

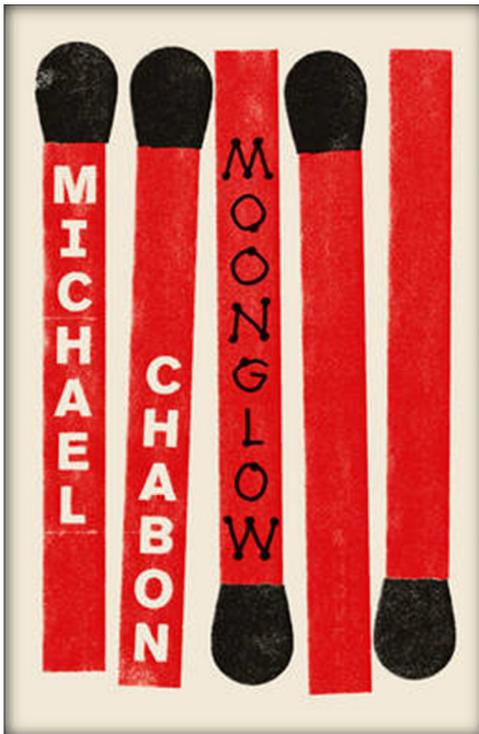


Helping you choose  
your next book

4<sup>th</sup>

## LoveReading Reader reviews of **Moonglow** by Michael Chabon

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



**Ed Robson**

***'Moonglow' is a triumph of narrative fiction in the tradition of character-driven, post-war Jewish American storytelling.***

*Chabon's writing brings to mind other accomplished Jewish authors such as Philip Roth and Howard Jacobson. Like them, he writes with a loquaciousness infused with a deep understanding of the human condition. He also wears his erudition lightly – I have rarely read such a long novel so quickly.*

*There is nothing new in 'Moonglow's' premise: a young family member recounting the life story of a flawed, irascible grandparent. Equally, there are no real shocks in the narrative – we know the*

*central character is dying and the narrator does not rely on grand revelations or plot twists to drive the story. Instead, what we are given is a wholly human tale that presents rounded human beings whose lives are defined by disappointment – yet Chabon manages the difficult trick of making their life stories vibrant and engaging without ever descending into forced pessimism.*

*The character of the narrator is deliberately undeveloped, an effective approach which ensures the reader's attention is always on the central character – the curmudgeonly grandfather, scarred by his wartime experiences and doomed to frustration in terms of love and work. If there is a weakness to the narrative, it is in the way Chabon presents what is a fictional story as biography – albeit with reference to real historical events and characters – with distracting footnotes. The story and the characters are strong enough not to need this device! Enthusiastically recommended.*

## **Humaira Kauser**

***From the narrative voice to the assortment of characters, this book just packs a punch with gloriousness. What a wonderful and heartfelt book.***

*I wasn't expecting much but this book out did itself. Hats off to Michael Chabon because 'Moonglow' is now one of my favourites. From the narrative voice to the assortment of characters, this book just packs a punch with gloriousness*

## **Jo-anne Atkinson**

***The story of a Jewish man in the 20th Century - written as a biography but purely fiction. A tale that encompasses crime, war and mental health but linked by an obsession with space travel.***

*Michael's grandfather is dying slowly and painfully of cancer. Over the course of a week he tells his story, high on medication it is hard to know what is the truth and what is his grandfather's version of reality. Growing up poor in Philadelphia her manages to get an education and begin a lifetime fascination with space exploration. During the war he discovers secrets about the V2 rocket but also the truth about what happened to his fellow Jews. After the war he marries a woman who brings a lot of problems, not least her mental instability, and this causes him to commit a reckless crime which lands him in jail. Finally in his twilight years he finds peace and purpose in Florida.*

*Although the protagonist is called Michael Chabon, the author is clear to point out that this is a work of fiction however it is written as though it were a stream of consciousness and an ode to family. The stories do not follow consecutively and explanations for actions only become clear as the book continues but that is part of the charm of this story. Chabon's writing is beautiful, he is descriptive but not florid and leaves the reader to fill in many of the gaps. The tales are quite far-fetched at times but, again, the line between the truth and fiction are blurred in the narrative as well as the entire premise of the book. What does shine through is the sheer readability of the story and idea of life for the Jewish diaspora after the war. Grandfather is a complex character who is hard to read, Grandmother is a woman whose sufferings before she entered the story mark her for life.*

[www.pluckedhighbrow.wordpress.com](http://www.pluckedhighbrow.wordpress.com)

## **Phylippa Smithson**

***This had such potential - grandfather revealing to his grandson his past lived during some of the most remarkable times of recent US history – but was disjointed and left me disappointed.***

*Influenced by extra strong pain killers, the past of an ageing man is confessed to a grandson who has travelled to spend the final days with his grandfather to say his goodbyes. It takes a week for the confessions of a past lived to the full in times of turbulence but as the pain takes hold, is what is being shared truth or an expression of a life in the mind of a man hallucinating under the power of medication?*

*Growing up poor in Philadelphia he has a self determination to get an education and is rewarded by discovering an interest in everything to do with space exploration which runs through his life. He experiences the war and, in some incredibly hard hitting prose, he learns the truth of what actually happened to so very many of his fellow Jews.*

*Marriage follows the war but his wife is inflicted by mental illness and in trying to cope with the tension and challenges this brings, the grandfather commits a crime and in a moment of thoughtless action, he lands himself in a US jail.*

*Definitely worth reading but it was confusing and whilst the author claimed it to be fiction, I think I would have been more engaged had it been based on real life.*

### **Peter Mynehan**

*A difficult read and not one for beginners. **Quite a difficult read with a difficult concept.***

*The tone in which the book is written is one of disdain and anger that the author has towards his father.*

### **Andrea Rayner**

*'Moonglow' is the life story a dying man tells his grandson. He reveals stories from his own past that have previously been secret. They cover the second half of twentieth-century American history.*

*Throughout his life he has been taciturn but because he is dying, he tells his grandson stories from his own past which have hitherto been kept secret. These adventures span many decades. They start before World War II and finish close to the end of the twentieth century. They include his love for his French wife,*

*who survived the Holocaust but suffers from mental health problems, including a 'Skinless Horse' that torments her. It also covers his own time in the army, as well as a spell in prison after trying to strangle his boss when he loses his job. We find out so much about the central protagonist's life and yet we never know his name. His story is set against a backdrop of modern American history, including the war and the Space Shuttle missions.*

*These adventures are snapshots of American life. They create **a rich tapestry of characters and events from the latter half of the twentieth century**. They also document pre- and post-war life of the Jewish community. The main protagonist's lifelong search for meaning echoes the existential angst imbued in numerous aspects of contemporary American culture.*

### **Angela Rhodes**

*Everyone has a granddad that tells stories, stories of daring escapades, stories that let the listener imagine they are the ones, in the stories.*

*'Moonglow' has one such granddad, one who is on his deathbed and due to the strong painkillers that Granddad tells from his setting explosives on a bridge in Washington, from Jewish slums, before the war, to his meeting of his wife,*

**Michael Chabon's latest book will keep the reader glued and entertained** as the stories unfold, ones that can be true and ones that can't. Can they?

### **Jane Brown**

*I was fortunate to be off for the all of the holidays and was lucky to be asked by Lovereading.co.uk to review this book.*

**Every so often a book comes your way that is so endearing and you think this is why I read and love reviewing books and 'Moonglow' is just that.**

*The author was inspired by his grandfather and during his end of life care to write down his grandfather's stories. So with the effects of his analgesic he digs into his past and tells tales of his life, history and some amazing stories.*

*Whether this is truth or fiction it is up to the reader to decide.*

*The reader is made to think about life, relatives - just how much do you know about the lives they lead/led.*

*It is emotional and best of all a great read. Will be in the top ten when published*

*this month in January 2017.*

*What a great book to begin my blog in 2017.*

<http://browniebookworld.blogspot.co.uk/>

## **Lucy Bunce**

***Taking in themes from the space race to the holocaust, this is a work of fiction which makes the reader rethink facts.***

*I found the first third of 'Moonglow' hard to get into. The story time hops, and as with any story of that nature, it takes a while to work out when and where you are. The book is premised on the narrator speaking to his grandfather on his deathbed and recounting the grandfather's life story. As is the nature of such conversations, the account rarely uses names and instead is littered with ""my grandfather, her mother, his daughter"" etc. which was confusing. The grandfather's name was only discovered towards the end of the book and the fact that the narrator is in fact Michael Chabon took me a while to work out! And that, is a curious part of the book. As the acknowledgements reveal, the characters are entirely fictitious so why write in this faux-autobiographical way? It reminds me of Sweet Caress by William Boyd. A book where the insertion of captioned photographs of the era lead the reader to assume the story is a biography rather than fiction.*

*The second two thirds of the book were far easier to grasp. Once Chabon had settled and allowed me 3 or 4 chapters within a single time period I managed to work out the relationships and the eras covered. The underlying themes of the book cover the race to the moon, mental health and the holocaust. The plundering of Nazi Germany for scientists after the war is not news and there's long been a suspicion that some of these were more implicated in Hitler's final solution than we'd wanted to believe. Chabon left me thinking, about the role of ethics in science, about the foundations of rocket science and the ways in which mental health issues are dealt with by families.*

Follow Lucy on Twitter: @loobey41

## **Tina Tse**

***A book that lays out the human condition, exploring the different truths that make up our lives.***

*The narrator sits by his grandfather's deathbed as the old man reminisces over*

his life and provides a confession of sorts to his grandson.

*Just like memories, the story is told in disjointed episodes jumping backwards and forwards in space and time. This did make it quite difficult to follow at first. This was not helped by certain descriptions that felt rather drawn out, e.g. some of those dealing with the war.*

*Others, however, were much more successful. Particularly poignant was where the narrator's mother was able to describe four photos from her childhood photo album that had gone missing.*

*A key theme throughout the book was the exploration of truth and how it appeared to the different characters. As the story unfolded, I found myself constantly reassessing the original version.*

*Given the excitement surrounding this new book by Michael Charon, I did expect more but I am very grateful to have had the chance to review the book.*

### **Alfred Nobile**

***This was a book I really struggled with.....Not that the writing wasn't good. It was.*** Also the premise was good. A grandfather telling his grandson of his life.

***But the rambling way the narrative was told really grated on me.***

*The time and place shifts annoyed me and I found for me it spoiled the narrative of the story. I am willing to concede this was clever ploy by the author. An old man at the end of his life would ramble but this did not appeal to me.*

*I was disappointed that I did not enjoy this book but for various reasons I could not. Thanks to [lovereadng.co.uk](http://lovereadng.co.uk) for the ARC.*

### **Edel Waugh**

*This is the story about a young man who interviews his grandfather about the fascinating and astonishing life he led. Now in old age he relives his colourful past as he tells his grandson the ups and downs and the people he met that shaped him to who he is now as he nears the end of his life.*

*I loved the idea behind this book and I think it was orchestrated very well, each chapter was a look into a certain part of his life. There was enough action from the grandfathers past to make you keep flicking the pages but not so much where it became vastly unbelievable. The story comes across more as the grandfather telling you it rather than the grandson, either way it was **a fine***

***story about a life lived to the fullest and it left me with plenty to think of long after finishing it. If you enjoy a story about a lifetime of one man's experiences in life, love, and hope then this is the book for you.***

**Annette Woolfson**

*Wow! How do you even begin to describe this tour-de-force by Michael Chabon? Are we reading a novel, a history book, an autobiographical account? Chabon manages to combine them all and then add humour, moments of deep sadness, hatred, love, anger, forgiveness...and more.*

***There is magic in the writing and in the slow unfolding of the story of a remarkable man, living in remarkable times. But at its core it is a story of love, a story beautifully told.***