

Chapter 1 : Norman Maclean, A River Runs Through It, excerpt

A River Runs Through It and Other Stories is a semi-autobiographical collection of three stories by author Norman Maclean () published in May by the University of Chicago Press.

Somehow, I developed an early notion that he had done this by fallen from a tree. If our father had had his say, nobody who did not know how to catch a fish would be allowed to disgrace a fish by catching him. My father was very sure about certain matters pertaining to the universe. To him, all good things - trout as well as eternal salvation - come by grace and grace comes by art and art does not come easy. Undoubtedly, our differences would not have seemed so great if we had not been such a close family. Painted on one side of our Sunday school wall were the words, God Is Love. We always assumed that these three words were spoken directly to the four of us in our family and had no reference to the world outside, which my brother and I soon discovered was full of bastards, the number increasing rapidly the farther one gets from Missoula, Montana. We held in common one major theory about street-fighting - if it looks like a fight is coming, get in the first punch. If suddenly they feel a few teeth loose, they will rub their rubs, look at the blood on their hands, and offer to buy a drink for the house. Every once in a while you run into some guy who likes to fight as much as you do and is better at it. If you start off by loosening a few of his teeth he may try to kill you. It is not in the book, yet it is human enough to spend a moment before casting in trying to imagine what the fish is thinking, even if one of its eggs is as big as its brain and even if, when you swim underwater, it is hard to imagine that a fish has anything to think about. Still, I could never be talked into believing that all a fish knows is hunger and fear. Below him was the multitudinous river, and, where the rock had parted it around him, big-grained vapor rose. The mini-molecules of water left in the wake of his line made momentary loops of gossamer, disappearing so rapidly in the rising big-grained vapor that they had to be retained in memory to be visualized as loops. The spray emanating from him was finer-grained still and enclosed him in a halo of himself. The halo of himself was always there and always disappearing, as if he were candlelight flickering about three inches from himself. The images of himself and his line kept disappearing into the rising vapors of the river, which continually circles to the tops of the cliffs where, after becoming a wreath in the wind, they became rays of the sun. I called her Mo-nah-se-tah, the name of the beautiful daughter of the Cheyenne chief, Little Rock. One reason Paul caught more fish than anyone else was that he had his flies in the water more than anyone else. Many of us probably would be better fishermen if we did not spend so much time watching and waiting for the world to become perfect. The hardest thing usually to leave behind can loosely be called the conscience. Poets talk about "spots of time," but it is really fishermen who experience eternity compressed into a moment. No one can tell what a spot of time is until suddenly the whole world is a fish and the fish is gone. I shall remember that son of a bitch forever. If you have never seen a bear go over the mountains, you have never seen the job reduced to its essentials. Of course, deer are faster, but not going straight uphill. Not even elk have the power in their hindquarters. Deer and elk zagging and switchback and stop and pose while really catching their breath. The bear leaves the earth like a bolt of lightning retrieving itself and making its thunder backwards. He just likes to tell women he likes to fish. It does something for him and the women. And for the fish too," I added. On the river the heat mirages danced with each other and then they danced through each other and then they joined hands and danced around each other. Eventually the watcher joined the river, and there was only one of us. I believe it was the river. As the heat mirages on the river in front of me danced with and through each other, I could feel patterns from my own life joining with them. It was here, while waiting for my brother, that I started this story, although, of course, at the time I did not know that stories of life are often more like rivers than books. But I knew a story had begun, perhaps long ago near the sound of water. And I sensed that ahead I would meet something that would never erode so there would be a sharp turn, deep circles, a deposit, and quietness. You have never really seen an ass until you have seen two sunburned asses on a sandbar in the middle of a river. Nearly all the rest of the body seems to have evaporated. The body is a large red ass about to blister, with hair on one end of it for a head and feet attached to the other end for legs. Then, more often than not, the part that is needed is not wanted. And even more often, we do not have the part that is

needed. They take all the help they can get, and are just the same as they always have been. Big clumsy flies bumped into my face, swarmed on my nose and wiggled in my underwear. Blundering and soft-bellied, they had been born before they had brains. They had spent a year under water on legs, had crawled out on a rock, had become flies and copulated with the ninth and tenth segments of their abdomens, and then had died as the first light wind blew them into the water where the fish circled excitedly. Still, it would be hard to know what gigantic portion of human life is spent in this same ratio of years under water on legs to one premature exhausted moment on wings. I took one look at it [fly] and felt perfect. My wife, my mother-in-law, and my sister-in-law, each in her somewhat obscure style, had recently redeclared their love for me. I, in my somewhat obscure style, had returned their love. I might never see my brother-in-law again. My brother was taking tender care of me, and not catching any fish. I was about to make a killing. But by now I had seen enough of life to have regained my confidence in it. In the slanting sun of late afternoon the shadows of great branches reached from across the river, and the trees took the river in their arms. The shadows continued up the bank, until they included us. 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. 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.

Chapter 2 : A River Runs Through It by Norman Maclean | Teen Ink

"A River Runs Through It" is one of the best written stories I've ever read. Nearly a third of its pages are spent describing fly fishing outings in minute detail. Having never had this experience myself, I nonetheless leaned forward, spellbound, as I read.

As beautiful as anything in Thoreau or Hemingway. This is more than stunning fiction: Pierce, Village Voice

In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing. We lived at the junction of great trout rivers in western Montana, and our father was a Presbyterian minister and a fly fisherman who tied his own flies and taught others. It is true that one day a week was given over wholly to religion. On Sunday mornings my brother, Paul, and I went to Sunday school and then to "morning services" to hear our father preach and in the evenings to Christian Endeavor and afterwards to "evening services" to hear our father preach again. In between on Sunday afternoons we had to study The Westminster Shorter Catechism for an hour and then recite before we could walk the hills with him while he unwound between services. But he never asked us more than the first question in the catechism, "What is the chief end of man? His chief way of recharging himself was to recite to us from the sermon that was coming, enriched here and there with selections from the most successful passages of his morning sermon. Even so, in a typical week of our childhood Paul and I probably received as many hours of instruction in fly fishing as we did in all other spiritual matters. After my brother and I became good fishermen, we realized that our father was not a great fly caster, but he was accurate and stylish and wore a glove on his casting hand. Somehow, I early developed the notion that he had done this by falling from a tree. Unlike many Presbyterians, he often used the word "beautiful. Although it was eight and a half feet long, it weighed only four and a half ounces. It was made of split bamboo cane from the far-off Bay of Tonkin. It was wrapped with red and blue silk thread, and the wrappings were carefully spaced to make the delicate rod powerful but not so stiff it could not tremble. Always it was to be called a rod. If someone called it a pole, my father looked at him as a sergeant in the United States Marines would look at a recruit who had just called a rifle a gun. My brother and I would have preferred to start learning how to fish by going out and catching a few, omitting entirely anything difficult or technical in the way of preparation that would take away from the fun. If our father had had his say, nobody who did not know how to fish would be allowed to disgrace a fish by catching him. So you too will have to approach the art Marine and Presbyterian-style, and, if you have never picked up a fly rod before, you will soon find it factually and theologically true that man by nature is a damn mess. The four-and-a-half-ounce thing in silk wrappings that trembles with the underskin motions of the flesh becomes a stick without brains, refusing anything simple that is wanted of it. All that a rod has to do is lift the line, the leader, and the fly off the water, give them a good toss over the head, and then shoot them forward so they will land in the water without a splash in the following order: Well, until man is redeemed he will always take a fly rod too far back, just as natural man always overswings with an ax or golf club and loses all his power somewhere in the air: If, though, he pictures the round trip of the line, transparent leader, and fly from the time they leave the water until their return, they are easier to cast. They naturally come off the water heavy line first and in front, and light transparent leader and fly trailing behind. Almost the moment, however, that the forward order of line, leader, and fly is reestablished, it has to be reversed, because the fly and transparent leader must be ahead of the heavy line when they settle on the water. If what the fish sees is highly visible line, what the fisherman will see are departing black darts, and he might as well start for the next hole. The four-count rhythm, of course, is functional. Power comes not from power everywhere, but from knowing where to put it on. So my brother and I learned to cast Presbyterian-style, on a metronome. She would occasionally peer down to the dock from the front porch of the cabin, wondering nervously whether her metronome could float if it had to. When she became so overwrought that she thumped down the dock to reclaim it, my father would clap out the four-count rhythm with his cupped hands. Eventually, he introduced us to literature on the subject. He tried always to say something stylish as he buttoned the glove on his casting hand. He was an Episcopalian and a bait fisherman. However, I knew already that he was going to be a master with a rod. Even at this age he liked to bet on

himself against anybody who would fish with him, including me, his older brother. It was sometimes funny and sometimes not so funny, to see a boy always wanting to bet on himself and almost sure to win. Although I was three years older, I did not yet feel old enough to bet. Betting, I assumed, was for men who wore straw hats on the backs of their heads. We had to be very careful in dealing with each other. I often thought of him as a boy, but I never could treat him that way. He was never "my kid brother. He did not want any big brother advice or money or help, and, in the end, I could not help him. This text may be used and shared in accordance with the fair-use provisions of U. Archiving, redistribution, or republication of this text on other terms, in any medium, requires the consent of the University of Chicago Press.

Chapter 3 : River Quotes (quotes)

*A River Runs Through It and Other Stories, Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition [Norman Maclean] on www.nxgvision.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Just as Norman Maclean writes at the end of A River Runs through It that he is haunted by waters.*

At least a river of it was. I will steal a word of praise from Annie Proulx, who says it so much better than me in the Foreword to the 25th anniversary edition: There are few books that have the power to put the reader in such a deep trance that the real world falls utterly away. I believe the explanation of the instant charm these stories have exerted on me can be explained by their long gestation and by the passion for the subject the author has been able to translate into words that flow like his sparkling mountain rivers. Maclean first published these stories in his seventies, but they were born much earlier: So what we are reading now has been told and retold and polished and distilled down to its essence a long time before it was put down on paper. Who would be interested in reading such detailed accounts about fly-fishing or camping out in the wilderness? I have seen some few reviewers here on Goodreads who share in the sentiment, but I am in the camp who argues that the story was never about fishing. It is about history, and about nature, about working with your hands, it is about family and about friendship, about death and about passing the flame of love to the next generation. Maclean in his own foreword explains a little about the purpose of the text: Writing is not a simple act of taking a snapshot of a significant moment in your life. In the retelling, the story gets altered, the facts rearranged to fit around the core ideas, the dialogues streamlined and the revelations explained in a timely manner. Like the good fisherman, the writer chooses his lure carefully, throws the line in the water and then coaxes his catch with a firm hand to the shore to the moral of the story. Later the focus moves on the adult relationship between brothers, about extended families and the disconnect between generations, about the impossibility of full understanding even between the closest of siblings: You can love completely without complete understanding. Part of the issue is the stoical, dour Scottish ancestry that claims men should be capable of taking care of themselves without crying out for help, part is the need to allow the other person the freedom to live his own life any way it pleases him. The author looks back to that troubled time and exorcises the demons of the past through his writing, hoping the answers that he found will be of more use to the next people that find themselves at a crossroad. Proulx notes that the novel is a memoir, a requiem, an allegory, pointing out both the autobiographical elements and the metaphysical implications of the text. As I already said, it is not at all a novel about fishing. The solitude, the silences and the beauty of the scenery serve a similar role to the one the desert offered to the early saints who retreated there from the crowded civilized places. The wild rivers of Montana are the haven the Macleans retreat to when the going gets tough and their batteries need recharging. The most important passage in the story is probably the description of the river both in technical fishing terms and as a metaphor for life: Fishermen also think of the river as having been made with them partly in mind, and they talk of it as if it had been. They speak of the three parts as a unity and call it "a hole", and the fast rapids they call "the head of the hole" and the big turn they call "the deep blue" or "pool" and the quiet, shallow water below they call "the tail of the hole", which they think is shallow and quiet so that they can have a place to wade across and "try the other side". As the heat mirages on the river in front of me danced with and through each other, I could feel patterns from my own life joining with them. It was here, while waiting for my brother, that I started this story, although, of course, at the time I did not know that stories of life are often more like rivers than books. But I knew a story had begun, perhaps long ago near the sound of water. And I sensed that ahead I would meet something that would never erode so there would be a sharp turn, deep circles, a deposit, and quietness. Being able to recognize the patterns of your life in a ray of sunlight reflecting on moving water may be the most valuable lesson I was able to extract from the book, but this just one of the levels at which I was able to enjoy the text. When we were silent we could hear the pine needles falling like dry leaves. Making the transition from the feelings of awe and peace of mind the mountains have offered time and time again to the thoughts about religion and the meaning of life comes easily when you remove yourself from the stress of modern life. When he looks at the majestic alpine valley,

Maclean sees also the slow dance of glaciers across millenia, the effects of deforestation, the personal histories of the settlers and their economic outlooks. I know I said the novel was never about fishing, but I come back to my earlier statement and say now that the story is a story about fishing with all the technical details and the moments of joy that the sport offers to the passionate practitioner. He liked beaver dams and he knew how to fish them. So off he went happily to wade in ooze and to get throttled by brush and to fall through loose piles of sticks called beaver dams and to end up with a wreath of seaweed around his neck and a basketful of fish. It becomes what you are in the deepest, most precious and valuable core of your being, it is the answer to how you define your life: I sometimes think of myself as an aspirant photographer, so the passage that made the story personal is here:

Chapter 4 : A River Runs Through It (novel) - Wikipedia

Elegantly redesigned, A River Runs through It includes a new foreword by Robert Redford, director of the Academy Award-winning film adaptation of River. Based on Maclean's own experiences as a young man, the book's two novellas and short story are set in the small towns and mountains of western Montana.

Maclean is the elder son of a Scottish Presbyterian minister. He and his brother, Paul, fish the wild Montana streams as often as possible. Much of the action in this story is set along the Big Blackfoot River. For the Macleans, fly fishing is religion. The Reverend Maclean taught his boys to cast a fly rod with the same discipline that he engendered in them concerning religious studies. He recounts competitive but friendly experiences with his brother. Something is wrong in paradise. Paul has difficulty controlling his drinking and gambling, and his stubborn refusal to be helped contributes to his demise. He also ignores certain hypocritical customs of his region. For example, he dates American Indians, which tends to put him at odds with his society. In one instance, Paul is taken to jail because he took vengeance on someone who had insulted his date. Norman is called to retrieve his drunken brother and Indian girlfriend from jail. As the elder brother, Maclean conveys a frustrating sense of helplessness concerning Paul. Much of the action of the story details memories of his experiences with Paul and their father. The pleasant memories involve fishing trips where the brothers experienced the pure beauty of the wild rivers and various species of trout and wildlife. Maclean wrote his story nearly forty years after the death of his brother. His writing clearly suggests his attempt to make peace with his apparent inability to help his troubled brother. It will not let us go. He himself always turned aside any offer of help. Neal has abandoned Montana for the West Coast. His return visit causes comic relief as well as reinforcing the values of home, family, and genuineness. Though raised in Montana, Neal likes to pretend to be a tennis star or talk about fishing when in fact he is good at neither. His artificiality contrasts with the Maclean brothers, who see him for what he really is. They are obligated to try to help him, however. Neal eventually deserts the Macleans to spend time with a prostitute. In their drunkenness, Neal and the woman lie naked on a sandbar and are severely sunburned. Norman and Paul, then, have to carry Neal home to his mother to have his burns treated. Paul is described as a beautiful artist, especially when handling a fly rod. Neither Norman nor his father can help Paul because he refuses their attempts. It is only in the reconstruction of memory that Norman can make sense of their loss.

Chapter 5 : Craig Sheffer - IMDb

Among the summaries and analysis available for A River Runs Through It, there are 2 Full Study Guides, 1 Short Summary and 2 Book Reviews. Depending on the study guide provider (SparkNotes, Shmoop, etc.), the resources below will generally offer A River Runs Through It chapter summaries, quotes, and analysis of themes, characters, and symbols.

Chapter 6 : Flashback and Foreshadowing | Read Write Talk

A River Runs Through It and Other Stories consists of two, page novellas and a short story. Since the Title story was made into a movie with Brad Pitt and Robert Redford this book has had seen much press and many reprints.

Chapter 7 : A River Runs Through It “ Random Short Stories

An excerpt from A River Runs Through It by Norman Maclean. Also available on website: online catalogs, secure online ordering, excerpts from new books. Sign up for email notification of new releases in your field.

Chapter 8 : Norman Maclean - Wikipedia

DOWNLOAD PDF A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT SHORT STORY

A River Runs Through It is written in first-person limited narration. Maclean the narrator is the protagonist, his character derived from the author's memories and reflections.

Chapter 9 : River runs through it | The Weekly Advertiser

The author, Norman Maclean, narrates the entire story, reminiscing back on memories and events in his life. Imagery This was huge in A River Runs a Through it, taking place in such a beautiful location such as Bozeman Montana.