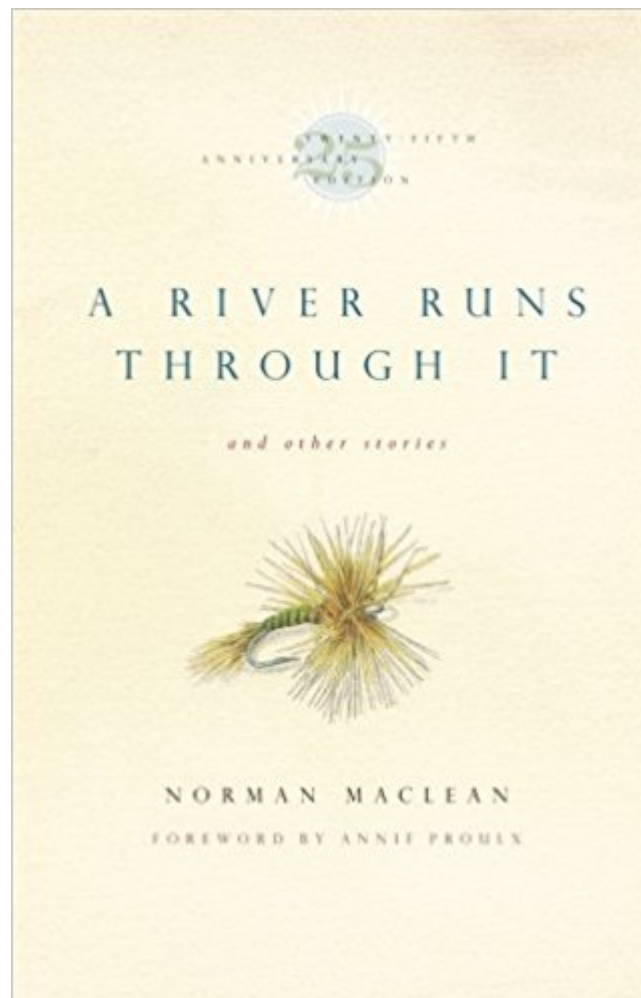




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A River Runs Through It And Other Stories, Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition



Synopsis

Just as Norman Maclean writes at the end of "A River Runs through It" that he is "haunted by waters," so have readers been haunted by his novella. A retired English professor who began writing fiction at the age of 70, Maclean produced what is now recognized as one of the classic American stories of the twentieth century. Originally published in 1976, *A River Runs through It and Other Stories* now celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary, marked by this new edition that includes a foreword by Annie Proulx. Maclean grew up in the western Rocky Mountains in the first decades of the twentieth century. As a young man he worked many summers in logging camps and for the United States Forest Service. The two novellas and short story in this collection are based on his own experiences the experiences of a young man who found that life was only a step from art in its structures and beauty. The beauty he found was in reality, and so he leaves a careful record of what it was like to work in the woods when it was still a world of horse and hand and foot, without power saws, "cats," or four-wheel drives. Populated with drunks, loggers, card sharks, and whores, and set in the small towns and surrounding trout streams and mountains of western Montana, the stories concern themselves with the complexities of fly fishing, logging, fighting forest fires, playing cribbage, and being a husband, a son, and a father. By turns raunchy, poignant, caustic, and elegiac, these are superb tales which express, in Maclean's own words, "a little of the love I have for the earth as it goes by." A first offering from a 70-year-old writer, the basis of a top-grossing movie, and the first original fiction published by the University of Chicago Press, *A River Runs through It and Other Stories* has sold more than a million copies. As Proulx writes in her foreword to this new edition, "In 1990 Norman Maclean died in body, but for hundreds of thousands of readers he will live as long as fish swim and books are made." "Altogether beautiful in the power of its feeling. . . . As beautiful as anything in Thoreau or Hemingway."--Alfred Kazin, *Chicago Tribune Book World* "It is an enchanted tale. . . . I have read the story three times now, and each time it seems fuller."--Roger Sale, *New York Review of Books* "Maclean's book--acerbic, laconic, deadpan--rings out of a rich American tradition that includes Mark Twain, Kin Hubbard, Richard Bissell, Jean Shepherd, and Nelson Algren. I love its sound."--James R. Frakes, *New York Times Book Review* "The title novella is the prize. . . . Something unique and marvelous: a story that is at once an evocation of nature's miracles and realities and a probing of human mysteries. Wise, witty, wonderful, Maclean spins his tales, casts his flies, fishes the rivers and the woods for what he remembers from his youth in the Rockies."--*Publishers Weekly* "Ostensibly a 'fishing story,' 'A River Runs through It' is really an autobiographical elegy that captivates readers who have never held a fly rod in their hand. In it the art of casting a fly becomes a ritual of grace, a metaphor for man's attempt to move into

nature."--Andrew Rosenheim, The Independent

Norman Maclean (1902-1990) was the William Rainey Harper Professor of English at the University of Chicago. His book on Montana's Mann Gulch forest fire of 1949, *Young Men and Fire*, is also available from the University of Chicago Press.

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Customer Reviews

"[Maclean] would go to his grave secure in the knowledge that anyone who'd fished with a fly in the Rockies and read his novella on the how and why of it believed it to be the best such manual on the art ever written--a remarkable feat for a piece of prose that also stands as a masterwork in the art of tragic writing." (Philip Connors Nation)"Altogether beautiful in the power of its feeling. . . . As beautiful as anything in Thoreau or Hemingway." (Alfred Kazin Chicago Tribune Book World)"It is an enchanted tale. . . . I have read the story three times now, and each time it seems fuller." (Roger Sale New York Review of Books)"Maclean's book is as acerbic, laconic, deadpan as it rings out of a rich American tradition that includes Mark Twain, Kin Hubbard, Richard Bissell, Jean Shepherd, and Nelson Algren. I love its sound." (James R. Frakes New York Times Book Review)"The title novella is the prize. . . . Something unique and marvelous: a story that is at once an evocation of nature's miracles and realities and a probing of human mysteries. Wise, witty, wonderful, Maclean spins his tales, casts his flies, fishes the rivers and the woods for what he remembers from his youth in the Rockies." (Publishers Weekly)"Ostensibly a 'fishing story,' 'A River Runs through It' is really an autobiographical elegy that captivates readers who have never held a fly rod in their hand. In it the art of casting a fly becomes a ritual of grace, a metaphor for man's

attempt to move into nature." (Andrew Rosenheim The Independent) – "Forty years ago, a book appeared that landed fly fishing in the center of American society. At the time, fly fishing books were not places where people played for keeps, where family promises were forgotten, where young heroes died, where relationships that were problematic in life become more so in death. Fly fishing books instead offered an idealized patch of life. A River Runs Through It and Other Stories certainly stood that one on its head." (Will Ryan American Angler)

Just as Norman Maclean writes at the end of "A River Runs through It" that he is "haunted by waters," so have readers been haunted by his novella. A retired English professor who began writing fiction at the age of 70, Maclean produced what is now recognized as one of the classic American stories of the twentieth century. Originally published in 1976, A River Runs through It and Other Stories now celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary, marked by this new edition that includes a foreword by Annie Proulx. By turns raunchy, poignant, caustic, and elegiac, these are superb tales which express, in Maclean's own words, "a little of the love I have for the earth as it goes by," a love shared by millions of readers. As Proulx writes in her foreword to this new edition, "In 1990 Norman Maclean died in body, but for hundreds of thousands of readers he will live as long as fish swim and books are made."

A first work of fiction by a retired English professor may not be rare, but the quality of the two novellas and the short story in this book is exceptional. The autobiographical tales of Maclean's boyhood in the Rockies feature naturalistic lore plus strong characterization, and they are written by a natural spinner of yarns. When one anticipates a story of fly-fishing or of logging in the mountains, one finds that Maclean shifts his focus subtly, so that what happens to the characters, and to the boy-narrator in particular, becomes paramount. Finally the reader understands when Maclean reflects over the years and decides that "eventually all things merge into one, and a river runs through it".

These concluding words should compel anyone to read this excellent book: "Now nearly all those I loved and did not understand when I was young are dead, but still I reach out to them." Of course, now I am too old to be much of a fisherman, and now of course I usually fish the big waters alone, although some friends think I shouldn't. Like many fly fishermen in western Montana where the summer days are almost Arctic in length, I often do not start fishing until the cool of the evening. Then in the Arctic half-light of the canyon, all existence fades to a being with my soul and memories

and the sounds of the Big Blackfoot River and a four-count rhythm and the hope that a fish will rise."Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs."I am haunted by waters"

"A River Runs Through It" is beautifully told. It will have you laughing out loud at times and choking up with emotion at others. It's a story we all seem to know now because of the movie. And as great of a job that Robert Redford did with the movie, it lacks the emotion that Mr. Maclean manages to evoke with just a few well placed words. This book makes you long for simpler times when people were actually more "connected" without all the cell phones, e-mails, etc. You FEEL their love and their concern for family members and loved ones... and it's just so beautifully told that you will want to drink it up. And even if you know nothing about fishing, or fly-fishing in particular, Mr. Maclean will make you fall in love with the idea of it. His other stories in the book (Logging and Pimping and "Your Pal, Jim" and "USFS 1919: The Ranger, the Cook, and a Hole in the Sky" aren't that bad, either. I found "Logging..." especially a fun read. The Kindle version is well presented. It's the quintessential reason to have a Kindle... a great book in an electronic format that makes it easy to read while traveling!

This is not a book one easily puts down. Norman Maclean wrote about what he loved, and his love showed in what he wrote. Probably aren't too many people reading this review that haven't seen the movie "A River Runs Through It." The movie catches the gist of the first novella here, but doesn't quite do the book justice. Unfortunately for me, it took me a while to shed the image of Brad Pitt as Paul. Really wished I hadn't watched the movie so many years ago before reading the book. As the book was much better, and though Brad Pitt played the part well, I feel my imagination was held back just a bit in letting Paul's character develop fully as I read the novella. Still, my wife had a hard time getting me to the dinner table once I started reading. "Logging, Pimping, and Your Pal Jim" I have learned is somewhat of a cult classic for those who love the woods and stories about the men who inhabit them. Years ago a pastor friend recommended the story to me, and I think it was the best gift he ever gave me. "USFS 1919, The Ranger, the Cook and the Hole in the Sky" Is an autobiographical account of the early days of the U.S. Forest Service and the men who worked the woods. In telling the story you get a feel for Montana almost a hundred years ago, but that is true of all the stories in this book. It was a Montana full of loggers, loose women, cowboys and card games.

When at the end of the story Norman ends up nursing back his health in the Hamilton whorehouse, (where better?) his first thought is, this is just like one of those old west whore houses my friend described to me, before he realizes that it is in fact the thing itself. The door on that house shuts behind it tales of a misspent youth in the wilds of a Montana that was still young itself.

This book is a work of art. As a fly fisherman and the father of a beautiful but troubled son, the heartfelt truth of this story often moved me to tears. "Why is it that those who most need advice never hear it?" From the poetic experiences of trout fishing, to the seedy descriptions of small town watering holes, and the nefarious characters who infest them, I found myself reliving colorful vignettes of my youth in upper Michigan where my fathers evening and weekend job was bartending. A literary work becomes a masterpiece as well as work of art, when it contains universal truth and relevance. This work is beautiful, timeless, and true. If you have not read "A River Runs Through It", you cannot truthfully call yourself... well read.

One reads these stories with a wistful smile on one's face, thinking of the beauty of Montana, the love that people in the Maclean family feel for one another, the reaching out that they do to those who need help but can't necessarily accept it. Although the movie A River Runs Through It uses the short story of that name as its basis, Robert Redford (the director) has taken some liberties with the story line. Both book and movie compliment each other beautifully with many of the voiceovers in the movie taken from the book itself. The last few paragraphs of the book are among the most haunting ever written. A treasure for all time.

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