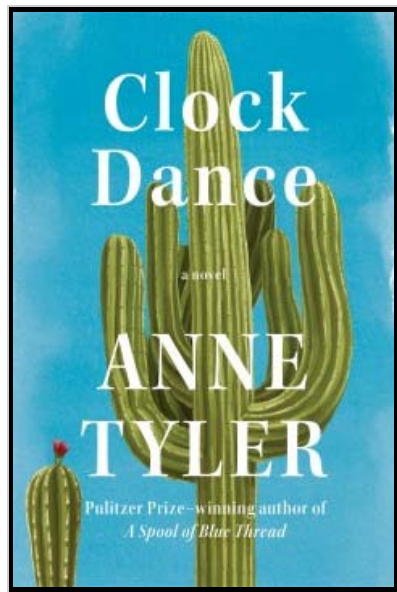




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Clock Dance

A novel

by Anne Tyler

Price: \$26.95 (Hardcover)

Published: July 10, 2018

★★★★★

Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher: A charming new novel of self-discovery and second chances from the best-selling, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *A Spool of Blue Thread*. Willa Drake can count on one hand the defining moments of her life. In 1967, she is a schoolgirl coping with her mother's sudden disappearance. In 1977, she is a college coed considering a marriage proposal. In 1997, she is a young widow trying to piece her life back together. And in 2017, she yearns to be a grandmother but isn't sure she ever will be. Then, one day, Willa receives a startling phone call from a stranger. Without fully understanding why, she flies across the country to Baltimore to look after a young woman she's never met, her nine-year-old daughter, and their dog, Airplane. This impulsive decision will lead Willa into uncharted territory--surrounded by eccentric neighbors who treat each other like family, she finds solace and fulfillment in unexpected places. A bewitching novel of hope and transformation, *Clock Dance* gives us Anne Tyler at the height of her powers.

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About The Author

Anne Tyler

ANNE TYLER is the author of more than twenty novels. Her eleventh novel, *Breathing Lessons*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1988. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

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What We Say

The latest Anne Tyler novel is -- I believe -- my first Anne Tyler novel, after years of eying her ever-growing stack of acclaimed novels. Where to begin, I wondered? The answer, finally, is here. The story is modest in a very appealing manner. Its rather intriguing structure begins with two little sisters who have a patient father and an abusive mother. It jumps forward in time to college and a startlingly abrupt marriage and then jumps again and again in short bursts until we arrive at 2017 with two-thirds of the novel still to come. One of those little girls is Willa, now the very accommodating wife of her second husband, Peter. A woman she's never heard of calls out of the blue and demands Willa come to

Baltimore and take care of Willa's daughter in law and granddaughter. Actually, the girl is not Willa's daughter in law and the little girl is not her granddaughter. Willa's son dated the woman briefly but the child isn't his and Willa has never even met them. Nonetheless, the young woman was shot (shot!) and is in the hospital and the little girl is alone and this neighbor is at her wit's end. For reasons even she can't explain, Willa heads to Baltimore even though none of this has anything to do with her. Willa's husband Peter grumpily joins her; Willa is so unassuming one can imagine he felt she simply wasn't capable of the journey on her own. (Airplane flights, driving, strangers -- it's all a bit much.) Why does Willa do it? And why is she so happy befriending Denise (the ex her son dumped for the wife of another neighbor, it turns out) and Denise's pre-teen daughter Cheryl? Everyone has an idea and shares it with Willa. But it's surely nice to be needed and Willa hasn't felt needed or appreciated in a long time. Tyler has an almost invisible presence here, though she does have a gift for ending chapters with a sting, a final line that tilts your perspective or unsettles you or provides a moment of grace. (Like a classic New Yorker short story, I'd say.) By and large, you simply see the people in this world along with the thousand and one accommodations they make in life, sometimes a thousand and one in an hour, it seems. "Clock Dance" passed effortlessly and with pleasure and yet, it mattered too. Not knowing Tyler, I wasn't sure if this was the sort of book that might involve dramatic changes at the end or whether that sort of thing just wasn't done in Tyler-land. The finale was satisfying but I'd suggest it runs exactly two paragraphs too long. Tyler found the perfect ending and then -- who can blame her? -- offered up a coda with a showy simile as a sort of curtain bow. I haven't a clue as to whether long-time fans will see this as a triumph or just more of the same, which would be just fine after some 22 novels. I do know I'll be reading more. -- Michael Giltz

What Others Say

"A stellar addition to Tyler's prodigious catalogue . . . A bittersweet, hope-filled look at two quirky families that have broken apart and are trying to find their way back to one another . . . The cast of sharply drawn characters dominates in ways both reflective and raucous across a series of emotional events."
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred, boxed)

"Tyler, a master of honey enchantment and sly social evisceration whose storytelling finesse has propelled more than 20 novels, now delivers an especially lithe and enlivening tale . . . Tyler's bedazzling yet fathoms-deep feel-good novel is wrought with nimble humor, intricate understanding of emotions and family, place and community —and bounteous pleasure in quirkiness, discovery, and renewal . . . Ensnaing . . . Quintessential Tyler . . . Brilliant, charming, and book-club-ready."
—Donna Seaman, *Booklist* (starred)

"Tyler's characteristic warmth and affection for her characters are engaging as ever. . . [They are] all vibrantly portrayed with her usual low-key gusto and bracingly dark humor . . . Power dynamics are never simple in Tyler's portraits of marriage." —*Kirkus Reviews*

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