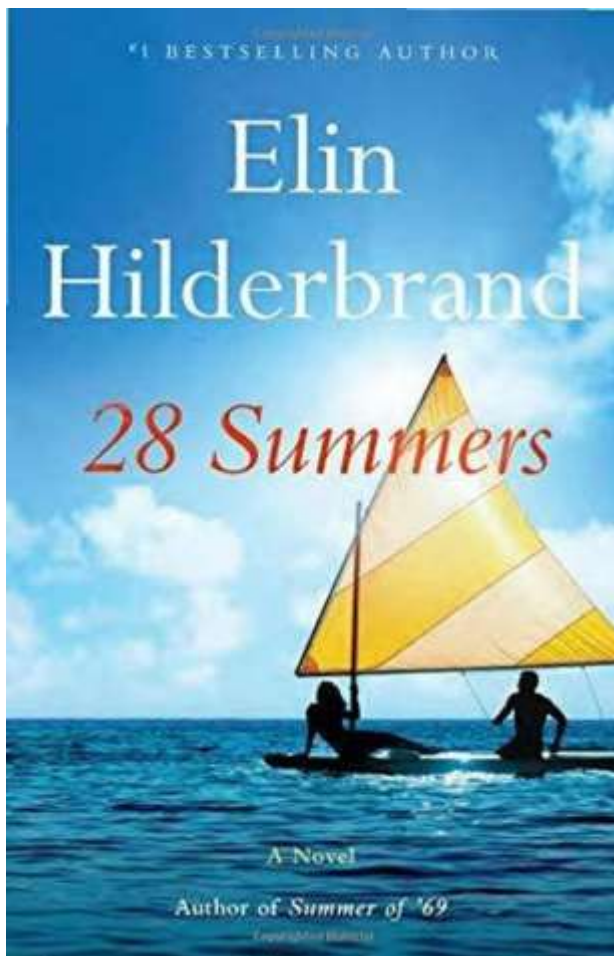


Allison's Book Corner August 2020

[28 Summers](#) by Elin Hilderbrand
(Little, Brown 2020)

It isn't really summer without reading an Elin Hilderbrand "beach read." You open one of her books and you can smell the sunscreen. Perhaps you imagine a little sand falling out of the pages.

A beach read usually refers to lighter fare that one can read and then forget. *28 Summers* is 417 pages. A hardcover weapon if necessary. Also, if you are a regular Hilderbrand reader, you know that she



approaches heavy topics with humor and grace. There is also always a lesson buried somewhere in there. This story stays with you for a day or two after reading.

Here the author has used the basis of an older movie, "Same Time Next Year," as the premise for her book. She has no shame in telling us this in the introduction and even has the main characters watch the movie annually. For those who are not regular Turner Classic Movie watchers, the 1978 movie tells the story of a couple who meet the same time every year to continue an affair. The rendezvous takes place no matter what else may be going on in their lives.

Selfish, you say? Morally repugnant? Yes, those things may be true, but as usual, Hilderbrand makes us fall in love with her characters. Mallory Blessing and Jake McCloud are genuinely likeable. They are our neighbors. Mallory could have been our young schoolteacher. Jake could have been our friend at college, or the roommate of our college friend. All

with beautiful Nantucket as the backdrop. Mallory lives there year 'round, while Jake only comes once a year, to be with her. As you might imagine there is a wife, and soon, children involved. Jake has the wife and child, Mallory just a child, no spouse. The writing is beautiful and insightful. When Mallory first meets Jake in their twenties, "she is a line drawing of a woman that has been only partially colored in."

We human beings can rationalize anything, including bad behavior. Jake loves his wife, but in a different way, and a childhood trauma keeps them together. Mallory takes on the role of the usual devoted woman who cannot even imagine being full-time with another man. I will not reveal the big secrets. When you carry on something like this in your life, other people are bound to be hurt. Also, it's pretty hard to keep a secret like this for 28 years. Jake, lacking the courage to go after what he really wants, often thinks when he is with Mallory, "Freeze! I want to stay right here forever." We all have that thought during amazing moments -- but we are not in control, and time does not wait for us.

Hilderbrand has a gift of writing the big rollicking story that takes us through many years and a few generations of one family. Her stories always feel like that moment when you are standing in your kitchen and someone you care about comes up behind you and hugs you around the waist. Who doesn't have a family member who always messes up his life? The best friend you stay friends with because you have history. Ending things with that person would take away the one person who knew you at that innocent time in your life. "It was a wonder Mallory and Leland had remained friends. They had done so only because Mallory had chosen to overlook Leland's faults...their friendship had history." Sound familiar?

So we become invested over the 28 years. Hilderbrand takes us from 1993 to 2020. She has a masterful way of combining current events in her storyline. We laugh and cry with the characters and learn something about ourselves along the way.

This summer of 2020 is an odd one. Some of us are still in lockdown. We are running around wearing masks and wondering whether our kids will attend school in the fall. Do yourself a favor and treat yourself to this book. You'll become lost in a sweet story set in a beautiful location. You may not be able to travel physically, but your mind can transport you.