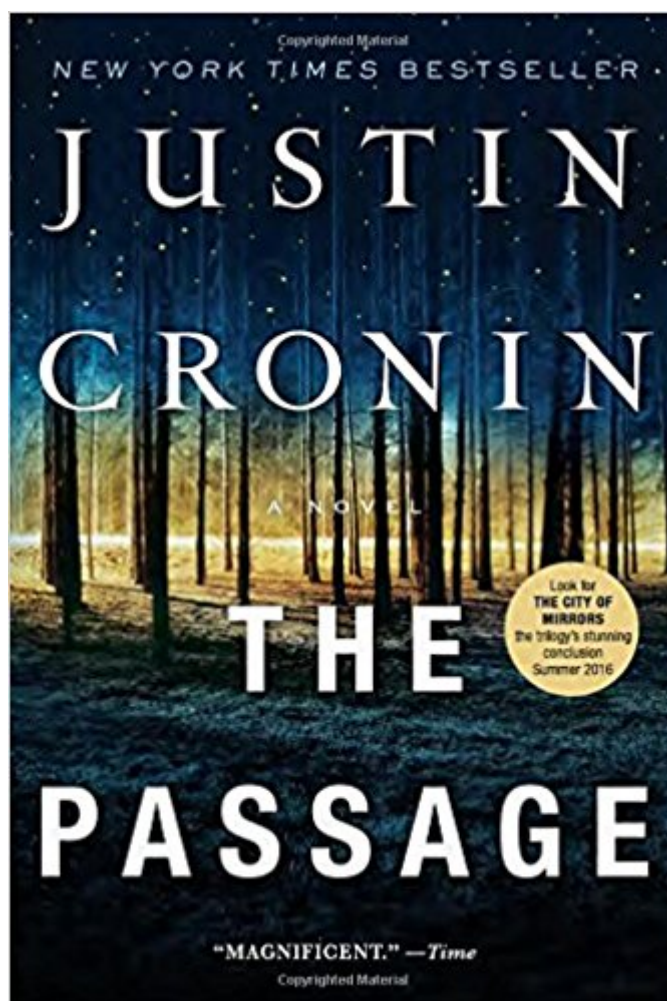


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# The Passage: A Novel (Book One Of The Passage Trilogy)



## Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER — This thrilling novel kicks off what Stephen King calls “a trilogy that will stand as one of the great achievements in American fantasy fiction.” “It happened fast. Thirty-two minutes for one world to die, another to be born.” An epic and gripping tale of catastrophe and survival, *The Passage* is the story of Amy, abandoned by her mother at the age of six, pursued and then imprisoned by the shadowy figures behind a government experiment of apocalyptic proportions. But Special Agent Brad Wolgast, the lawman sent to track her down, is disarmed by the curiously quiet girl and risks everything to save her. As the experiment goes nightmarishly wrong, Wolgast secures her escape but he can’t stop society’s collapse. And as Amy walks alone, across miles and decades, into a future dark with violence and despair, she is filled with the mysterious and terrifying knowledge that only she has the power to save the ruined world. Look for the entire Passage trilogy: *THE PASSAGE* | *THE TWELVE* | *THE CITY OF MIRRORS*

Praise for *The Passage* NAMED ONE OF THE TEN BEST NOVELS OF THE YEAR BY TIME AND ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The Washington Post Esquire U.S. News & World Report NPR/On Point St. Louis Post-Dispatch BookPage Library Journal “[A] blockbuster.” The New York Times Book Review “Mythic storytelling.” San Francisco Chronicle “Magnificent . . . Cronin has taken his literary gifts, and he has weaponized them. . . . The Passage can stand proudly next to Stephen King’s apocalyptic masterpiece *The Stand*, but a closer match would be Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*: a story about human beings trying to generate new hope in a world from which all hope has long since been burnt.” Time “The type of big, engrossing read that will have you leaving the lights on late into the night.” The Dallas Morning News “Addictive.” Men’s Journal “Cronin’s unguessable plot and appealing characters will seize your heart and mind.” Parade

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Best Books of the Month, June 2010: You don't have to be a fan of vampire fiction to be enthralled by *The Passage*, Justin Cronin's blazing new novel. Cronin is a remarkable storyteller (just ask adoring fans of his award-winning *Mary and O'Neil*), whose gorgeous writing brings depth and vitality to this ambitious epic about a virus that nearly destroys the world, and a six-year-old girl who holds the key to bringing it back. *The Passage* takes readers on a journey from the early days of the virus to the aftermath of the destruction, where packs of hungry infected scour the razed, charred cities looking for food, and the survivors eke out a bleak, brutal existence shadowed by fear. Cronin doesn't shy away from identifying his "virals" as vampires. But, these are not sexy, angsty vampires (you won't be seeing "Team Babcock" t-shirts any time soon), and they are not old-school, evil Nosferatus, either. These are a creation all Cronin's own--hairless, insectile, glow-in-the-dark mutations who are inextricably linked to their makers and the one girl who could destroy them all. A huge departure from Cronin's first two novels, *The Passage* is a grand mashup of literary and supernatural, a stunning beginning to a trilogy that is sure to dazzle readers of both genres.

--Daphne Durham Dan Chaon Reviews *The Passage* Dan Chaon is the acclaimed author of the national bestseller *Await Your Reply* and *You Remind Me of Me*, which was named one of the best books of the year by *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *Entertainment Weekly*, among other publications. Chaon lives in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, and teaches at Oberlin College. Read his review of *The Passage*: There is a particular kind of reading experience--the feeling you get when you can't wait to find out what happens next, you can't turn the pages fast enough, and yet at the same time you are so engaged in the world of the story and the characters, you don't want it to end. It's a rare and complex feeling--that plot urgency pulling you forward, that yearning for more holding you back. We say that we are swept up, that we are taken away. Perhaps this effect is one of the true magic tricks that literature can offer to us, and yet it doesn't happen very

often. Mostly, I think, we remember this experience from a few of the beloved books of our childhood. About three-quarters of the way through *The Passage*, I found myself in the grip of that peculiar and intense readerly emotion. One part of my brain couldn't wait to get to the next big revelation, and I found myself wanting to leapfrog from paragraph to paragraph, hurtling toward each looming climax. Meanwhile, another part of my brain was watching the dwindling final pages with dread, knowing that things would be over soon, and wishing to linger with each sentence and character a little while longer. Finishing *The Passage* for the first time, I didn't bother to put it on a shelf, because I knew I would be flipping back through its pages again the next day.

Rereading. Considering. Certain kinds of books draw us into the lives of their characters, into their inner thoughts, to the extent that we seem to know them, as well as we know real people. Readers of Justin Cronin's earlier books, *Mary and O* and *Neil and The Summer Guest*, will recognize him as an extraordinarily insightful chronicler of the ways in which people maneuver through the past, and through loss, grief and love. Though *The Passage* is a different sort of book, Cronin hasn't lost his skill for creating deeply moving character portraits. Throughout, in moments both large and small, readers will find the kind of complicated and heartfelt relationships that Cronin has made his specialty. Though the cast of characters is large, they are never mere pawns. The individual lives are brought to us with a vivid tenderness, and at the center of the story is not only vampires and gun battles but also quite simply a quiet meditation on the love of a man for his adopted daughter. As a fan of Cronin's earlier work, I found it exciting to see him developing these thoughtful character studies in an entirely different context. There are also certain kinds of books expand outwards beyond the borders of their covers. They make us wish for encyclopedias and maps, genealogies and indexes, appendixes that detail the adventures of the minor characters we loved but only briefly glimpsed. *The Passage* is that kind of book, too. There is a dense web of mythology and mystery that roots itself into your brain--even as you are turning the pages as quickly as you can. Complex secrets and untold stories peer out from the edges of the plot in a way that fires the imagination, so that the world of the novel seems to extend outwards, a whole universe--parts of which we glimpse in great detail--and yet we long to know even more. I hope it won't be saying too much to say that there are actually two universes in this novel, one overlapping the other: there is the world before the virus, and the world after, and one of the pleasures of the book is the way that those two worlds play off one another, each one twisting off into a garden of forking and intertwined paths. I think, for example, of the scientist Jonas Lear, and his journey to a fabled site in the jungles of Bolivia where clouds of bats descend upon his team of researchers; or the little girl, Amy, whose trip to the zoo sets the animals into a frenzy--"They know

what I am," she says; or one of the men in Dr. Lear's experiment, Subject Zero, monitored in his cell as he hangs "like some kind of giant insect in the shadows." These characters and images weave their way through the story in different forms, recurring like icons, and there are threads to be connected, and threads we cannot quite connect--yet. And I hope that there will be some questions that will not be solved at all, that will just exist, as the universe of *The Passage* takes on a strange, uncanny life of its own. It takes two different kinds of books to work a reader up into that hypnotic, swept away feeling. The author needs to create both a deep intimacy with the characters, and an expansive, strange-but-familiar universe that we can be immersed in. *The Passage* is one of those rare books that has both these elements. I envy those readers who are about to experience it for the first time.

Danielle Trussoni Reviews *The Passage* Danielle Trussoni is the author of *Falling Through the Earth: A Memoir*, which was the recipient of the 2006 Michener-Copernicus Society of America Award, a BookSense pick, and one of *The New York Times* Ten Best Books of 2006. Her first novel *Angelology* will be published in 30 countries. Read her review of *The Passage*:

Justin Cronin's *The Passage* is a dark morality tale of just how frightening things can become when humanity transgresses the laws of nature. The author of two previous novels, Cronin, in his third book, imagines the catastrophic possibilities of a vampiric bat virus unleashed upon the world. Discovered by the U.S. Military in South America, the virus is transported to a laboratory in the Colorado mountains where it is engineered to create a more invincible soldier. The virus's potential benefits are profound: it has the power to make human beings immortal and indestructible. Yet, like Prometheus's theft of fire from the Gods, knowledge and technological advancement are gained at great price: After the introduction of the virus into the human blood pool, it becomes clear that there will be hell to pay. The guinea pigs of the NOAH experiment, twelve men condemned to die on death row, become a superhuman race of vampire-like creatures called Virals. Soon, the population of the earth is either dead or infected, their minds controlled telepathically by the Virals. As most of human civilization has been wiped out by the Virals, the few surviving humans create settlements and live off the land with a fortitude the pilgrims would have admired. Only Amy, an abandoned little girl who becomes a mystical antidote to the creatures' powers, will be able to save the world. *The Passage* is no quick read, but a sweeping dystopian epic that will utterly transport one to another world, a place both haunting and horrifying to contemplate. Cronin weaves together multiple story lines that build into a journey spanning one hundred years and nearly 800 pages. While vampire lore lurks in the background--the Virals nick necks in order to infect humans, are immortal and virtually indestructible, and do most of their hunting at night--Cronin is more interested in creating an apocalyptic vision along the lines of Cormac McCarthy's *The*

Road. Taking place in a futuristic America where New Orleans is a military zone, Jenna Bush is the Governor of Texas and citizens are under surveillance, *The Passage* offers a gruesome and twisted version of reality, a terrifying dream world in which our very worst nightmares come true. Ultimately, like the best fiction, *The Passage* explores what it means to be human in the face of overwhelming adversity. The thrill comes with the knowledge that Amy and the Virals must face off in a grand battle for the fate of humanity.

Questions for Justin Cronin Q: What is *The Passage*? A: A passage is, of course, a journey, and the novel is made up of journeys. But the notion of a journey in the novel, and indeed in the whole trilogy, is also metaphoric. A passage is a transition from one state or condition to another. The world itself makes such a transition in the book. So do all the characters—as characters in a novel must. The title is also a reference to the soul’s passage from life to death, and whatever lies in that unknown realm. Time and time again I’ve heard it, and in my own life, witnessed it: people at the end of life want to go home. It is a literal longing, I think, to leave this world while in a place of meaning, among familiar things and faces. But it is also a celestial longing.

Q: You are a PEN/Hemingway Award-winning author of literary fiction. Does *The Passage* represent a departure for you? A: I think it’d be a little silly of me not to acknowledge that *The Passage* is, in a number of ways, overtly different from my other books. But rather than calling it a departure, I’d prefer to describe it as a progression or evolution. First of all, the themes that engage me as a person and a writer are all still present. Love, sacrifice, friendship, loyalty, courage. The bonds between people, parents and children especially. The pull of history, and the power of place, of landscape, to shape experience. And I don’t think the writing itself is different at all. How could it be? You write how you write.

Q: *The Passage* takes place all across America—from Philadelphia to Houston to southern California. What prompted you to choose these specific locations? A: Many of the major locations in the novel are, in fact, places I have lived. Except for a long stint in Philadelphia, and now Houston, my life has been a bit nomadic. I was raised in the Northeast, but after college, I ping-ponged all over the country for a while. In some ways, shaking off my strictly Northeastern point of view has been the central project of my adult life. This gave me not only a sense of the sheer immensity of the continent, but also the great diversity of its textures, both geographical and cultural, and I wanted the book to capture this feeling of vastness, especially when the narrative jumps forward a hundred years and the continent has become depopulated. One of the most striking impressions of my travels across the country is how empty a lot of it is. You can pull off the road in Kansas or Nevada or Utah or Texas and stand in the quiet with only the wind for company and it seems as if civilization has already ended, that you’re all alone on the planet. It’s a wonderful

and a terrifying feeling at the same time, and while I was writing the book, I decided I would travel every mile my characters did, in order to capture not only the details of place, but the feeling of place. The writer Charles Baxter once said (more or less) that you know you've come to the end of a story when you've found a way to get your characters back to where they started. The end of *The Passage* is meant to create another beginning, and the space for book two to unfold. Q: Your daughter was the spark that set your writing of *The Passage* in motion. What else drove you to delve into such an epic undertaking? A: The other force at work was something more personal and writerly. One of the reasons that the story of *The Passage* had such a magnetic effect on me was that I felt myself reclaiming the impulses that led me to become a writer in the first place. Like my daughter, I was a big reader as a kid. I lived in the country, with no other kids around, and spent most of my childhood either with my nose in a book or wandering around the woods with my head in some imagined narrative or another. It was much later, of course, that I formally became a student of literature, and decided that writing was something I wanted to do professionally. But the groundwork was all laid back then, reading with a flashlight under the covers. Q: Did you have the narrative completely mapped out before you started, or did certain developments take you by surprise? A: I had it mostly mapped out, but the book is in charge. I split and recombined some characters (mostly secondary ones.) I tend to think in terms of general narrative goals; the details work themselves out as you go, just so long as you remember the destination. And to that extent, the book followed the map I made with my daughter quite closely. Q: When will we get to read the next book? A: Two years (fingers wishfully crossed). --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. Fans of vampire fiction who are bored by the endless hordes of sensitive, misunderstood Byronesque bloodsuckers will revel in Cronin's engrossingly horrific account of a post-apocalyptic America overrun by the gruesome reality behind the wish-fulfillment fantasies. When a secret project to create a super-soldier backfires, a virus leads to a plague of vampiric revenants that wipes out most of the population. One of the few bands of survivors is the Colony, a FEMA-established island of safety bunkered behind massive banks of lights that repel the virals, or dracs—but a small group realizes that the aging technological defenses will soon fail. When members of the Colony find a young girl, Amy, living outside their enclave, they realize that Amy shares the virals' agelessness, but not the virals' mindless hunger, and they embark on a search to find answers to her condition. PEN/Hemingway Award winner Cronin (*The Summer Guest*) uses a number of tropes that may be overly familiar to genre fans, but he manages to

engage the reader with a sweeping epic style. The first of a proposed trilogy, it's already under development by director Ripley Scott and the subject of much publicity buzz (Retail Nation, Mar. 15). (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Hands down, *The Passage* is proof-positive that, when placed in the right hands, one can still fashion diamonds from classic vampire tropes. At first blush, one might consider a 800-page dystopian thriller chock full of immortal, light-sensitive vampires; biblical undertones; an audacious time-jump that spans a century between the first third of the book and the remainder of the story; and the fate of the world resting squarely on the shoulders of an enigmatic preteen girl is too ambitious an endeavor. But Houston novelist Justin Cronin can seemingly do no wrong, and successfully sustains the narrative by defying expectations every step of the way. *The Passage* is one of the finest written examples of apocalyptic horror—lurid, meditative, and epic in scope. Despite being a vampire saga, the book is peppered with such human themes as love, hope, destiny, friendship, and sufficient pathos to satisfy top-notch literature enthusiasts. The language is both poetic and beautiful, the dialogue believable and appealing, while the narrative shifts tempo—both in style and time period—in order to keep things intriguing. Set in the near future, *The Passage* entwines a convoluted but convincing tale that spotlights a six-year-old girl named Amy, whose hapless mother abandons her to a Memphis convent, home of clairvoyant African-born nun Lacey Kudoto. Meanwhile, FBI Agent Brad Wolgast and his partner are assigned to acquire Amy and twelve death-row inmates for Project NOAH, a military-bankrolled biomedical experiment using a longevity virus found in some nasty Bolivian bats. Naturally, mankind is punished for its jingoistic hubris and the project soon runs amok, unleashing grotesquely mutated vampires—virals—on the world, bringing the human race to near-extinction. Fast-forward 93 years to the ravaged wastelands of the once-great America, wherein an isolationist community of beleaguered descendants employs high-wattage lights to protect the colony from the photophobic dracs. However, an expedition to recharge the failing batteries is elevated to a chance prospect of reclaiming the world after renegade protagonist Peter Jaxon happens upon a strange girl who not only appears ageless but can communicate telepathically with the virals. Cronin takes the time to explore his ensemble cast, masterfully imbuing each character with life and personality, and ultimately reveals the depths of their convictions in the face of impossible odds. From the tormented FBI Agent who steps into the role of surrogate father to ensure a young girl's safety as the world they know



crumbles around them, to the unwavering band of colony warriors who persist in their struggle against inhuman monsters even in the face of the dying light. Readers will find themselves cheering for the book's badass heroine, Alicia Lish Donadio, a Valkyrie warrior who could go toe-to-toe with the headstrong likes of Lara Croft (even without the superhuman vampire serum thrown in); just as readers' hearts will bleed for Anthony Carter, the benign death-row inmate turned government guinea pig whose sole crime was being in the wrong place at the wrong time. You may even feel a pang of compassion for the misunderstood virals. By all outward appearances they are indestructible, merciless spawns from Hell, and yet inside each of them is a small perpetual voice that wonders who they are, a voice yearning for identity. Fellow readers, do not be daunted by this 766-page behemoth, for *The Passage* is a worthwhile investment that pays dividends in panache prose, compelling characters, and show-stopping action sequences. Mark my words; once the crossbows are firing overhead and bloodthirsty virals are flying at you from amidst the darkened rafters and billowy treetops, you'll be running so fast that you'll be left breathless by the final page—an evocative, albeit ambiguous caesura that's sure to have you clawing for the next volume, eager to learn the fates of these sympathetic heroes. Interestingly, Cronin offers glimpses of his master plan, using brief excerpts to imply that the human race will endure, though it may take a thousand years for things to return to normal.

I decided to read this book after hearing about it on a podcast. The book took me on many twists and the author, who writes well and never lacks for turns in the story, does a good job keeping the reader going. While you can read what others have said about the content of the story, I will admit I got bogged down a few times. While it's true the author tries to keep the story moving, I found myself wanting it to speed up. At 881 pages, it's a long story. Still I commend the author for his character development. My only dissatisfaction was with some of the language and killing off some great characters. From a Christian worldview, nothing much to say. The story is clearly fictional. God is mentioned here and there (especially from a Catholic nun) but He is largely ignored. Yet the book borrows from the truth of Christ with its emphasis on love, sacrifice, sorrow, death, life, and evil.

Wow, a friend of mine suggested this book to me, I was looking for something new to read and he said: "How do you feel about vampires?" You mean like "Twilight Vampires"? I ask.. no.. darker.. less sparkle.. (although there is something that makes me think Twilight, I won't say what). Sure I replied. And so I started digging into this book. It's what I would call dystopian vampire, dark and a

fresh take on things. I love that the book time shifts between periods, has somewhat of a journal type aspect but mostly just great well written prose with detailed characters that you find yourself really getting invested in. I figured I'd give the book a read, at \$10 and some change for the Kindle version I figured it was worth a shot. I am now 15% of the way through book two. Would definitely recommend.

Frightening, brilliant telling of a new world, where once human test subjects wreak havoc upon humanity. It's as though God abandoned humanity and a type of Devil rules the Earth. Yet, where there is evil, there is good. The story is brilliant in how it frightens. The imagery is so clear and telling, the first night of reading, I woke with a scream. Yes, yes it gave me a nightmare. For me, this shows strength in an author's work and it's ability to sit in the mind while one sleeps. Not sure if making these connections are politically correct, but if you're curious about the story, put it this way, the book reminds me of Stephen King's "The Stand" meets "Salem's Lot" plus one other but I'll keep that a secret. It will give away too much but there is a third book which came to mind. It's a great story! I highly recommend the series.

Based on the description, this is the kind of I tend not to like. I won't spoil it for you, but I run from anything with Twilight like creatures. So overdone. But that isn't this book. Honestly, this is the best written book I've read in months. At turns touching and adventurous and scary and other-worldly, The Passage is well written and moves at the right pace. I quickly ended up caring about the characters, and for me, that's a key to any well-written book. Frankly, it's so well written, the story so captivating and haunting that I don't understand how anyone can give this book so few stars. I just finished book 2 and purchased book 3. I don't want to start the third book yet - what will I read when I'm done? Get a sample of this book and give it try, even if it's not your kind of book, you might be delightfully surprised.

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