

FOUR DAYS IN MAY SYNOPSIS - Beth Shaughnessy

The dramatic historical fiction, *Four Days In May*, examines the events that lead up to the tragic shootings at Kent State University through the lives of the Murphy family. Murph, the patriarch, is a professor at the university and is assigned the duty of keeping the college demonstrations under control. His wife, Helen, is a homemaker who struggles to keep her family together. Daughter Ruthie must win a writing competition in order to be named the first female editor of her high school newspaper. Her assignment takes her to the local college campus to cover the story. The second oldest, Tommy, is a liberal freshman at the university. Caught up in the protest movement, he takes to the town and campus with a destructive force. Meanwhile, the oldest son Patrick's National Guard unit is deployed to the university to stop the rioting students. These demanding duties and their conflicting beliefs soon weigh on the family dynamic.

During May 1st the enraged college students destroy downtown Kent. Ruthie innocently gets caught up in the crowd. With Tommy's help, she barely escapes the oncoming police and her father's notice. On May 2nd Ruthie, out to photograph the protest march, joins Tommy and the leaders of the campus unrest. Sparked by the crowd's anger, Tommy burns down the Army ROTC building. Murph, unable to stop the enormous crowd, watches helplessly. The National Guard arrives with Patrick in the lead. Sarge, a soldier filled with hate and prejudice, encourages his troops to use force against the students. Tommy and Patrick clash over Tommy's rebellious actions. On May 3rd the students' sit-in blocks a major intersection. Murph tries in vain to stop the combined law enforcement forces from attacking the peaceful students. As Ruthie snaps photos, the Guard chases Tommy and fellow students across campus. On May 4th, despite the administration's attempt to cancel the noon rally, students gather to not only protest the war, but also the National Guard's presence. Tommy takes to the field with anger, while Ruthie joins in support. Murph, relieved of his peace keeping duties, watches in horror as Patrick's group fires into the innocent crowd killing four students and injuring nine. On the battlefield the Murphy family stands, each questioning their actions of the past days with remorse and regret as their answers.

In four days a family, a college, and a country are forever changed.