



## ***Good to a Fault by Marina Endicott***

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### **About the author:**

Marina Endicott was born in Golden, BC, and grew up with three sisters and a brother, mostly in Nova Scotia and Toronto. She worked as an actor and director before going to England, where she began to write fiction. After London she went west to Saskatoon, where she was dramaturge at the Saskatchewan Playwrights Centre for many years before going farther west to Mayerthorpe, Alberta; she now lives in Edmonton. Her first novel, *Open Arms*, was short-listed for the Amazon/Books In Canada First Novel award in 2002. Her second, *Good to a Fault*, was a finalist for the 2008 Giller Prize and won the 2009 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book, Canada/Caribbean region. *The Little Shadows*, her latest book, longlisted for the 2011 Giller Prize, was a finalist for this year's Governor General's Award and will be published in the UK and Australia in spring 2012. She is at work on a new novel, *Hughtopia*.

Source: Author's website (<http://marinaendicott.com>)

### **About this book:**

In a moment of self-absorption, Clara Purdy's life takes a sharp left turn when she crashes into a beat-up car carrying an itinerant family of six. The Gage family had been travelling to a new life in Fort McMurray, but bruises on the mother, Lorraine, prove to be late-stage cancer rather than remnants of the accident. Recognizing their need as her responsibility, Clara tries to do the right thing and moves the children, husband, and horrible grandmother into her own house—then has to cope with the consequences of practical goodness.

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As Lorraine walks the borders of death, Clara expands into life, finding purpose, energy, and unexpected love amidst the hard, unaccustomed work of sharing her days. But the burden is not Clara's alone: Lorraine's children must cope with divided loyalties and Lorraine must live with her growing, unpayable debt to Clara—and the feeling that Clara has taken her place.

*Good to a Fault* won the 2009 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book, Canada/Caribbean region. It was short-listed for the 2008 Giller Prize, longlisted for the Dublin IMPAC Prize, and was featured on CBC Radio's Canada Reads in 2010.

Source: Author's website (<http://marinaendicott.com>)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. *"None of the words in church made sense to her. The Creed --- what part of that could she say she believed? Resurrection of the body, life everlasting, not those... She thought of her mother and father falling to shreds in their graves, and then, sharply, of Lorraine."* Throughout *Good to a Fault*, there seems to be a tension between faith, or religious sensibility, and the more institutionalized religion of church ritual and scripture. Do you think the novel moves towards reconciliation between the two? How do you think attitudes toward faith and religion have changed in the twenty-first century?
2. *Good to a Fault* is told from a number of very different points of view. What is the effect of telling the story from a range of perspectives rather than from a single point of view?
3. Aside from a literal collision, what does the collision between Clary's car and the Dart represent? What differences are immediately apparent between Clary



and the Gages?

4. What does Dolly get out of her wanderings throughout the neighborhood? What do books (whether stolen or bought) and reading offer her?
5. As time passes, Clary is alternately “worn out with all this eventful life” and increasingly dedicated to taking care of the Gage children. What is Clary’s motivation in keeping the children? How does that motivation change or develop throughout the book?
6. What is Clary’s initial reaction when Lorraine unexpectedly recovers? Why does Lorraine cut Clary out of the equation so suddenly?
7. *Good to a Fault* is peppered with quotations from poets --- Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dylan Thomas, in particular, figure prominently. How does their inclusion in the narrative enhance the book?
8. How do you define the concept of home? How has *Good to a Fault* altered that concept?

Source: Reading Group Guides (<http://www.readinggroupguides.com>)

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