VOCABULARY

Section 1 – Pages 1-23

Void (20) – It was so dark that I wondered, as I had many times before, if this is what blindness felt like—this enveloping void.

Wan (22) – Mr. Kaminski pulled a chain from the pressed-metal kitchen ceiling, and light seeped from a bulb, casting a wan glow over a scarred wooden table…

Incessant (23) – I was so afraid that our lives would fall apart again that I tried to ignore the things that frightened me the most: our da’s continued love affair with drink, which a change in country did not change; Mam’s black moods and rages; the incessant fighting between them.

Section 2 – Pages 24-55

Superlative (25) – Yes, he says “perfect,” parr-fec, in his German accent; I learn, in this instant, the terrible power of superlatives.

Milquetoast (28) – Mrs. Scatcherd and Mr. Curran, a milquetoast with a brown moustache, line us up by height, tallest to shortest…

Surreptitious (52) – Glancing surreptitiously at her phone, Molly sees it’s 4:15—only fifteen minutes since she arrived.

Genteel (53) – That she has fulfilled her role as a thieving member of the underclass, now indentured to this genteel Midwestern white lady, is too perfect for words.

Section 3 – Pages 56-82

Depravity (64) – “You have the chance to save a child from destitution, poverty, and I believe Mrs. Scatcherd would agree that it is not too great an exaggeration to add sin and depravity.”

Florid (69) – Mr. Curran gives a less florid version of the speech he gave in Minneapolis, and people begin to inch forward.

Tufted (77) – At the back of the yard, tufted with grass like spare hair on a balding head, is a weathered grey shed with a slit cut out of the door.

Austere (81) – The house is austere, but not uncomfortable.

Section 4 – Pages 83-112

Apropos (85) – At one point, apropos of nothing, Vivian says, “So where is that mother of yours, anyway?”
Rescind (93) – “He should know fully what sort of a bargain he had made, while there was time to rescind it.”

Insolent (96) – “You insolent girl. I don’t want to hear another word.”
Desiccated (106) – We’ve stopped eating dinner together. She takes her food upstairs, leaving a desiccated chicken leg or a bowl of cold brisket in a chunk of brown gelatinous fat on the counter, with strict instructions that I wash my dish when I’m done.

Section 5 – Pages 113-138

Gingerly (114) – Mr. Sorenson rubs his hands together and, motioning for me to follow, makes his way gingerly up the creaking steps to the porch.

Contemporaneous (131) – They’ve read Native narratives and contrasting contemporaneous viewpoints and taken a field tripe to the Abbe, the Indian museum in Bar Harbor…

Scant (132) – Molly’s own childhood memories are scant and partial.

Emanating (137) – It was pouring earlier, great sheets of frain, and now the clouds outside the window are crystal tipped, like mountain peaks in the sky, rays emanating downward like an illustration in a children’s bible.

Section 6 – Pages 139-167

Remnant (142) – I sat on a three-legged stool listening to the crackle and spit of goose skin in the oven while she trims a ribbon of dough from around the rim of the pie dish, making a cross with a remnant for the center and brushing it all with a beaten egg…

Haphazard (148) – By mid-September, round bales of golden straw dot the yellow fields on my walk to the country road, arranged in geometric formations stacked in pyramids and scattered in haphazard clumps.

Salvage (153) – My coat is thin, but I’m wearing what clothing I could salvage underneath, and as I hurry along I begin to warm up.

Inadvertently (158) – I merely meant that sometimes, particularly if one has been through distressing events in one’s young life, one might be inclined to jump to conclusions—to inadvertently blow things out of proportion.

Section 7 – Pages 169-199

Insubordination (182) – “The predicament, you must understand, is that you are an orphan, and that whatever the reality, it looks as there may be an issue with… insubordination.”

Quivering (187) – The other three adults watch us with a quivering intensity.

Elemental (195) – We light candles the twenty-foot tree to the right of the altar, all the fair-haired Lutheran
children and parents and grandparents singing with songbooks open, the reverend preaching a sermon as elemental as a story in a child’s picture book, a lesson about charity and empathy.

Section 8 – Pages 200-236

Reprobation (202) – The only thing they can really take away is my weekly Sunday-afternoon trip to the picture show with Judy, so for the next two weeks I stay home instead. And endure their silent reprobation.

Revelation (204) – And when I begin to wear makeup, I have a revelation.

Placate (205) – Together we manage employee’s problems, placate customers, manage vendors.

Pusillanimous (209) – She almost feels sorry for him, the pusillanimous wretch.

Sycophantic (218) – Once upon a time—fairly recently, in fact—Molly would’ve gagged over these words, both because they’re blatanly sycophantic and cringingly sentimental.

Section 9 – Pages 237-273

Languorous (238) – I have never felt like this—slow-witted and languorous, dreamy, absentminded, forgetful, focused only on each moment as it comes.

Parse (242) – I listen to the radio, scour the Tribune, wait anxiously for the mail drop, and devour Dutchy’s letters when they come, scanning quickly for news—is he okay? Eating well, healthy?—and parsing every word for the tone and nuance, as if his sentences are a code I can crack.

Idiom (243)—The words he uses are the idioms of popular songs and poems in the newspaper.

Amicable (258) – In the window in Molly’s bathroom, also on the ocean side, a light cotton curtain dances constantly in the breeze, sucked toward the screen and out again, billowing towards the sink, an amiable ghostly presence.