



Duma Key

Stephen King

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Six months after a crane crushes his pickup truck and his body self-made millionaire Edgar Freemantle launches into a new life. His wife asked for a divorce after he stabbed her with a plastic knife and tried to strangle her one-handed (he lost his arm and for a time his rational brain in the accident). He divides his wealth into four equal parts for his wife, his two daughters, himself and leaves Minnesota for Duma Key, a stunningly beautiful, eerily remote stretch of the Florida coast where he has rented a house. All of the land on Duma Key, and the few houses, are owned by Elizabeth Eastlake, an octogenarian whose tragic and mysterious past unfolds perilously. When Edgar begins to paint, his formidable talent seems to come from someplace outside him, and the paintings, many of them, have a power that cannot be controlled.

Duma Key Details

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From Reader Review Duma Key for online ebook

Books Ring Mah Bell says

How jacked up is it that I'm going to say I find Stephen King comforting?

Yep. Pretty jacked up.

Then again, I've been reading him since I was a pre-teen (or tween, I think that's the proper term for it these days). Anyway, when the R.L Stine and Christopher Pike seemed a bit immature, (no offense to those authors, I LOVED them as a kid!) I turned to King.

He's what I know.

(insert joke about my psychological issues here)

After all these years, he still manages to weave a fantastic tale.

So, to not give the whole story away, I'll say this:

A man named ----- suffers a brain injury and loses an arm in an accident - he gets hit by a ----- . He gets away from his failing marriage in ---- and heads to Duma Key, where he can recover and ----- in peace.

There, on the island, he discovers he has amazing talent for drawing and painting. He creates surreal, haunting art that eventually causes problems.

Really BIG PROBLEMS. Like -----!!!

Naughty, EVIL, art!

Anyway, he meets ---- and ----- . Gets an art exhibition. Makes ----- . Then ----- tells him to get ----- off the island to and NEVER ----- . So then ----- happens and he has to ----- with a few of his new island friends and ----- . So they go to ----- and he brings ----- and the next thing you know they see -----, which is *totally* fucked up! But then he -----, so that ----- . Awesome.

AWESOME!

Thank you again, Mr. King., for another great read, and for always being that warped, scary, "happy place" for me.

Sadie Hartmann Mother Horror says

It's been years since I first read Duma Key. While I loved it the first time around and gave a five star rating, it's possible I loved it more the second time around.

I think just knowing the story better and where it was going, helped clarify some of the more supernatural aspects of certain events early on.

Lately, (on bookstagram) I've seen people rating a King book lower *because* he had a supernatural element to an otherwise, genre specific story--example: The Outsider. People thought it should have just been a detective novel.

Well, let me step up on this platform as a seasoned Constant Reader for second and announce that Mr. King is well known and admired for his genre-bending stories. The Dark Tower series, for instance, is everything.

It's a Western, dark fantasy, horror, supernatural, apocalyptic, science fiction/time travel, you name it, it's probably in there to some degree.

Duma Key is not going to be pigeon-holed into a genre either so be prepared to just enjoy the ride and not try to figure it out--at its core, this story is about a man who has had his life stripped away after a body (and soul crushing) accident on the job.

He goes to Florida to stay in a big house at the edge of the sea for some contemplative walks on the beach. Of course this is a King novel so Edgar Freemantle isn't going to be left alone at "Big Pink" despite however lonely he feels, right?

Right.

My favorite aspect to this novel are the relationships. The unexpected deep friendship between Wireman and Edgar and perhaps even the crazy love between Fathers and Daughters, even the destructive/toxic relationship between former lovers is intense and compelling--told through dialog and inner mind chat that only King can tell it.

The climax and the way the story takes on that snowball-racing-down-an-avalanche feeling towards the end is some of King's best work.

This is definitely a top 20 if not top 10 King ranking for me.

Edward Lorn says

Wrap *Pet Sematary* in a *Bag of Bones* and you'll have *Duma Key*. Revenants, creepy dolls, paintings that fix the broken, and enough tragedy to fill a swimming pool with tears is what you'll find within these pages. The scene at the end with [name deleted because spoilers] is one of the creepiest heart-rending scenes I've read. The descriptions are so well written. It truly is masterful. The sand coming off her fingers... Well, I guess you had to have been there. Those of you who have read *Duma Key* will know of what I speak.

This book also has one of my favorite secondary characters ever to show up in a King novel. Wireman beats out Trashcan Man for the top honor. I like Wireman. He's a cool dude. Moreover, I could read banter between him and Edgar all day and never get bored of it.

If you are one of those who have not felt the draw to read this book, or have never been able to finish it, I really wish you would. The level of imagination on display here is impressive. King wrote over 50 novels before this one. Keep that in mind. To still give this much of a shit about his craft after writing that many doorstops... Dude, it's just mindboggling.

Finally, there are far too many tie-ins to the Dark Tower universe to name here (especially where the number 19 is concerned) but I feel the most important are the obvious ones. Roses pop up in a lot of Edgars paintings, and Edgar shares the same gift as Patrick, The Artist from the final book. At one point in the book, Edgar thinks of life as a wheel, and there's mention of his daughter hearing a woman talking inside a sink drain.

For those of you hardcore Tower junkies, you can go to King's website (link below) and check out all the times 19 shows up, or you can read the bit I copied and pasted below. Your choice.

Link: <http://stephenking.com/darktower/conn...>

Submitted by Zack: "*There are several references to the Dark Tower Series. Edgar refers to himself as a*

"gunslinger" (pg 433). One of Edgar's major works is "Roses Grow from Shells." His ex-wife tattoos a rose onto her breast. Roses are also mentioned several times in the novel. The main antagonist wears a red robe similar to that of the Crimson King. His daughter's name (Ilse Marie Freemantle) has 19 letters in it. Edgar's E-mail is EFree19 and his real estate agent's is SmithReality9505, both of which have numbers the amount to 19, which constant readers will recognize. Along with these other "19's", the first big storm (or "Alice") occurred in 1927, which when added together makes 19; and the flight he takes to Florida is flight 559. Pam's room number is 847 which added together is 19. Edgar's artistic abilities seem to parallel those of Patrick Danville, especially the ability to remove things from reality by drawing and then erasing them. Nan Melda loses two fingers on her right hand on a beach, which also happens to Roland Deschain at the beginning of the Drawing of the Three. Charley the Lawn Jockey (pg 568) shares the name of Charlie the Choo Choo, and the root "char," meaning death, also echoed when Edgar thinks about having people sit in the "char" when he has to think sideways to mean "chair". In one passage of the book, Edgar compares life to a wheel, in the sense of always coming around to the beginning, one of the main philosophies of the Dark Tower. The idea that drawings or paintings can change reality is another recurring motive."

In summation: This book is packed with the magic of storytelling. It always surprises me when I hear King fans saying the didn't like this one. I honestly believe it is one of his best.

Final Judgement: Art.

Lisa says

I suppose firstly, I should admit that Stephen King is the man who has shared my bed the most after my husband. That got to the point where, right around "Black House" hubby made a complaint about having to share me in bed with Mr. King and I never brought a book to bed again unless I was all by my onesies. Since I was a preteen Mr. King has always been there for me in his own weird existential way. Through marriages, births, deaths, moving, depression, great highs of life and everything in between he's been right there sitting on the shelf or on my lap. The silent witness to everything I've ever experienced. Always ready and willing to offer me an escape when I needed it just like a good pal should.

The title of the book; for those of you wondering what kind of a key that is...it's one off the coast of Florida. As in the Florida Keys. Not a special key to a spooky door or something like that. It's the masterfully told story of Edgar Freemantle, one-time construction company owner turned artiste. It's also the story of Jerome Wireman and Elizabeth Eastlake, two very wonderful characters. Edgar and Jerome have more than just a shading of Red and Andy in them and I love that.

If you've never read a Stephen King book before start with this one, if you've read them all get this one because you'll love it even more. It's not King at his terrifying horrifying best. Not the King that keeps you up all night wondering what's going to happen and worst of all, what's that moving in the corner of the bedroom? As I said, more like the King who wrote "Shawshank Redemption", "Green Mile" and "Stand by Me" (a/k/a "The Body" original short story title). That's not to say it doesn't have its creepy parts, most of it is pretty creepy/odd/weird but not overly so not like, say, Pennywise or Cujo. This is a really good Camp Fire Story—not that I'd know, I've never been camping, but had I at least once sat around a camp fire and heard a tale spun out for me, I imagine it would be a lot like this one...but shorter. It's like...it's like...it's like walking out a local convenience store and seeing someone you haven't seen in years sitting there smiling

at you, as though they knew you were there and they were waiting for you to come out. When you do he slings an arm around your shoulders and says; hey, long time no see. How the hell are ya? I know it's been a while but look, I got something to show ya. You're gonna love it. C'mon walk with for a little bit, it's just up the road, right up there and around the corner...in the dark.

I have to say that I love him most when he tells a story that involves one of two things or both; 1- an creative person as the central character; a writer or as in Edgar's case a budding painter and 2- a child/children as main player(s). He's always good for having kids in his stories and I think he uses them masterfully because no matter how bad it gets, how scary or creepy or outright gross! That underlying air of innocence always remains it is there just as surely as the crazy clown, rabid dog, and pets raised from the dead are there. The juxtaposition is genius and he uses it better than anyone I've ever read.

Back to that first one; the writer, the artist, the creative individual. I love those characters best because I identify with them and not just because they're a writer but because he puts so much of himself and the Creative Process into the character. Only someone who truly gets way far into the Zone can know what that's like. Only they know the hunger, the absolute ravenous hunger that comes after. Only they know the bone tiredness of it that settles over you with the crash. He talks about them openly. Sort of like I do here from time to time. The Truth, my friends and neighbors, the Truth. Above everything else, no matter how hard it gets or how ugly it becomes always tell the Truth of the story or paint the Truth of the picture. You will be greatly rewarded in the end. This is a major lesson I have learned from him over the years and which was reinforced in this latest novel with such ferocity and tenderness that it often brought a tear to my eye as I read or I found myself nodding my head saying; yep, you got it, Steve, you got it. Over the years there have been many times when I swore he looked into my head, plucked something out, said; that looks interesting, and put it into a story. Then I realize I'm not unique and neither is whatever the experience was, it's probably just something we've all gone through in one way or another, something that binds us all together as human beings. Good old Common Ground. That's another he's great at finding and weaving into the tale he's telling.

There are a few things that are hard for the Reader to take in this book but then again Life is full of bitter little pills that we have to swallow, like it or not. It seems that no one is more acutely aware of this than my old buddy, my pal. With most he does a very good job of preparing the Reader beforehand...kudos, Steve especially where a certain daughter is concerned. Even though you know its coming and you don't have to experience it.—he's kind enough to spare you that and just tell you about it after it happens—it still stings, a lot. I kept hoping he was going to find a way to reverse it even though after all these years I know that's not really his style.

Hope is a dangerous thing, so sayeth Red, so sayeth we all.

Then, of course, there's the last little twist of the knife. It's only about six words long but I bawled my eyes out at the end of this story and I'm misting up now just thinking about it. Ah, the hallmark of a well told tale; the emotion lingers long after the second cover has been closed. I sat there with it, hugging it tightly for a while and thinking about all the characters I'd just met and the things I'd gone through with them.

As with most King stories there is also that last little ray of hope, that glimmer, that shimmer, in the dark that tells you no matter what happens, no matter how hard or how bad it gets it will get better, the sun will shine again eventually and we'll all be ok in the end.

I learned a new saying with this story and I kinda like it. Do the day and let the day do you. I might adopt that as my new attitude.

What more can I say except...read this book! Don't wait for the paperback. Go. Now. Get it. Read it. What are you waiting for?

Vladimir says

Dosta dobar roman.

Ni jedno poglavlje nije imalo prazan hod i ni na sekundu se nisam dosaživao. Ima u njemu elemenata iz „Deperation“, „Shining“, „Bag of bones“ ali su svi povezani u jednu lepu celinu tako da nisam imao problem sa onim „da sam to ve? negde pro?itao“.

Karakterizacija je više nego odli?na i svaki lik ima svoju dubinu. Stanja kroz koja su prolazili Edgar i Elizabeth su fantasti?no opisana. Slike uopšte nisam imao potrebe da zamišljam koliko je sve bio precizno.

Kako se jeza polako uval?ila u glavne junake nisam ni ja ostao imun naslu?uju?i da svi zajedno idemo ka ne?em veoma užasnom.

Jedna stabilna ?etvorka od mene.

Howard says

Awful. Cloyingly sentimental, forcedly folksy, sloppily written. At first I was hoping that he was doing this on purpose, using the unrealistic dialogue and the instant bonding of the characters to turn it around on us, make us look back and see it as creepy eventually, but it's just bad writing. The characters don't act like people, they act like characters in a Stephen King novel. When they develop psychic powers, nobody even blinks, and everybody immediately understands how they work...because these are the things that would happen in a Stephen King novel.

To an extent he's earned a lot of leeway, and he's still a great natural storyteller, so there's nothing preventing you from reading it; it's not the kind of awful where you can't force yourself to read another page. (Thus two stars.) But it's just poor work on all sorts of levels.

Here's something that particularly bothered me. Maybe it's quibbling, but an editor should have caught this, if not the author. The first person narrator uses the word "febrile" on page 248; first time it's appeared in the book. On page 249, another character uses it in dialogue.

It's an uncommon enough word that the reader notices (especially since it's out of character for the regular-guy narrator). If it were ultimately going to be revealed that it's all taking place in the narrator's head, it would be a good, if sort of obvious clue, but because it isn't, it's just a reminder that it's all taking place in the author's head. Which, you know, it's sort of his job to avoid.

Alex Telander says

DUMA KEY BY STEPHEN KING: Most Stephen King fans will admit that the last couple of novels by the

international bestselling author, while selling well, have been somewhat lacking coming from the renowned horror writer; one might even go so far as to use the term “mediocre,” and don’t get me started on *Cell*. Thankfully, with the arrival of *Duma Key*, the slate has been wiped clean and the master of horror is back! King’s first novel set in his alternate home of Florida weighs in at over six hundred pages, and while it reveals a more laid-back and matured author, with the terrifying days of *The Tommyknockers* and *It* perhaps over; *Duma Key* is nevertheless an incredibly well written novel with some wonderfully deep and complex characters, and a world that is just as complicated but in many more ways real.

Enter Edgar Freemantle. An entrepreneur who started a construction company and developed it into a multi-million dollar business; loving husband of two adult daughters; until he is involved in a freak on-site accident that should’ve killed him, but leaves him missing his right arm, a couple of slowly healing broken ribs, and a damaged mind that results in outbursts of anger and violence. The strain becomes too great and Freemantle’s marriage falls apart, leaving him an angry, empty shell. Seeking escape, he leases a beautiful house on the island of Duma Key. While watching the breathtaking sunsets, Freemantle decides to try his hand at some artwork, having sketched a little throughout his life. He discovers the more he works, the better he gets, soon switching to paints and canvasses; he also discovers that painting satisfies the seemingly insatiable itch in his missing right arm. Freemantle’s work is of the sunsets and the beautiful coastline, along with the occasional abstract object added in to offset it; he is eventually tagged as an American Primitive, but as more and more people discover his work, they are amazed by it and at his first gallery showing all works listed for sale are sold.

But beneath the art, there is a sinister plot at work, because this is after all a Stephen King novel. Freemantle discovers a psychic ability in his work, painting items he should know nothing about, as well as the eventual power to paint events that come to fruition: whether it be the restoring of blindness, or the forced suicide of a serial killer. And then there’s something wrong with the sold paintings: death follows them. The plot thickens, deepens, and becomes darker as the enigmatic history of Duma Key is discovered. It seems Freemantle isn’t the only person in its history to come to the island with a fragile mind and a special ability expressed through art. Then there’s the south side of the island which has become an overgrown and seemingly impenetrable jungle. The last time Freemantle and his daughter, Ilse, took a trip headed in that direction, Ilse immediately felt nauseous and horrible sick, while Freemantle felt the insatiable familiar itch that grew to an unstoppable buzzing; upon driving back north, they mysteriously found their ailments disappearing. Clearly something evil and powerful doesn’t want them getting to the south of the island.

Duma Key is not just a novel for the fans, but a cathartic response from King over his near-death accident in 1999; no doubt he relived his agonizing recovery while writing about Freemantle, and yet it is because of this firsthand experience, that *Duma Key* feels much more personal and empathetic. Also being King’s first foray into his new sometime Florida home, one might think his fellow Floridians a little unhappy on this introduction, or being Stephen King, they may feel the opposite and expect this. Regardless, *Duma Key* is a welcome return of the great horror writer, with an extra development of character and setting that King seems to have discovered in his later years, making this book one of his best, and one of my personal favorites.

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Becky says

I've read a lot of King. I *read* a lot of King, and this is among his best. I know some people feel that after his accident he lost his touch for the creeping horror that made him famous, but I assure you that is not the case. This book proves that King not only still has it, he's still improving.

I listened to this on audio, and I'm sure that lent something to the suspense, but I'm very glad that I did. (I downloaded from Audible, and each part was preceded by music that is creepy on its own. I'm not sure if the audio CD's are the same way.) Listening to this made me pace myself, and made sure that the build-up was properly built up. I have a tendency to speed-read when I get excited, when I know I hold something great in my hands and want to experience it as quickly as possible. I couldn't do this with the audio, and so the anticipation piled up until I had to finish, regardless of the fact that it's now 4:19a and I have to work tomorrow.

John Slattery's reading was just about perfect. He had this great tone, a feeling for the story, and a subtle way of lending personality to the characters that makes them come alive. King obviously gives him a lot to work with and build on, but I don't know if another reader would have done the book justice the way Slattery did. I could tell exactly who was speaking at all times, even before he got around to telling me who it was, yet he didn't make the characters HIS characters, if that makes sense. He just gave them life. His reading of Perse (this is how I'm assuming it's spelled, as I haven't seen it in print) gave me goosebumps, and I think will haunt me for a long time.

This book contained more than a few of the things that creep me out the most. But I couldn't stop listening. I loved the aspects of Elizabeth's childhood history. That part of the story fascinated me. I also felt that the book brought back pieces of other books that King has written, making it a part of the larger universe that links his stories together.

-Perse's red robe, and the mentions of red throughout the story brought the Crimson King to mind. Could she be the Crimson King's consort, maybe?

-Perse speaking to Ilsa from the drains and toilet obviously brings IT to mind.

-Edgar's ability to create (and uncreate) through his art. King does this with every story he writes, but I kept thinking specifically of Peter Rickman from Kingdom Hospital and Patrick Danville from The Dark Tower series and Insomnia.

-Edgar's accident and injuries acting almost as a muse/catalyst for his artistic ability, as Peter Rickman's did, as King's own did, if you consider the shift his stories took after his accident. How the ability seemed to flow through him, but was not invented BY him. (Maybe I'm reading too much into this, but these are the things I was thinking of...)

-Wireman not only mentioning that he's a gunslinger, but actually being a gunslinger, if only temporarily. I have no doubt that had he made his way into that section of the SK Universe, he'd have found 5 missing members of his Ka-tet.

Anyway, I found much to love in this book, and I have a feeling it will become a favorite. I would highly recommend it.

Kemper says

And this is why adults shouldn't play with dolls...

Edgar Freemantle used to be the quintessential American success story. He was a self-made millionaire who built a thriving construction business, and he had a long and happy marriage which produced two daughters. However, Edgar's good luck ran out one day when he had a brutal run in with a crane at a job site that cost

him an arm, screwed up a leg, and cracked his skull. The brain trauma left his eggs slightly scrambled and made him prone to fly into furious rages that his wife couldn't endure so the accident also ends his marriage.

While trying to recover from his injuries and the divorce Edgar decides to relocate to Florida and indulge in his long dormant hobby of drawing and painting pictures. Edgar rents a house at isolated Duma Key on the Gulf Coast where the gorgeous views and long walks on the beach inspire him to amazing artistic achievements and a rapid recovery of his health. In fact, Edgar's progress in both areas could be termed as too good to be true if not downright spooky.

I read this for the first time shortly after it was originally released in 2008, and at that time I was intrigued by the story of a damaged man turning to art to heal his body and mind which is a subject that King has intimate knowledge of after being run down by a car. (King wrote movingly about it in the non-fiction *On Writing*.) However, I found the supernatural stuff lacking, and I'd kinda wished that King had written just a straight up character piece about a guy discovering a latent talent following a tragedy.

Since then I've seen what happens when King tries his hand at a non-horror genre piece (*Mr. Mercedes*) so I no longer think that would have been a good idea. Overall, I found myself more intrigued this time by the supernatural aspects and less enamored of the story about Edgar's recovery and development as a painter. This is probably because I've find myself more sensitive to the tics of his that I dislike which this has several of.

First is that there's a general lack of focus. King has always been willing to throw the kitchen sink at a reader, but he really seemed particularly unwilling or unable to pick a path and stick to it here. There's elements you see from other stories like *Dead Zone* with a brain injury leading to weird abilities and there's the ghost story in an isolated locale like *The Shining* as well as bits and pieces from other King works. All of this leads to the typical case of King bloat where it seems like a couple of hundred pages could have easily been shaved from the finished product.

The character of Wireman is a prime example of something else I've grown irritated with in King's work where he creates wise and quirky characters and then fills their mouths with overblown dialogue. Here, Wireman frequently refers to himself in the third person, sprinkles his conversations with Spanish jargon, and he's full of meaningless sayings that are treated as profound by Edgar. Seriously, if someone ever told me, "Do the day, muchacho! And let the day do you!" then I'm going to flip them off and walk away. Which is a shame because there was much about Wireman in this best friend role other than the way he constantly expressed himself that I really liked.

Another King trope that has increasingly irked me in recent years in his habit of creating situations where the characters are fighting the clock but then waste huge amounts of time talking instead of acting. In this one there's a point near the end where hell is gonna be unleashed at sunset which is coming fast, and yet Edgar feels that's the ideal time to sit the other characters down and tell them a long rambling story about what he's discovered. And then of course they find themselves screwed at sunset. How about for once you let them get the job done and save story time for afterwards, Uncle Stevie?

However, despite these gripes I did enjoy this book. King hits the melancholy tone of Edgar, a middle-aged man with a broken home and broken body, perfectly. Doing one of his stories on a bright Florida beach rather than the spooky Maine woods was a nice change of pace, and it fits the way that there's an underlying tension to all of it. There's also an extremely wicked irony at play here in that most of the stuff happening seems like a good thing rather than evil. Edgar is healing and he's creating amazing art, and he even uses his newfound abilities to do some good. You can see how he's willing to push aside any warning signs because so much of what is happening to him is legitimately changing his life for the better without any of the usual dark down side you'd immediately see in most horror books.

It's not quite as good as I found it in 2008, but it's still one of the better later era King novels.

Franco Santos says

Negro es la ausencia de luz, pero blanco es la ausencia de memoria, el color de no poder recordar.

Duma Key es un libro increíble. Es uno de mis favoritos de Stephen King (sí, ya sé, tengo muchos de él, pero todos lo valen).

Me encantó el modo de narrar los hechos, te absorbe fuertemente en la trama.

En cuanto a los protagonistas puedo decir que son de los mayores atractivos. **Jerome Wireman** es uno de mis favoritos de todos los libros que leí. Elizabeth no se queda atrás; qué personaje tan etéreo. Pero en especial quiero resaltar al susodicho Wireman. Se van a encariñar sobremanera con él.

La vida es como la telenovela un viernes. Te crean la ilusión de que todo va a resolverse, y entonces el lunes vuelven a retomar la misma mierda de siempre.

Es una historia en la que el arte toma un papel protagónico y *amenazador*. En la que cada pincelada define el destino. **Cada trazo es poder, y el poder puede volverse contra uno si no se lo trata con cuidado.**

Una novela de tragedia y misterio; de terror y sometimiento; **de arte y magia.**

En fin, un libro extraordinario. Es uno de los mejores trabajos de Stephen King y lamentablemente no es tan conocido. Tiene un **muy** buen final.

Al final, siempre terminamos por desgastar nuestras preocupaciones. Eso es lo que Wireman dice.

Adam Light says

I haven't been writing reviews of my King rereads so much lately, not for any particular reason other than perhaps sheer laziness, but this one demands that I write something.

This is a mammoth tome, but it reads like sands slipping through slightly spread fingers. Is it King's magnum opus? I can't be sure, but it is such a heartbreaking, eerie, and humorous read, combining all of the man's best qualities and mixing them into a cyclone of white-knuckle suspense. If you need a place to begin reading King's work, I can't think of any better place to do it.

Jake Kern says

Every single page is like a lover touching my cheek...sometimes it's a caress, and sometimes it's a slap...but every page, every *word*, has a profound impact upon me. I'm in the middle of the book, and I'm terrified to finish it, but I can't stop turning the pages...

...Just finished it. I heard one reviewer state that it was the best book King had ever written. While reviewers have short memories and liberal use of hyperbole, I must admit that this *was* one of his best he's written. While not epic like *The Stand*, *It*, or *The Dark Tower*, it is powerful, insightful, and terrifying. Also, the fact that the book is not *epic* is one of its greatest strengths. One of King's self-indulgences in the past couple of decades has been his ability to use 1000 pages to write a 500 page story. Remember that *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption* and *The Body* were both just novellas. In *Duma Key*, King uses each of the 607 pages with power and efficiency.

Another of King's self-indulgences has been his treatment of Bryan Smith, the man who hit him during his walk and nearly killed him. That same man died a year later from a prescription drug overdose. I remember being especially uncomfortable of King's incorporation and depiction of the accident as a key element in one of his stories. (I HATE spoilers, so either you know what I'm talking about or you don't.) It got to the point where I really started to dislike the man, Stephen King. I mean, c'mon, let the dead rest.

But in this book, King delves into the aftermath of being broken and how being broken made him act and say things that simply were not of his character. Noticeably in this story, King only refers to the crane that causes the accident that crushes Edgar Freemantle and sets everything in motion, and he never once speaks of the driver. Later in the story as Edgar tests his newfound talents, the test results in the death of a child molester. Now, while the bastard certainly had it coming to him, Edgar is overwhelmed with a sense of power, horror, fear, and guilt. In this narrative, I believe that King is trying to work through the aftermath of his own brokenness and how it changed him, most noticeably in his treatment of Bryan Smith. And an interesting thing happened...I found that I had forgiven King's spite and nastiness during this period of pain and healing.

Finally, King puts to words so well what it is like to be broken...what it's like to not be yourself and be the monster and victim at the same time...and what it's like to look back on the wake of relationships that will never be the same again. Having gone through this myself (and I'm not out of the woods yet) I found myself weeping in sections where King's script perfectly put to words the hopelessness, frustration, and loneliness of a broken person. In this book, I found a bit of my own healing realizing that I'm not the only one to have dealt with this and coming to terms with the fact that it's not my fault.

Was this Stephen King's best book? I honestly don't have an answer. All I know is that it has had a bigger impact on me than any other work of fiction I've ever experienced.

Mindi says

"Our memories have voices, too. Often sad ones that clamor like raised arms in the dark."

The first time I read *Duma Key* in 2014 I spent a lot of time kicking myself for not picking it up sooner. I had actually received it as a gift for my birthday the year it was published, and it just ended up sitting on my shelf for a long time. I didn't even buy *Under the Dome* and *11/22/63* when they were originally released, and that's saying something because for years I had never missed a Stephen King release day. Something happened to me in 2008, the year *Duma Key* was released. I had friends on the internet who I spoke to daily and were heavily influencing my reading choices. I had yet to discover Goodreads or Bookstagram, and the people that I talked to the most had very selective reading choices. I had taken a lot of literature courses in college, so it wasn't hard for me to understand that my new friends were into what a lot of people might call pretentious writing. All of a sudden I thought my love for King should be a secret. That liking King was a guilty pleasure that I was over, and now I could read some serious fiction. That isn't their fault, the fault is all mine.

We fool ourselves so much we could do it for a living.

Flash forward to 2014, and a Goodreads challenge FINALLY got me to read Duma Key. By then my reading had started to shift back to contemporary and genre novels, and I realized that I was a complete idiot for worrying about what other people thought about my reading tastes. Thank goodness I came to my senses, because Duma Key absolutely blew me away. I immediately bought the King books that I had missed while I was busy being a book snob, and devoured all of them. I got over myself, and then I found an entire group of Constant Readers on Instagram. My love for King had returned, and I was no longer ashamed of it.

This year my friend Sadie announced that she wanted to host a Duma Key group read, and I immediately knew I wanted to take part. I remembered the book so fondly, but details were starting to fade, and even though my reading schedule this year has been tight and doesn't have a lot of room for rereads, I didn't care. I knew that reading this book for the second time needed to happen.

Revisiting Duma Key and Big Pink was exactly what I needed in my life right now. I remember that I loved this book the first time, but I loved it even more the second. I know for sure now that this book is definitely in my list of top 5 Stephen King novels. I usually just tell people to read it. The cover develops a lot more meaning after you read the story, but it doesn't look like a typical Stephen King novel, at least not typical horror, and I think there's something about either the cover or the synopsis that doesn't really draw people in. Which is really a shame because this book is absolutely fantastic. I think you should approach it knowing as little as possible though. Some of it may be a bit confusing during a first read, but by the end everything makes crystal clear sense, and every single word is worth it.

This is another one of King's big books. It's certainly not as long as *It* or *The Stand*, but King definitely takes his time telling this story, and he tells it in exactly the right way. Each character gets just enough time for their stories to unfold, and those stories are important, because Duma Key has some of the best characters King has ever written. Jerome Wireman will always be one of my all-time favorite King characters, but the other's are just as beloved. Even the Key and Big Pink itself are almost characters, and as the reader you find yourself wanting to be there. Wanting to hear the shells under Big Pink...wanting to feel the sand between your toes as you watch the sun set into the Gulf. Wanting to drink green tea at *El Palacio* while Elizabeth plays with her Chinas and Oprah plays in the background. But now I feel as if I've said too much. What I really want to say is read this book. Fall in love with the characters. Fall in love with Duma Key.

"In the end we always wear out our worries. That's what Wireman says."

Kealan Burke says

In many circles, Stephen King's last novel *LISEY'S STORY* is considered his masterpiece. I couldn't get past the 50 page mark, the gauge by which I judge the readability of a book. This is not to say that it isn't a classic. We've all put down books with a snort of disgust only to try again sometime later and realize them for the great works that they are (or, in some cases, are not.)

Before *LISEY'S STORY* came *CELL*, and while I found it entertaining and worth reading, I didn't consider it a good example of King at the height of his power. A minor entry in his literary arsenal, I thought, while at the same time wistfully remembering those days when a new Stephen King book was cause for almost childish excitement. Sadly, I haven't felt that way about King's work for a long time.

After reading *DUMA KEY*, that excitement and anticipation has been reignited.

When King is on, he's on, and no other writer comes close to equalling his power as a writer.

In DUMA KEY, he most certainly is ON, and displays all the techniques of characterization, plot, and style upon which his reputation was built.

Oddly enough, while it is most definitely a horror novel, the first two thirds of DUMA KEY can hardly be classified as anything but a bittersweet, engaging, and dryly humorous drama. The characters--particularly "Wireman"--walk off the page and keep you completely immersed in the sunset world King has created. You feel for these characters and hope all turns out for the best.

Being a King novel, this of course does not turn out to be the case.

Rather than rehash the plot (which you can read for yourself by clicking on the book's cover above), I'll simply say that DUMA KEY is the story of a man changed by fate, who loses almost everything but then finds new life, but a life that comes with a high price.

Despite it's 600 pages, DUMA KEY was for me a swift read (3 days!), and has restored my faith in King as one of the best writers we have.

Highly recommended.

Wayne Barrett says

I'll have to mirror fellow reviewer and friend, Edward Lorn on this one because, as he pointed out, this novel did strike me as a mix between Pet Cemetery and Bag of Bones.

King did a great job with the character development and plot line. Unlike Bag of Bones, which felt a little weak for me, Duma Key was laid down with great depth and power. If I had a complaint, and what keeps me from giving it 5 stars, is that after following this deep drama for so long, the climax seemed a little silly in context to the build up. It still wasn't bad and overall this was a good King novel.

Will Byrnes says

In Duma Key Stephen King taps into extreme mid-life crisis and although he stirs it in a bubbling vat of macabre, the core, non-magical, element remains. What is one to do with one's life? Edgar Freemantle struggles with redefining himself after having faced near-death trauma, having lost not only his right arm but some of his mental function, and, oh yes, his marriage. Have a nice day. Luckily for him, and conveniently for the author, he has been a very successful contractor and, having socked away rather large sums, he can afford to take a giant step away from the rubble of his life. Eager to heal both body and mind, Edgar opts in to a large beach house on the lightly populated Duma Key. This being Stephen King, the beach house and the island itself come with more than just sun, sand and surf.

In short order Freemantle discovers that his amateur's ability for drawing has blossomed into a world class talent for painting. Edgar continues to experience sensations in the missing arm, and that feeling seems to connect him with inspiration for his creepy, if inspired canvasses. There are dark forces at work, and the paintings Freemantle is cranking out have a little extra in them.

Down the beach he meets the elderly Elizabeth, owner of most of the Key, and Wireman, her caretaker. The

three strike up a fast friendship. Elizabeth's past is at the center of this tale.

Expect creepie crawlies, a few shivers, a puzzle to be figured out, good friends working together to try to do just that, and a powerful resident evil. This is a fast-paced book. I hated to put it down. It was fun to read, and scary enough.

King has a particular fondness for children in his stories, and does not disappoint here, offering not only chapters in which the narrator is a child, but characters both immediate and historical that fit the bill. Also, Freemantle's own children, while adult, or near-adult, still qualify because of how he feels about them.

I did not think that Duma Key was one of his best works. But garden-variety Stephen King is better than most in this genre. He is readable, enjoyable, and taps into enough reality to lend emotional substance to his spook stories.

A few other SKs we have reviewed

Under the Dome

The Shining

Lisey's Story

Doctor Sleep

Johann (jobis89) says

"We can't imagine time running out, and God punishes us for what we can't imagine."

Duma Key focuses on the story of Edgar Fremantle, a self-made millionaire who becomes injured at work after a crane crushes his pickup truck. Following the loss of his arm, amidst other injuries, Edgar becomes a little too much for his wife to handle and she asks for a divorce. He leaves behind his wife and two daughters and heads off to Duma Key, a stunning but eerily quiet stretch of the coast where he has rented a house. Very quickly upon his arrival, he encounters the charismatic Wireman and the old lady he looks after - Elizabeth Eastlake. Although suffering from dementia, Elizabeth's tragic and heartbreaking history begins to unfold, while at the same time, Edgar finds himself able to paint striking, haunting pictures. However, the ability to paint such pictures seems to come from some other outside force...

It's been a while since I posted a book review - three weeks to read Duma Key! But let me emphasise that this was due to being busy and not because I wasn't engrossed in this story. This book is held with high regard amongst the King community on bookstagram and pretty soon after starting this book, I realised why. This book easily has two of King's most likeable characters in Edgar and Wireman. What a duo. Their friendship just lifts up from the page from the get-go. There's just a real respect and love there and the lengths they will go to for each other and for their friendship is pretty astounding. I think these two characters are a huge part of what makes this book so enjoyable. And what makes their inclusion even more fascinating is that they're just pretty normal guys. Normal guys going through a kinda crazy situation. King's ability to build a story based on his characters is simply unparalleled. In addition to the friendship between Edgar and Wireman, the relationship between Edgar and his daughter, Ilse, is just so sweet and believable. King clearly draws on his real-life relationships when putting his character's relationships on page, which explains why they're just so real and touching.

As for the story itself, it was captivating. From the very beginning, I just had no idea where King was going

to go with this one, and I was kept guessing for the majority of the book. The story actually gets pretty scary at times, there's some parts that made my hairs stand on end and were quite unsettling. I quite enjoyed the supernatural force at work within Duma Key, I liked the story behind it and thought King executed it perfectly. I also feel like King was commenting on the mixed blessing that comes with having an artistic talent and how often such talents come with their own drawbacks.

Now I am not one for locations such as the Floria coast, I'm not a beach kinda gal, but King really sells Duma Key to me. The location of this novel is GORGEOUS. His descriptions of sunsets and the beach and the house itself is just beautiful. He builds a real atmosphere, and if it wasn't for the scary forces at play, I'd move to Duma Key, like yesterday.

As for the ending - PERFECT. King's endings are often criticised but this one cannot be faulted, for me, personally. The book continually built up to a crescendo and didn't fall at the final hurdle. This one will stay with me for a long time, and has even forced itself into my top 5 King books. Outstanding.

Paul O'Neill says

It was red...

This must be King's most underrated book, and I've no idea why. Maybe because it was released in 2008 and maybe horror wasn't as cool then and it kind of slipped through the cracks. Feels weird calling a book with 70k ratings underrated, but there you go. I've never heard anyone say that Duma Key was up there with the best of King's works. After finishing this I certainly will be!

If this was released earlier in King's career, would it be mentioned as one of his greatest? Maybe...

This book is creeeeeepy and original. The ending is also superb, which isn't always the case in King's books (see Under the Dome!).

More than anything, King's ability to create memorable characters and dialogue shines through.

You need to sit in the chum, sit in the buddy and read this you stupid birch!! All the stars and perhaps one of my top three King books...which is saying something!

Do the day, and let the day do you!

Gary says

This book is a return to King in his classic style. The writing was tight and concise, unlike some of his 90s material which tended to ramble a bit. He claims to be writing more slowly as he ages, and tyhis is working in his favor. This book capitalizes on the author's ability to create likable characters that we care about, foreshadow tragedy, and establish settings that can drive the story when the plot lags.

The story focuses on Edgar, a protagonist that has suffered a tragedy and goes to an island off the coast of Florida to recuperate. The island, of course, is not the relaxing vacation which it first appears to be. The setting comes to life through the author's trade mark variety of techniques that apply to the five senses. Seashells scrape beneath the house like skeleton bones; the island appears deserted except, of course, for one old woman at the other end of it.

Anyone that has a daughter or is a daughter will relate to Illy, the protagonist's daughter. Marriage, tragedy and familial relations weave into the pot until they become an integral part of the story even for hardened horror buffs. Even the supporting characters (including the late introduced ones) quickly appear round and lifelike.

Reading this book reminds me that we are in the presence of a modern master that will be studied for many years to come. He is already appearing in literature textbooks in our classrooms. As I spent my late July nights turning these pages, I was reminded of college days spent reading this author's novels unable to put them down.

There were parts of the story that slowed down, particularly in the center of the storyline. At times I took breaks and returned to this and with a little patience my attention was hooked again. The author's talent carries a lagging story when it has to. Soon enough the story hooked me into its momentum quickly enough and the story wraps in a fashion that only a master storyteller can do, building crescendo as it climbs. Many of this author's novels in the 80s and 90s began to read like the movie was already in his mind when he was writing. This book reads like a writer that is in the late years of his career and is enjoying the talent he has been given.

Kasia says

Ahh... what can I say about Duma Key, other than it being an extraordinary experience, a literary breath of fresh air, a masterpiece of color and texture without any actual paint being used. I guess there are some people out there think it's boring or long but I instantaneously felt a bond with the book and I can say that I absolutely loved it! The writing itself was so colorful and interesting that I enjoyed each and every page, there was in no rush to get to the ending by any means, but I did like the end, it matched the enigmatic feel of the story and it had a lush, tropical feel to it but it was tainted by something dark and eerie and quite frankly very creepy because it was deadly. Those affected could have never imagine their demise, and whether they believed in it or not, it was coming. I was attracted to this book right away, partially because of the cover; it always begged to be read and as an artist it touched my sensors in ways that kept me thinking of it often so I finally had to sit down and read it and also because one of my best friends started reading it and I had to follow suit so we could enjoy and discuss it together, it was a real treat to read it at the same time and marvel at the unfolding story.

Edgar Freemantle is a handicapped man who moves to a mythical island of Duma Key, a place that doesn't exist in reality but seems more real than half the vacation spots I've been in. He rents a salmon colored house and starts painting with his remaining arm, paintings that change his life - at first for the better but later he realizes that his new found gift is very hungry, and it hungers for things most precious to him. His recovery seems to progress until he starts feeling his missing arm, at the same time strange storms are coming to the island and things that shouldn't be real are happening, Edgar knows that his paintings have more power and meaning than he could have ever imagined and it's up to him to solve the mystery that has enshrouded Duma Key for generations and left many skeletons during it's rein. The story jumps off the cliff with an appearance of a ship on the horizon, Edgar knows that its not good news, something strange and deadly is on that ship and the closer it gets to him during those storms the stranger the hold on his sudden artistic talents and the results are quite shocking, but hey they make for great reading. After reading it I can safely say that it's one of my favorite books ever, I even got the hard cover version so I could have the full dust jacket with it's glorious art to see while I read the paperback and carried it with me everywhere. This might not be for everyone, but that's totally fine with me, I loved it and it made an impact on me, I'm sure there are people out there who wont like it, and that's fine, It only makes me feel lucky that I'm not one of them!

This story is like an exotic fruit bowl, gorgeous from every angle and full of mouth watering rainbow of

flavors. The characters in this tale are extremely realistic, from the kooky and zany to mysterious and deadly, each plays a part that paints such a grand picture that the more I think about it the more I feel the need to read it again, just to dip back into that pool of "ahh.." it creates.. It's really hard to explain but this book was marvelous and it made a bond with my imagination, one that will stay with me for a long time. There is plenty of original mystery and horror and love and growth combined with struggles and some deaths, it all paints a picture worth thousands of words, one that I could stare at forever.
