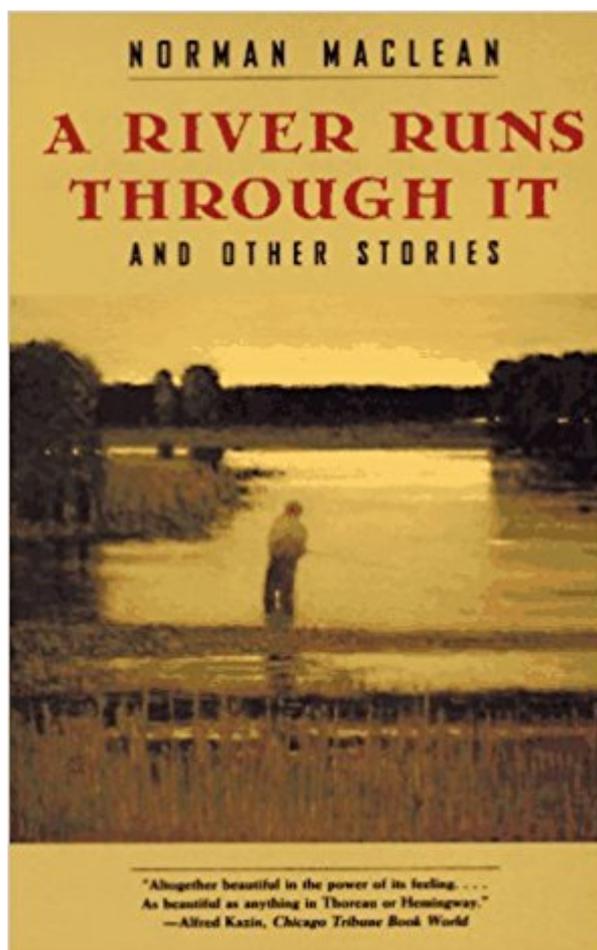


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# A River Runs Through It, And Other Stories



## Synopsis

From its first magnificent sentence, "In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing", to the last, "I am haunted by waters", *A River Runs Through It* is an American classic. Based on Norman Maclean's childhood experiences, the title novella has established itself as one of the most moving stories of our time; it captivates readers with vivid descriptions of life along Montana's Big Blackfoot River and its near magical blend of fly fishing with the troubling affections of the heart. The paperback edition is now available with an evocative new cover by acclaimed Montana painter Russell Chatham. "A masterpiece. . . . This is more than stunning fiction: It is a lyric record of a time and a life, shining with Maclean's special gift for calling the reader's attention to arts of all kinds—the arts that work in nature, in personality, in social intercourse, in fly-fishing."—Kenneth M. Pierce, *Village Voice*

Norman Maclean (1902-90), woodsman, scholar, teacher, and storyteller, grew up in the Western Rocky Mountains of Montana and worked for many years in logging camps and for the United States Forestry Service before beginning his academic career. He retired from the University of Chicago in 1973.

## Book Information

Paperback: 217 pages

Publisher: University of Chicago Press (September 1, 1992)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226500578

ISBN-13: 978-0226500577

Product Dimensions: 8.6 x 5.7 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 421 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #151,844 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #92 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > West #1254 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories & Anthologies > Anthologies #2074 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories & Anthologies > Short Stories

## Customer Reviews

One of the best-selling audiotapes ever, this title became hard to find recently, as it fell victim to a series of buyouts of various publishers. HighBridge is putting a new cover on this classic reading by Ivan Doig, Montana native and author of *This House of Sky*. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Exquisite . . . this recording joins the ranks of the few near-perfect matches of reader and author.

--This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

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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