



## 11/22/63

BY STEPHEN KING

Read Between The Wines Book Club is an informal group of women who gather once a month to discuss a book they have read, while sharing a meal, wine and friendship.

Stephen King is best known for his scary novels and we had been assured that this book was not like the other 50 he had written. In fact, the scariest thing about this book was that it is 849 pages... overwhelming for many recreational readers. King recounts that he originally tried to write this book back in 1973. But, he realized that "the wound was still too fresh" then and the American public were not ready to relive the loss. With the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 2013, we thought this would be a fitting book to read and review. The time seems right.

This is a time travel story that is set in 1987 as the base year and with repeated travel back to 1958. Our hero and narrator, Jake, is a 35 year old high school teacher in a small town in Maine. When a local diner owner becomes terminally ill, he confides in Jake and burdens him with his secrets and personal mission. Jake is asked to carry out the mission: go back in time and prevent JFK's assassination. This request was prefaced with a sample trip back to 1958 via a time portal that the diner owner literally stumbled upon in his walk-in at the diner.

Apparently, the diner owner had been making regular trips via the portal for years but never made it there long enough to get to 11/22/63 since with each trip he aged and now it was obvious that he would not have enough time for another attempt before he dies. Jake accepts the mission and makes multiple trips, each time trying to undo wrongs from his present day along the way. All well meaning, but boy can it foul up other events and lives each time you try to fix just one. Perfect examples of the "butterfly effect" as first described by Edward Lorenz regarding the chaos caused by time travel.

During his travels to the past, Jake, of course, falls in love. Now what should he do? Be selfish and follow his heart or be a martyr and try to save the world? Why can't he do both? Throughout the novel, we learn about history surrounding that fateful day in Dallas. King has carefully researched Lee Harvey Oswald's life, where he lived, what he was like, where he worked ... He has his hero seek him out and live among Oswald and his family to have a firm grip on the best method, place, and time to stop the attempt on JFK's life.

The details of time travel are enhanced by descriptions of the pop culture of each decade involved and are very nostalgic in this gripping story. Most of us in the book club had our doubts of whether or not we would be able to get through the whole book before we were to next meet to discuss. Needless to say, since we were all so engrossed in the story, none of us could put it down until we finished reading it all (save a few)! Oh, yes, there is some gore, some symbolism and some of the ridiculous. But it is a very good read.

Some wished it had ended differently (the romantics) but others found it suitable and fitting. Our discussion included the concepts of things such as playing God, realizing that even the smallest aspect of our day-to-day lives can affect others' lives in ways we could never imagine. We got off on a tangent about "where were you when Kennedy was shot?". And "would his living have really been a good thing for the world?" from a course-of-history perspective. Would Viet Nam have happened? Medicare? Civil Rights?

When you think about the threads of lives intertwined in this story you can't help but be reminded of Sir Walter Scott's quote "Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive". We give this book four and a half stars. You will feel like you really accomplished something when you turn that last page.

*Recommendations:* If you can't get through a novel this size, consider the audio version and listen in the car. There are many other conspiracy theories in the form of fiction and non-fiction books on the subject of JFK to read and we are sure there will be much ado in 2013 for the 50th anniversary of JFK's death, so no need to promote it here. There is always the 1991 movie "JFK" directed by Oliver Stone starring Kevin Costner. But we will go off on another tangent and recommend watching the 2004 movie "The Butterfly Effect" starring Ashton Kutcher. Believe it or not, the film actually won the Pegasus Audience Award at the Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival, and was nominated for Best Science Fiction Film at the Saturn Awards as well as received nods in the thriller category at the Teen Choice Awards.

So, Until next time,  
"Read Between the Wines",  
your Harford County book reviewers

The Club would give **11/22/63**,  
by Stephen King



### Read Between the Wines Book Club

(l-r front row) Susan Theuns, Bobbie Bingham, Theresa Seiter,  
Jane Pessagno, Susan Luckan  
(l-r back row) Audra Caplan, Diane Sengstacke, Debi Williams,  
Judy Sanders, Deborah Betkey, Carolyn Evans, Karmen Slezak,  
Kim Wagner, Marge Pearce