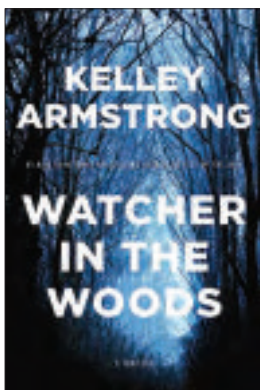


# Canadian Content

Canadian literature is as varied as the people who live in our country. There are books that are extremely literary and reflect on something much deeper than the plot may suggest, while other novels are set in a time gone by and shed light on a specific point in our history. And sometimes, they're set in present day but in a setting that is at times both familiar and strange. Each of the books in this roundup may seem dissimilar but they all share one thing in common: they are uniquely Canadian.

BY KALEY STEWART



## Watcher in the Woods

**KELLEY ARMSTRONG**

*Doubleday Canada (Penguin Random House Canada).  
February 12, 2019.*

Kelley Armstrong is bringing readers back to Rockton in her latest novel, *Watcher in the Woods*. In the fourth book of the City of the Lost series, Casey Duncan, a former homicide detective, has smuggled her sister, April, a doctor, into the remote town to help with a recently shot resident. Things get complicated when a U.S. Marshal arrives and ends up dead a few days later. Casey and her boyfriend, Sheriff Eric Dalton, must figure out why the Marshal was in town and who killed him.

This novel moves along at an extremely fast clip. There's a lot going on, which is surprising considering no one outside of the residents and council of this town is supposed to know it exists. The pace works with the nature of

the story as the reader doesn't have time to slow down and the heart is pumping the entire time.

The thriller can, to an extent, stand-alone if you haven't read the rest of the series. It would be recommended to read the first three so you can have a full grasp of the characters you're dealing with – as there are a lot of them and they all have complicated back stories. Armstrong does a good job of alluding to and explaining past events in a way that keeps newcomers in the loop but doesn't bore long-time readers.

This story will keep you on the edge of your seat as you race to finish the book to find out who's out to get the residents of Rockton. It will also leave you waiting for the next installment in the series and wondering what is going to happen next.



## The Quintland Sisters

**SHELLEY WOOD**

*William Morrow (HarperCollins Canada).*

*March 5, 2019.*

The Dionne Quintuplets captured the attention of Canada, and the world, when they were born in small-town Ontario in 1934. The five identical sisters – Yvonne, Annette, Cécile, Marie, and Émilie – did not have an easy life and Shelley Wood explores their early days in her fiction debut.

Wood has taken an exceptional true story and inserted a fictional character, as Emma Trimpany, the Dionnes' midwife's assistant, did not exist. The reader watches the Quints grow up through Emma's eyes and it is clear Wood has done her research. The novel is an epistolary one and is told through Emma's diary entries, letters from her friends, and newspaper clippings. As Wood explains in her acknowledgements, almost every article was included just as it was first published.

The sisters are the star of the times – the novel follows the girls from birth to five years old with a brief, and tragic, epilogue from 1954 – but it's quiet, invisible Emma who is the star of this novel. The way she cares for the quintuplets will make the reader hope someone really did love the sisters that much as they were growing up in the public eye. The "Quintland" in the title of

this book references the mania that surrounded the girls as they lived in a special hospital for the first several years of their lives. Over 6,000 people a day traveled to Callander to try to get a glimpse at the Quints in their playground.

Wood's novel is riveting and heartbreaking and definitely worth a read. It brings to light a tragic story that Canada is in danger of forgetting.



## Small Game Hunting at the Local Coward Gun Club

**MEGAN GAIL COATES**

*House of Anansi Press.  
February 12, 2019.*

The title of Megan Gail Coates' debut novel should give the reader a hint that it will not be straightforward. You must be a fan of literary novels and stories that get deep at an issue without seeming to have a point to enjoy *Small Game Hunting at the Local Coward*

*Gun Club*. The novel features a large cast of characters trying to make it through a particularly brutal February in Newfoundland. A restaurant, and all of its staff and guests, hosts most of the drama, with flashbacks shedding insight into each character's problems.

The best thing about this novel was the setting. It focused on a part of our cities, St. John's in particular, that is often swept aside. All but two of the characters you meet in this novel are dealing with some sort of financial issue and sometimes almost crippling poverty. It's not a pretty picture, nor is it meant to be. The setting is raw and tough, and the characters reflect that. You don't often see this in Canadian fiction and, while it was hard to read, it is a welcome addition to the literary landscape.

The story is harsh and none of the characters are treated well, not that many of them deserve it. There are a few characters that the reader may root for but this is not a novel where you will find a new friend between the pages. Their stories meander across the pages without any real point and absolutely no resolution in the end. Ambiguous endings are not for everyone and may leave the reader feeling upset and frustrated. **nlife**

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