



One True Thing: A Novel

By Anna Quindlen

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • “[Anna Quindlen] writes passionately . . . painstakingly uncovering all the intensity, suspicion and primitive love that bonds mothers and daughters.”—*The Boston Globe*

Ellen Gulden is enjoying her career as a successful magazine writer in New York City when she learns that her mother, Kate, is dying of cancer. Ellen’s father insists that she quit her job and return home to become a caregiver. A high-powered career woman, Ellen has never felt she had much in common with her mother, a homemaker and the heart of their family. Yet as Ellen begins to spend time with Kate, she discovers many surprising truths, not only about herself, but also about the woman she thought she knew so well.

Later, when Ellen is accused of the mercy killing of her mother, she must not only defend her own life but make a difficult choice—either accept responsibility for an act she did not commit or divulge the name of the person she believes committed a painful act of love.

Praise for *One True Thing*

“A triumph.”—*San Francisco Chronicle*

“We leave *One True Thing* stimulated and challenged, more thoughtful than when we began.”—*Los Angeles Times*

“Like a brush with mortality, *One True Thing* leaves the reader feeling grateful, wide awake, lucky to be alive.”—**Michael Chabon**

“It calls you back for another read. . . . This is a book of catharsis.”—*The Denver Post*

“Fiercely compassionate and frank.” —*Elle*

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One True Thing: A Novel By Anna Quindlen Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

One True Thing is a film starring Meryl Streep as the cancer-stricken homemaker mother, Renee Zellweger as the daughter who quits her top-dog job to care for her, and William Hurt as the chilly professor who lets the women in the family do the heavy emotional lifting dying requires. But the real star of the project remains former *New York Times* everyday-life columnist Anna Quindlen, who quit her top-dog job to write novels (and who took time off from college to nurse her own dying mother).

Quindlen hit a nerve with *One True Thing*, which captures an experience seldom dealt with in popular culture. (One exception: the sensitive 1996 film with Streep and Leonardo DiCaprio of the play *Marvin's Room*.) Though the heroine of *One True Thing*, Ellen Gulden, is a golden girl with two brothers who'll lose her career the instant she steps off the fast track, society concurs with her dad, who says, "It seems to me another woman is what's wanted here."

The book is a mother-daughter tale that should please fans of, say, *The Joy Luck Club*. It's not flashy, but it has a deep feel for the way children often discover, just before it's too late, who their parents really are. "Our parents are never people to us," Ellen writes, "they're always character traits.... There is only room in the lifeboat of your life for one, and you always choose yourself, and turn your parents into whatever it takes to keep you afloat." The mercy-killing subplot isn't gripping, but the palpable sense of deepening family intimacy certainly is. --Tim Appelo

From Publishers Weekly

Quindlen (Object Lessons) again examines delicate family dynamics with this resonating tale of a matriarch's illness and the tempest of emotion that swirls around her deterioration and death. Manhattan psychiatrist Ellen Gulden recalls the dark time nearly a decade ago when she was accused of administering a fatal dosage of morphine to her mother, who was suffering with terminal cancer. Back then, intelligent, overachieving Ellen was forced by her domineering father to abandon a promising magazine career and assume the role of companion and caretaker at her family's suburban home. While tending her failing mother, Ellen discovered some harsh truths about herself, her parents and the relationships they had developed over the years. Following Kate Gulden's autopsy, circumstantial evidence-as far-reaching as a high-school essay she wrote championing euthanasia-accumulated against Ellen, and she was arrested. Now cleared of charges and estranged from her father, Ellen speculates on what really happened during the final hours of Kate's life. Quindlen's talent for weaving a believable reality from her characters' complex sentiments shines here, and her portraits are full-bodied and carefully drawn. Unfortunately, Ellen's digressions are often too broad in scope, incorporating peripheral characters and aiming to discuss several themes (i.e., friendship, sex, the cost of ambition) at once; these introspections occasionally slow the narrative, especially in the novel's second half. These stylistic points aside, Quindlen's story sustains an emotional momentum, and she addresses difficult issues with compassion.

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From Library Journal

The second novel by this Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist follows the psychological travails of Ellen Gulden, who against all personal inclinations returns home to care for her dying mother, Kate, and eventually finds herself accused of mercy-killing. Ellen, an intelligent though not particularly warm person, has spent her life earning her professor father's approval. After achieving high school valedictorian and Harvard honors, she aspires to advance her New York career. At her father's insistence, however, she leaves her job

and takes on the role of nurse and homemaker. Through long hours as companion to Kate, she discovers the real value of her mother's life. As in *Object Lessons* (LJ 3/1/91), Quindlen's gifts for characterization and clear description provide insight into families and the human heart. Recommended for all fiction collections. --*Sheila Riley, Smithsonian Inst. Libs., Washington, D.C.*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary McCollum:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? Sure, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or even read a book allowed One True Thing: A Novel? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time using your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with their opinion or you have other opinion?

Charles Jose:

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David Wade:

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