



The Red Convertible: Selected and New Stories, 1978-2008

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“Erdrich is a true original... [and] one of our major writers: She illuminates large swaths of U.S. history and culture, and [*The Red Convertible*] is a good demonstration of her compelling stylistic innovations, not to mention her literary cunning.” —*Washington Post Book World*

From *New York Times* bestselling author Louise Erdrich, fresh off her acclaimed Pulitzer-Prize finalist *The Plague of Doves*, comes *The Red Convertible*, a stunning collection of short stories selected by the author herself from over three decades of work. A veritable masterclass in the art of short fiction, *The Red Convertible* features 31 previously published stories and 5 never-before-published pieces. Presented in one collection for the first time, the stories of *The Red Convertible* cement Louise Erdrich’s position in the pantheon of consummate, innovative writers of the American short story alongside such luminaries as Flannery O’Connor and Charles Baxter.

The Red Convertible: Selected and New Stories, 1978-2008 Details

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Laura says

phew. finally done with this one! So good writing sometimes gets wearisome. I like Louise Erdrich a bunch but found this book to be a challenge. I think that part of it was the weird confusion of stories that were familiar from being part of other books of hers and the way most of the stories had a certain similarity of place and characters that made me Want to connect them into a novel even if they were not Really connected. On top of that, some of them Were connected in actuality. I felt like I needed a guide book to the book.

I think that one of things I like about her novels is the way they are made of stories within the story and the way those stories cross through time and character emphasis. Works great in a novel.

All that said, most of the stories themselves were thought provoking and intriguing.

Patti says

I am a Louise Erdrich fan and have read most of her books. This book however weighed me down and I was anxious to finish it. The writing was excellent as always but the stories were so powerful and filled with tragedy and trouble that I found them hard to read: maybe because the stories are compressed as opposed to her novels where the heavy parts aren't so concentrated.

My favorite story was "A Wedge of Shade".

"I drag more pillows down from the other rooms upstairs. There is no question of attempting the bedrooms, the stifling beds. And so, in the dark, I hold hands with Gerry as he settles down between my mother and me. He is huge as a hill between the two of us, solid in the beating wind."

Connie (Ava Catherine) says

Erdrich is one of my favorite writers, and in Red Convertible the reader gets the flavor of her writing over the past thirty years. Erdrich makes me laugh and cry (sometimes at the very same time) , and then when I have wiped my eyes, I come back for more. She says more in a single sentence than most authors say in a chapter. Her prose is to be savored and reread. I am in love with her writing.

Richard says

I love Louise Erdrich's writing. I think the quality of her writing is at least as good as anyone writing today (in fact, I put her in a group with Cormac McCarthy and...that's about it). And on top of her writing, she's a natural storyteller. So, even though I was familiar with most of these stories through her novels, of course I

loved these stories. I loved how through the power of her words she made me believe in the magic that appears in them. I love that her characters simultaneously seem like someone you know and no one you will ever know. I love how I learn more about myself when I read about these people and places that I don't know. 500 pages of stories sure seems like a lot when you first hold the book. But I sure felt like I needed more when I was done.

Tristan says

The Red Convertible was an highly enjoyable collection of short stories. It is a tad long--consisting of 36 stories, but it is worth the effort. I do recommend this collection with a warning though. If you intend to read any of her early novels, especially *Love Medicine* or *The Beet Queen*, you are probably better off either delaying your read of this collection, or skipping the first ten stories. All of these stories are good, but as these ten stories became five chapters in each of *Love Medicine* and *The Beet Queen* respectively, if you read this first, you will have a fair amount of knowledge going into either of these novels. Erdrich's stories are also closely related; those ten were not the only ones that existed in continuity with one another and with other stories in the collection, which, while enjoyable, can get frustrating as it sends you skittering back a few stories to find out whether or not you are supposed to already know the protagonist or the narrator of this particular story.

Erdrich deals, first and foremost, with the experience of Native American life, particularly the experience of the Ojibwe people (of whom she is a member). Most of the stories in the collection have Native protagonists and many deal very closely with their experiences as they are shaped by the experience of being Native American. Many of the remaining tales deal with the experience of German and Scandinavian immigrants to the northern Midwest--also shaped by Erdrich's own personal world. The stories are strong and often have feminist tones to their interpretations of these sets of experience (although Erdrich is not afraid to have stories that do not fit a neat narrative of what her goals as an author might be). Erdrich also makes use of elements of magical realism (reluctant as I am to use the term). Her characters live in a world full of ghosts and spirits and strange, conventionally unexplainable phenomena. I am reluctant to use the term, because, although it is descriptively correct, these elements in the stories are often (but not always) deeply entrenched in Native American religious practice and belief. As such, while Erdrich is sometimes associated (and for good reason, looking at the details of these stories) the tone is often such a combination of reverence and acceptance that I am reluctant to even firmly term these elements "fantastical" despite the fact that I would do so if given them in a slightly different context. In terms of individual stories, my favorites were the five that became part of *The Beet Queen*, "Fleur", "The Leap", "Saint Marie", "Fuck With Kayla and You Die", "Anna", (oddly enough) "Le Mooz", "Shamengwa", "The Shawl", "The Butcher's Wife", and "The Painted Drum".

Erdrich's writing is direct and readable, sometimes even brutal, as in this passage in "Anna":

I began to feel sorry not for Anna but for this creature that will turn into a baby and then a child who will ave er for a mother. I know that somehow Anna will find a way to do just what she wants to do, whether or not it's good for the baby. It also occurs to me that the only reason Anna stays friendly with me is that I have never gotten in her way. Others who were friends with her were pushed aside if they had something she wanted--a job, a man, even money. The people she likes the least are thee people she owes the most. As I've never had money, man, or enviable job, I've kept my place in her life. Which is what? As I sit there watching her mouth move I understand that I do have a place, or a purpose, and it is this: I am supposed to see Anna as she really is.

Each story combines this sort of emotional intensity with fluid writing making the elements that seem less easily "realistic" slide even more readily into the fabric of Erdrich's richly detailed world.

Keith says

THE RED CONVERTIBLE is a wonderful book. It is a book for writers to savor and readers to enjoy. The simple elegance of Erdrich's prose is displayed over and over again in these marvelous pieces of short fiction, each one quite different than the other, a sweeping range of narrators, heroes, heroines, and anti-heroes-heroines. Some of the short pieces developed into one or another of the astonishing novels that later appeared. I especially enjoy "LE MOOZ", and piece about the woman who played the piano naked, both of which, in somewhat modified form, became seminal pieces of my favorite Erdrich novel, "THE LAST REPORT OF THE MIRACLES AT LITTLE NO HORSE". I also recognized bits and pieces of "TALES OF BURNING LOVE", "THE MASTER BUTCHER'S SINGING CLUB", "THE BINGO PALACE", "LOVE MEDICINE". . . I think you get the idea.

I do not share her Objibwa heritage, but I do share with her a deep grounding in North Dakota. She has not only become my favorite Dakota writer, but one of my favorite writers of all time. I haven't read "ROUND HOUSE", although it is on my shelf and I will soon. It was about time she won the National Book Award. She has done for the Objibwa Nation and for North Dakota what Flannery O'Conner did for Alabama and the Deep South. Their prose is similar in its simplicity, their stories in their inspired tales. Each story is peculiar each, and none of those stories could have been written by anyone other than their authors.

That said, my really favorite Erdrich piece is "CONVERSION", which is buried in the pages of "DAY IN, DAY OUT: Women's Lives in North Dakota", compiled and edited by Bjorn Benson, Elizabeth Hampston, and Kathryn Sweney at the University of North Dakota, published in 1988 for the celebration of North Dakota's Centennial year of 1989. That short writing is accompanied by a full page photography of high school senior, Louise Erdrich, of Wahpeton, North Dakota, elegantly dressed, elbow-length white gloved hands elevated in surprise as tears fall from her eyes and the crown of homecoming Queen of the Wops is place on her head.

Thapa Semran says

I read the story the red convertible, and it broke my heart. I actually had to read the story twice to understand it completely. I didn't know the meaning of post-traumatic stress disorder before this story, I got to know how dangerous it can get. It was really heartbreaking to witness the growing distance between the two brothers. It was sadder to see how hard Lyman was trying to fix the relationship but they all failed to see that Henry needed professional help. They avoided getting help just so they could protect their reputation from the society. It really is a sad story because I believe that Henry could have been saved if they seek help from the professionals.

Laura (booksnob) says

Erdrich completes me.

Mary says

I have read most of Ms Erdrich's books and have liked them all with some being exceptional. The Red Convertible is a collection of short stories-some from her novels and most published in various publications. I was disappointed in this collection however. It took a long time to read because many of the stories didn't grab me. A few were enjoyable but not her usual excellent writing.

gorecki says

I admit I am biased when it comes to Louise Erdrich. As one of my all-time favorite authors I really believe she's one of the best contemporary American writers. The narratives she creates and the stories she weaves are realistic and magical, emotional and raw, upsetting and uplifting all at the same time. I have rarely seen such perfect combination of humor and sadness within the same page.

In this collection of short stories, you can find the essence of her writing and the key to most of her main body of work. These short stories are the elements that build up the core of most of her novels, as she herself puts it in the foreword, and while reading them you can really notice that most of these stories are chapters from some of her novels, or stories of the characters you can find in them. All of them (except for the last few) have in some form already appeared as main stories or topics in her books, and while in those books they are developed further and more elaborate, in this short story collection they are a concentrate, a concoction - short, concise, and strong. If you would like to experience the essence of Louise Erdrich's writing, then this collection is just the book for you.

On a more personal note, some of these stories simply made me sigh and clasp the book to my chest while reading. This book contains many favorite stories that will haunt me for a long time and I am very happy that I can always just pull it off the shelf and dive into them again and again every time I just feel like it. To name just a few - "Saint Marie", "Snares", "Fleur", "The Leap", "The Fat Man's Race", "Father's Milk", "The Gravitron", "History of the Puyats", "Naked Woman Playing Chopin", "Shamengwa", "The Shawl".

Christina says

Savored this one over 5 months. What a breadth of stories, from fantasy to ancient to modern, some in the same universe, others completely separate, exploring themes universal like love and family and particular to the Native American community.

Jianne says

One of my favorite short stories that I had to read for my English Literature class, and thanks to this novel I got an 85 for my test! I love *The Red Convertible* because of the simplicity of the story and because of its themes. I love the symbolism and also because of this story, I finally get to hear my teacher swear in class. Ain't that a good moment? And a great story.

Lori M says

Good but repetitious. Finished 2/3 of the book.

Caroline says

This collection was my introduction to Louise Erdrich. The only reason it didn't get five stars (I would give 4.5 if I could) was because I found some of the stories to meander a bit. I am looking forward to reading her novels.

Malou Brouwer says

One of the best short story collections I have ever read! Absolutely loved it! I love how Erdrich presents the characters & how she makes you laugh (out loud) and cry and react to the stories. I felt like I was part of the story.
