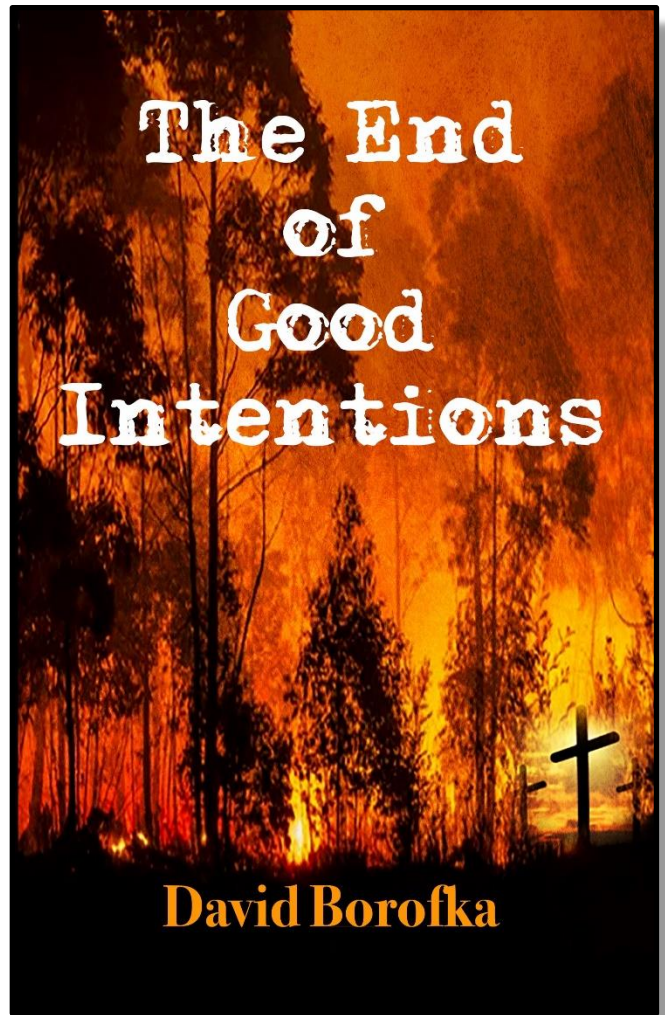


1. The novel focuses on a private, faith-based college in the foothills of Central California and a series of characters whose lives intersect with that college and with each other over several decades. How does the evolution of the college reflect some of the social and political changes of the last fifty years?
2. Of the many characters of the novel, Michael Wayte occupies the foreground. He is given the position of first-person narrator in four of the fourteen chapters, and his bar, seventeen miles downhill from the college, is one of the central locations. What perspective does he provide upon his alma mater and the concerns of the novel?
3. This is a novel that presents characters who view their lives within a religious (primarily Christian) context. What role does traditional Christianity and Evangelicalism play in their lives? What do they get out of their religious and/or spiritual experience? How do they respond to guilt and their own shortcomings?
4. What do you make of the following confession, by Brother Carl: "I did what I came here to do. I remembered what I was supposed to remember.... That the world is a shitty place, and it is human beings that make it so. Like me, shitty as shitty can be, thirty-plus years ago." Does this sensibility seem to apply to any of the other characters in the novel?
5. Sexuality and religious strictures have typically been fraught companions. How do the characters in the novel accommodate their beliefs, their desires, and their behavior?
6. In the character of Joshua Bowen, we have a character who is operating out of his own understanding of Oneida Perfectionism. To what extent are his actions the result of true belief, or are they a reaction to what he sees in his parents and the experiences of his childhood?
7. Fires begin and end the novel nearly fifty years apart. What has fire represented throughout literature? How are the fires of *The End of Good Intentions* similar and different from each other and their literary antecedents?



8. In 1964, while accepting the Republican nomination for President, Barry Goldwater famously said the following (in part), "...extremism in defense of liberty is no vice." What are some of the extremes—in belief as well as behavior—that the characters confront during the course of the novel? What do you think about the extremes that are represented here or presented on a daily basis in the news?
9. How does the structure of this book work? Would you call it a traditional novel? A novel-in-stories? Or, a collection of related stories?
10. The novel opens with two epigraphs:

My intentions were good, really. Really, they were. I'm telling you: they were meant to be good. But maybe you couldn't see it. I'm a better person in theory than I am in practice.

—Overheard just before midnight in *The Early Terrible*, Woodstock, NY

"Isn't it pretty to think so."

—Jake Barnes in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*

How do those statements predict or acknowledge the content of the novel?