there as a nurse and who survives the shootings while Caelum is called away by an urgent family business. I was completely shaken by the description of the killings, the facts were exposed in a journalist's style, without literary ornaments, which made all the recollection more real and hard to take in. After the killings we witness
Maureen's psychological decay and Caelum's futile attempts to bring his estranged wife back to normality again. In a nearly decomposing marriage, they decide to move to the old Quirk's family farm in Connecticut. The story starts to get complicated when Maureen is incarcerated for killing a boy while driving under the effect of some anti-
depressants and Caelum is left alone in the farm with the heavy burden of his old ancestors, who hide dark secrets which will change Caelum's understanding of life. Let's say the book could be more like and essay regarding controversial and actual subjects such as gratuitous violence in schools, the condemnation of wars and the abuse of power, the
ethical concept of victim or guilty and whether the punishing system is fair, and finally, the whole American history seen through the eyes of Caelum's ancestors. Mix all that complicate subjects with the emotional display of a deeply well described character who goes through the eyes of Caelum's ancestors. Mix all that complicate subjects with the emotional display of a deeply well described character who goes through the eyes of Caelum's ancestors. Mix all that complicate subjects with the emotional display of a deeply well described character who goes through the eyes of Caelum's ancestors.
emerging a wiser but a humbler person. Caelum comes to accept the inevitable but also, for the first time in his life, starts to believe. So, a too much ambitious project? Maybe too presumptuous? I don't know the answers. I only can say that I was moved by the end of the story, and if a novel can make you feel something it means that the message gets
through somehow. All in all, a difficult but a humbling experience, maybe not for a five stars rate, but still worth the effort. "Beware! He who goes questing for what he needs." "Our ancestors move along with us, in underground rivers and springs too deep for chaos to reach." "What I do know is that we are
powerless to whoever or whatever god is. "January 13, 2009This is a heavy, but gripping read. In the back of my mind I wonder how the people who were involved with Columbine will handle the inevitable media attention to the case but the novel has me hooked. Caelum is trying to live in the aftermath - guilt because he could have said something
about the two students; guilt because he wasn't in the building at the time; guilt because his wife was. And Maureen isn't coping. His life has turned 360 and he's struggling to see the future. So far (about a third of the way thru, and there is no way I can take this home as the poor kids wouldn't get fed!) and I'm rating this five stars. Update 28/11/08
I finished this yesterday and I must admit to sitting there, feeling a little empty (as you do when it's a really good read) and wondering what on earth I was going to read next. I have to say that at the end it is very uplifting and there are no loose ends. That bit in the middle that other people have said is boring? That's the bit that ties it all together.
While I have never been able to finish "I Know This Much Is True" this one is going on my keeper shelf.update 14/01 - sent on to MarthieFebruary 23, 2009This Lamb book was not worth the 10-year wait. I couldn't believe how much he tried to cram into the plot and the poor protagonist's life. Virtual orphan, failed marriages and cheating wives,
Columbine, mentally-ill wife who ends up in prison after killing a young boy, secret mother and doctored birth certificates, mummified babies and Katrina-refugee tenants. All of this interspersed with the story within a story told by his ancestor's letters. What? Caleum couldn't have been at Ground Zero on 9/11? It was just too much. In the after word
Lamb talks about how hard he struggled to find something to write about. It showed. I did however like the cameos made by previous books' characters: Dominick Birdsey and Doloroes. I like the type of stuff but it certainly added to the feel that this author was, clumsily, wrapping up his career. Also? The habit Lamb seems to have developed? Of all of
his characters asking questions instead of making declarative sentences? That really got on my nerves. August 29, 2024DNF at 28%It's been a long time since I've read Wally Lamb, over 20 years, and recently I would read a telephone book
if he wrote it. So I decided to rectify this, So many over-hyped books come out these days and they are mostly met with disappointment from yours truly. Best to dig back to the tried and true and read authors I know are great. Well, he is a great writer, there is no doubt of that, and I was enjoying this one guite a bit. But it began to weigh on me. I read
for escapism. Good or bad, whatever is going on in my life, I do need to check out of reality and immerse myself into an imagined one. But these days, emotional trauma is not something I want to escape to, especially for the two or three weeks it will take me to read this big novel. I knew what I was getting into with this novel, and I didn't think it
would bother me as much as it did, but it did.And, I've read a couple of very helpful reviews saying that the second half with backstory that few people cared about, and I am already hitting the wall with the meandering even a quarter of the way in. No regrets, moving on. Just not the right book for me now. Displaying 1 - 30
of 6,882 reviewsGet help and learn more about the design. "[Lamb] knows just how to let the details of a tragedy unfold without decoration or commentary. He's a master at the kind of direct, unadorned narrative that brings these events alive in all their visceral power. . . . This portrayal of a couple dealing with the asymmetrical effects of trauma is
Lamb at his best, wholly sympathetic, deeply moving." — Ron Charles, Washington Post Book World"Lamb's narrative . . . Lamb is exceptional in his exploration of the direct and indirect impacts of survivor guilt." —
Robin Vidimos, Denver Post"The Hour I First Believed is a moving, sprawling story that seesaws between hope and despair." — Entertainment Weekly"An embracing, troubling book that spans the Civil War to the present, filled with those other Lamb trademarks—a deep
understanding of loss, tempered by compassion, big-heartedness, and that most necessary quality, humor." — Susan Larson, New Orleans Times-Picayune"A page-turner. . . . Lamb remains a storyteller at the top of his game." — Craig Wilson, USA Today "Profound and moving. . . . The beauty of The Hour I First Believed, a soaring novel as amazingly
graceful as the classic hymn that provides the title, is that Lamb never loses sight of the spark of human resilience. . . . Lamb's wonderful novel offers us the promise and power of hope." — Connie Ogle, Miami Herald"Too compelling to put down . . . a richly textured story . . . moving, funny, and completely unpredictable." — Gail Pennington, St. Louis
Post-Dispatch "Every character is rendered with vivid, utterly convincing depth. . . . A heck of a page-turner." — Dallas Morning News "Lamb does an extraordinary job narrating some of the most terrifying tragedies of the past 10 years. . . . This is an epic journey that ponders the inexplicable nature of tragedy and its terrible repercussions. Through
the chaos, Lamb reveals a quiet thread of hope. Grade: A." — Ashley Simpson Shires, Rocky Mountain News"It's part picaresque, part Russian novel, part mystery... ambitious... Caelum is an unusual, provocative character, neither a hero nor an antihero but a regular guy experiencing both the tragic and the absurd. His tone is by turns funny,
irritating, depressive and sentimental—which is to say, recognizably human." — Louisa Thomas, New York Times Book Review"Lamb, a maestro of orchestrating emotion . . . knows how to make his fans' hearts sing." — Corrie Pikul, Elle"Wally Lamb is a remarkable talent." — Columbus Dispatch"Lamb has crafted another affecting, engrossing tome
about complicated, interesting characters." — Cherie Parker, Minneapolis Star Tribune" A soaring novel as amazingly graceful as the classic hymn that provides the title" — Miami Herald" Wally Lamb is a remarkable talent... In his latest novel, he nimbly weaves real events, especially the Columbine school shootings, with the fictional story of Caelum
Quirk." — Alan Johnson, Columbus Dispatch "Every character and society and how they mold one another, but under Mr. Lamb's incandescent stewardship, it's also a thriller and a heck of a page-turner." — Joy Tipping, Dallas Morning
News"What a comfort to get lost in Lamb's characters.... [Lamb's] pacing is superb: Sections of the story expand to accommodate a mix of characters, yet scenes don't linger overlong." — Janet Okoben, Cleveland Plain Dealer"Lamb does an extraordinary job narrating some of the most terrifying tragedies of the past 10 years....an epic journey. Grade
A." — Rocky Mountain News "When you put Lamb's newest novel down, it will be reluctantly. It's that good...Lamb is a writer to be envied...he gives birth to characters so unforgettable they become part of his readers' psyche." — Knoxville News-Sentinel "Weaving the various storylines into something beautiful and rewarding took great skill—
something Wally Lamb has in spades." — Santa Cruz Sentinel" A rich and sprawling story." — Anne Stephenson, Arizona Republic "This epic novel (700-plus pages) is a profound meditation on how, against all odds, lives derailed by chaos are filled with hope once again." — Hallmark Magazine "The Hour I First Believed is a nuanced, multi-level and
omni-dimensional story...It's a wonderful, honest book." — The Day When high school teacher Caelum Quirk and his wife, Maureen, a school nurse, move to Littleton, Colorado, they both get jobs at Columbine High School. In April 1999, while Caelum is away, Maureen finds herself in the library at Columbine, cowering in a cabinet and expecting to
be killed. Miraculously, she survives, but at a cost: she is unable to recover from the trauma. When Caelum and Maureen flee to an illusion of safety on the Quirk family's Connecticut farm, they discover that the effects of chaos are not easily put right, and further tragedy ensues. Wally Lamb is the author of five New York Times bestselling novels:
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