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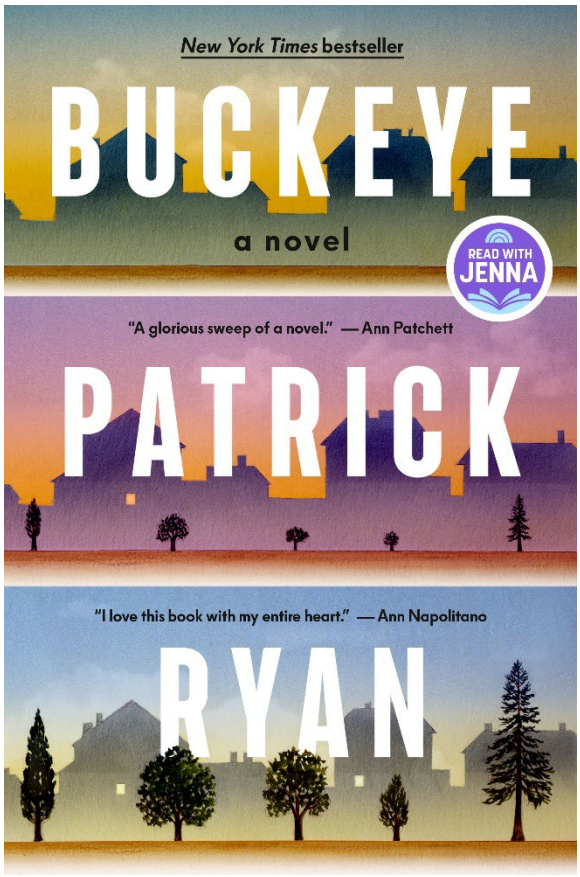
Buckeye
by Patrick Ryan

Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

Buckeye by Patrick Ryan

Included in the Kit:

- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestions



Book summary

In Bonhomie, Ohio, a stolen moment of passion, sparked in the exuberant aftermath of the Allied victory in Europe, binds Cal Jenkins, a man wounded not in war but by his inability to serve in it, to Margaret Salt, a woman trying to obscure her past. Cal's wife, Becky, has a spiritual gift: She is a seer who can conjure the dead, helping families connect with those they've lost. Margaret's husband, Felix, is serving on a Navy cargo ship, out of harm's way—until a telegram suggests that the unthinkable might have happened.

Later, as the country reconstructs in the postwar boom, a secret grows in Bonhomie—but nothing stays buried forever in a small town. Against the backdrop of some of the most transformative decades in modern America, the consequences of that long-ago encounter ripple through the next generation of both families, compelling them to reexamine who they thought they were and what the future might hold.

(Source: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/716991/buckeye-a-read-with-jenna-pick-by-patrick-ryan/)

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Meet the Author

Patrick Ryan is the author of the novel *Buckeye*. He is also the author of the story collections *The Dream Life of Astronauts* (named one of the Best Books of the Year by the *St. Louis Times-Dispatch*, *LitHub, Refinery 29, and Electric Literature*, and longlisted for The Story Prize) and *Send Me*. His work has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories*, the anthology *Tales of Two Cities*, and elsewhere. The former associate editor of *Granta*, he is the editor of the literary magazine *One Story* and lives in New York City.

(Source: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/60359/patrick-ryan/)



Photo: © Fred Blair

Discussion Questions

1. Each character struggles with the gap between who they are and who they're expected to be. Which character's internal conflict resonated most with you? Why is being true to yourself so difficult?
2. Buckeye stretches over more than 450 pages and covers over 50 years. Did the book feel long or short to you? Slow or rushed or just right?
3. Before this debut novel, Patrick Ryan was primarily known for his collections of short stories. Do you detect any influence of the short story form on this novel?
4. Ryan creates two families' worth of memorable characters in Cal, Becky, Margaret, Felix, Skip and Tom. Who was your favorite character and why? Did the character(s) you were most rooting for switch at all over the course of the novel?

5. The fictional Bonhomie, Ohio is the backdrop to the story. How familiar are you with small-town America? Did the setting ring true to you? How does the small-town setting intensify the impact of secrets?
6. War runs as an underlying presence throughout the novel. How does war affect the characters, both those who serve and those who stay behind?
7. Cal's disability shapes his experience from childhood onward. How does Ryan portray Cal's interior life, and did you find his perspective authentic? How do other characters' reactions to his disability reflect the attitudes of that era?
8. The author deliberately chose to make Becky's spiritual gift genuine rather than portraying her as a fraud. How does this decision affect the story and your connection to her character?
9. How does the book explore what it means to build a life with someone over decades? What did you take away about long-term relationships, whether romantic, platonic, familial or other?
10. Discuss the impact of secrets in the book and their ripple effects. What is the difference between a mistake and a secret? How do the lies protecting secrets cause more damage than the original wrongdoings?
11. Forgiveness is a central theme in the novel, and something that requires ongoing effort rather than a single moment of grace. How does the way in which the characters respond to their mistakes define them? Which characters achieve forgiveness, and which cannot? What makes the difference?

(Source: https://bookclubs.com/discussion-guides/buckeye)

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Recipes

Johnny Marzetti Casserole

Ingredients:



- 8 ounces rotini pasta
- 1 pound ground beef
- ½ pound bulk mild Italian sausage
- ¾ cup chopped onion
- ¼ cup chopped celery
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon minced green bell pepper
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 (15 ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1 (14.4 ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 2 cups shredded Italian cheese blend
- 1 ½ cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease a 7x11-inch casserole dish with cooking spray.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add rotini and cook until tender yet firm to the bite, 6 to 8 minutes; drain. Run cold water over pasta to stop it from cooking further.

While the pasta is cooking, cook ground beef and sausage in a large skillet over medium-high heat until completely browned and crumbly, 7 to 10 minutes. Add onion, celery, garlic, and bell pepper; cook and stir until vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat and stir in tomato sauce and diced tomatoes. Let cool for 5 minutes.

Spread pasta over the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle Italian cheese blend over rotini, then pour meat sauce over top. Cover the dish with heavy-duty aluminum foil.

Bake in the preheated oven for 45 minutes. Remove the foil and sprinkle Cheddar cheese over the casserole. Continue to bake until Cheddar has melted, about 5 minutes. Rest for 10 minutes before serving.

(Source: https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/143161/johnny-marzetti-casserole)

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Easy Buckeye Recipe

Ingredients:



- 2 cups (475 g) creamy peanut butter (not "natural" peanut butter)
- ½ cup (113 g) unsalted butter softened
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar firmly packed
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 ¼ cups (405 g) powdered sugar
- 2 cups (340 g) semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil or vegetable shortening

Directions:

Combine peanut butter and butter in the bowl of a stand mixer and beat until well-combined. Add brown sugar, vanilla extract, and salt. Stir well. Gradually add powdered sugar until completely combined. Scoop into Tablespoon-sized balls and roll with the palms of your hand until smooth and round. Place on wax-paper lined cookie sheet and freeze for 15-20 minutes.

While peanut butter balls are chilling, combine chocolate chips and coconut oil (or vegetable shortening) and heat in the microwave in 25-second intervals (stirring well in between) until chocolate is smooth and completely melted. Pour into a deep dish or wide cup.

Remove peanut butter balls from freezer, spear the top of each peanut butter ball with a toothpick and, holding the toothpick, dip each buckeye ball into the melted chocolate. Return to cookie sheet and remove toothpick. Use the pads of your fingers to smooth over the toothpick mark. Allow chocolate to harden before eating and enjoying (placing them in the refrigerator will speed up the process of the chocolate hardening!).

(Source: https://sugarspunrun.com/wprm_print/easy-buckeye-recipe)

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