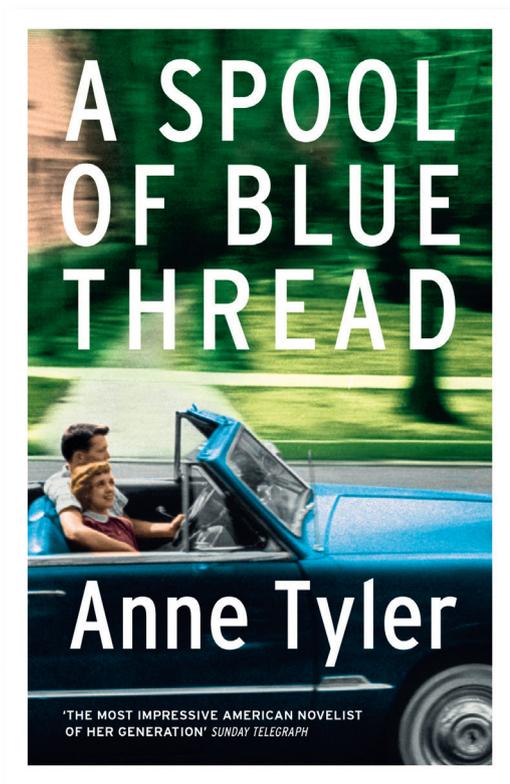


Reader's Guide



Other novels by Anne Tyler

If Morning Ever Comes (1964)
The Tin Can Tree (1965)
A Slipping Down Life (1969)
The Clock Winder (1972)
Celestial Navigation (1974)
Searching for Caleb (1975)
Earthly Possessions (1977)
Morgan's Passing (1980)
Dinner At the Homesick Restaurant (1982)
The Accidental Tourist (1985)
Breathing Lessons (1988)
Saint Maybe (1991)
Tumble Tower (1993)
Ladder of Years (1995)
A Patchwork Planet (1996)
Back When We Were Grownups (2001)
The Amateur Marriage (2004)
Digging to America (2006)
Noah's Compass (2009)
The Beginner's Goodbye (2012)

A Spool of Blue Thread

Anne Tyler

Chatto & Windus

www.themanbookerprize.com

#FinestFiction

About the author

Anne Tyler was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in October 1941 and grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina. She graduated from Duke University and Columbia University, New York and worked as a librarian and bibliographer before moving to Maryland.

She published her first book, *If Morning Ever Comes*, in 1964 and since then a new book has appeared every few years. Tyler's ninth novel, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, was a finalist for both the Pulitzer Prize and the PEN/Faulkner Award in 1983. *The Accidental Tourist* was awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1985, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1986 and was made into a movie starring William Hurt and Geena Davis. *Breathing Lessons* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1989. *Ladder of Years* was shortlisted for the inaugural Orange Prize for Fiction in 1996, and *Digging for America* was shortlisted for the same prize in 2007.

A Spool of Blue Thread

'It was a beautiful, breezy, yellow-and-green afternoon...' This is the way Abby Whitshank always begins the story of how she and Red fell in love that day in July 1959. The whole family on the porch, relaxed, half-listening as their mother tells the same tale they have heard so many times before. And yet this gathering is different. Abby and Red are getting older, and decisions must be made about how best to look after them and their beloved family home. They've all come, even Denny, who can usually be relied on only to please himself.

From that porch we spool back through three generations of the Whitshanks, witnessing the events, secrets and unguarded moments that have come to define who and what they are. And while all families like to believe they are special, round that kitchen table over all those years we see played out the hopes and fears, the rivalries and tensions of families everywhere – the essential nature of family life.

Discussion points

The novel opens and closes with Denny. Do you think he's the main character? If not, who is?

Why is Denny so resentful of Stem? Why is he so secretive about his life?

Do Red and Abby have favourite children and grandchildren? Who do you think each one favours?

The novel isn't structured chronologically. How does Tyler use shifts in time to reveal character and change the reader's perception?

On the train at the end of the novel, Denny sits next to a teenage boy who cries quietly. What is the significance of this scene?

Themed reading

Marilynne Robinson *Home*
Alice McDermott *Someone*
Ann Patchett *This Is the Story of a Happy Marriage*
Matthew Thomas *We Are Not Ourselves*

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
<http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/editions/a-spool-of-blue-thread/9780701189518>
<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/15/anne-tyler-interview-i-am-not-a-spiritual-person-spool-of-blue-thread>