



***Olive Kitteridge*, by Elizabeth Strout**
Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, January 2015

Rereading a favorite book is like a comfortable, enjoyable visit with an old friend. That's the way I feel about *Olive Kitteridge*, Elizabeth Strout's Pulitzer Prize winning novel.

Set in a coastal town in rural Maine, *Olive Kitteridge* covers twenty-five years of the title character's life. Olive, a math teacher, and her long-suffering husband Henry, the town's pharmacist, are polar opposites: Henry, the cheerful optimist; Olive, the cynical pragmatist. In between them is their son Christopher, an only child.

In each of the thirteen short-story-like chapters, Olive is a major or minor presence. Sometimes exasperating, sometimes endearing, Olive is a complex yet unforgettable character. She thinks she knows all the answers, but in her daily interactions with the townspeople, Olive discovers she still has a lot to learn. The world, as she knows it, is ever changing, but Olive has the determination to forge ahead.

HBO presented a fine mini-series adaption of *Olive Kitteridge*, with the excellent Frances McDormand as Olive and the steady Richard Jenkins as Henry. The screenplay and cast certainly captured the essence of the novel, but the book, as they say, is better.

So, this long winter, on a snow-bound day, pour yourself a cup of coffee and settle in a comfy chair. Then relax and have a nice visit with my old friend, *Olive Kitteridge*.