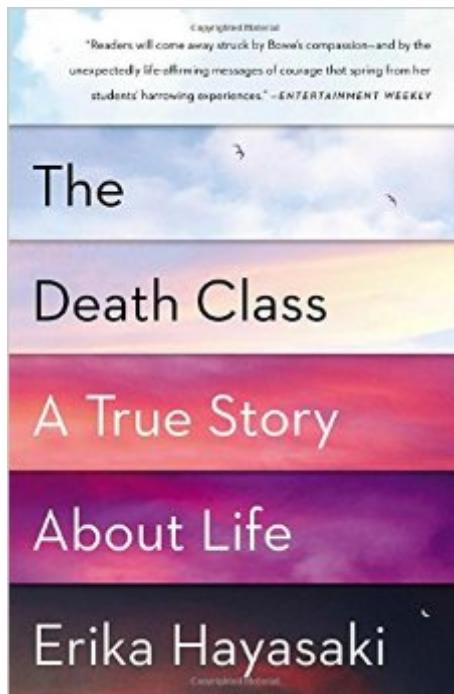


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# The Death Class: A True Story About Life



## Synopsis

The poignant, âœpowerfulâ • (>) look at how to appreciate life from an extraordinary professor who teaches about death: âœPoetic passages and assorted revelations youâ™ll likely not forgetâ • (>). Why does a college course on death have a three-year waiting list? When nurse Norma Bowe decided to teach a course on death at a college in New Jersey, she never expected it to be popular. But year after year students crowd into her classroom, and the reason is clear: Normaâ™s âœdeath classâ • is really about how to make the most of what poet Mary Oliver famously called our âœone wild and precious life.â • Under the guise of discussions about last wills and last breaths and visits to cemeteries and crematoriums, Norma teaches her students to find grace in one another. In *The Death Class*, award-winning journalist Erika Hayasaki followed Norma for more than four years, showing how she steers four extraordinary students from their tormented families and neighborhoods toward happiness: she rescues one young woman from her suicidal mother, helps a young man manage his schizophrenic brother, and inspires another to leave his gang life behind. Through this unorthodox class on death, Norma helps kids who are barely hanging on to understand not only the value of their own lives, but also the secret of fulfillment: to throw yourself into helping others. Hayasakiâ™s expert reporting and literary prose bring Normaâ™s wisdom out of the classroom, transforming it into an inspiring lesson for all. In the end, Normaâ™s very own lifeâ "and how she lives itâ "is the lecture that sticks. âœReaders will come away struck by Boweâ™s compassionâ "and by the unexpectedly life-affirming messages of courage that spring from her studentsâ™ harrowing experiencesâ • (Entertainment Weekly).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nothing short of 5 stars. I am not a reader, but this book had me so intrigued I read the book in its entirety in about 5 hours. As a previous student to Dr. Bowe, I already knew she was nothing short of amazing. Her compassion for others moves mountains. Along with Jonathan as a guest speaker in class. Erika Hayasaki describes Norma perfectly, from her sense of humor and quirkiness to her concern for others and passion for others. I felt as if I was present for the conversations. If there was one thing I learned from Norma, as well as Jonathan, it was how to look at life differently & how to live. Norma saves peoples lives, & she does it out of the kindness of her heart which is hard to come by. She has inspired so many people throughout her life and there is no doubt in my mind that she will continue this way of life. Erika Hayasaki captures the true essence of the class in her narrative. I highly recommend this book to ANYONE, especially those who are having a hard time dealing with death or just want to be reminded about how precious life is. My life has been changed forever.

I took Death in Perspective and I am proud to say I was one of Dr. Norma Bowe's students this past fall. This book is an extraordinary representation of what it means to live; to REALLY live. It tells the tales of people's most intimate, and darkest parts of their lives, and within those tales, the readers are given feelings of hope, compassion & determination for their own lives. I bought and read this book in one day, and will probably read it a few more times within the next few weeks. Not too many get the chance to experience this class, all it has to offer, and the chance to know Dr. Norma Bowe. It's a privilege and an honor, and she continues to inspire hundreds of people everyday, including myself. The way Erika Hayasaki put into words the beauty of this class is truly remarkable as well. This book is for all those who feel like giving up, and for all those who feel like death is the answer. Life is worth living. Choose it.

This was one of the few books I've read in my lifetime that I couldn't put down. This book inspired me, made me laugh, cry, and ultimately challenged me to reflect on my life. It challenged me to be better, to turn negatives into positives and more than anything it showed me I'm not alone. The fact that the author spent 4 years interviewing the characters in the book and spent so much on the little details really made you feel like you were there as she tells the stories. I believe this book will be around for a long time. I bought a few copies for friends and family. It's that good!

Heard the author interviewed on NPR and purchased this book to help me with the loss of my sister.

For me the book was really a biography of a remarkable woman, Norma Bowe, and the many people she touches, and empowers, with her endless energy and passion. While it might be helpful for those who have horrific trauma in their lives and don't have any previous background, at all, in knowing how to heal from it, I didn't find anything unique or insightful in this book. I don't believe I've ever read a hardcover book where I haven't underlined anything, except this one. I kept reading thinking I would find some nugget of wisdom, but it never materialized. Really, really didn't like the author's use of narrative journalism. I found it got in the way of the stories and trivialized what would have typically moved me. I'm sorry to say I would not recommend this book.

I've skipped a few important assignments and grading papers to read this book and it is defiantly worth the time to stop and smell the figurative roses. I've known Norma Bowe for many years now and she still amazes me with her endless energy, projects, and compassion. The book is very well written, told though different character's real life experiences, and woven together that illustrates only a small piece of the rich tapestry of a humble life dedicated to the care for others. Her past tragedies, experiences, and triumphs are uplifting and demonstrate the indomitable human spirit and resiliency. Norma has turned a life of tragedies into something greater and uses her past experiences to guide and inspire wayward people in the right direction. Norma's dedication, work and compassion speaks volumes of her character and who she is as a person. Having sat in her classes (The Bowe Trilogy), it is hard not to be influenced a tiny bit even with a callous heart. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt: It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. In this case, a professor standing in the streets with her students; feeding the homeless, championing for the mentally ill, the voiceless and the invisible, whom society has forgotten. On a personal note; I've always fought the administration of my Alma mater during my undergraduate/graduate days. I am glad, I lost the one battle that lead me to a professor by the name of Norma Bowe. Erika, thank you for all your hard work over the years and shedding some light on a professor that we all love and respected but never wanted to pry.

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