



# Crow Lake

*Mary Lawson*

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**Crow Lake** is that rare find, a first novel so quietly assured, so emotionally pitch perfect, you know from the opening page that this is the real thing—a literary experience in which to lose yourself, by an author of immense talent.

Here is a gorgeous, slow-burning story set in the rural “badlands” of northern Ontario, where heartbreak and hardship are mirrored in the landscape. For the farming Pye family, life is a Greek tragedy where the sins of the fathers are visited on the sons, and terrible events occur—offstage.

Centerstage are the Morrisons, whose tragedy looks more immediate if less brutal, but is, in reality, insidious and divisive. Orphaned young, Kate Morrison was her older brother Matt’s protegee, her fascination for pond life fed by his passionate interest in the natural world. Now a zoologist, she can identify organisms under a microscope but seems blind to the state of her own emotional life. And she thinks she’s outgrown her siblings—Luke, Matt, and Bo—who were once her entire world.

In this universal drama of family love and misunderstandings, of resentments harbored and driven underground, Lawson ratchets up the tension with heartbreaking humor and consummate control, continually overturning one’s expectations right to the very end. Tragic, funny, unforgettable, **Crow Lake** is a quiet tour de force that will catapult Mary Lawson to the forefront of fiction writers today.

## Crow Lake Details

Date : Published January 13th 2003 by Dial Press Trade Paperback (first published 2002)

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Author : Mary Lawson

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## From Reader Review Crow Lake for online ebook

### Rebecca McNutt says

*Crow Lake* is undeniably evocative of rural Canada, but at times the pacing is really slow and dry, not really the kind of story I often read.

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### Bonnie Brody says

This book is a gem for lovers of literary fiction. Mary Lawson captures the emotions and narratives of one family in Northern Ontario and puts them onto the page and into the hearts of readers. Told from the perspective of Kate, we are privy to the gifts, challenges, and tragedies that the Morrisons encounter, endure and surmount.

As the novel opens, the four children - Luke, Matt, Kate and Bo - are depicted as living a comfortable life with their middle class parents in a remote area of Canada. Luke has unexpectedly passed his national exams and has won a scholarship to study education at a Toronto university. Shortly after the reader finds this out, the children's parents are killed in a tragic automobile accident.

Time passed and Kate, now grown up, is a zoologist at a Toronto university and has been invited to Matt's son's high school graduation. She is debating whether to attend as she has distanced herself from her family. Once, she and Matt were so close, and it was Matt who instilled in her the love of science. What has happened? Kate reminisces about her childhood and the events that occurred which shaped her and her siblings throughout childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood.

Kate explores her life as an orphan, how she was raised and by whom. She looks back at herself and the impact of her parents' death on herself and each one of her siblings. Luke, overnight, as the oldest, is put in a place of responsibility. Can he continue with his education? Matt, the smart one, is forced to consider whether he should put his own dreams on hold. Kate is speechless after her parent's death. It appears that she has post-traumatic disorder which impacts her ability to trust and open up with others. Her life has been one of guardedness and secrets. Bo, the rebellious one and a toddler when her parents die, is only aware of herself.

Ms. Lawson writes beautifully and the book is an examination of love, family, projection, and finally, acceptance. I savored every page and felt connected to every character. The language is rich and poetic as is the sense of place it describes. It draws the reader into a place that only great literature is capable of doing.

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### Jane says

It's a strange thing that I came across this book. I found it wedged into the back of a shelf downstairs. It seems I read it at the perfect time. It came to me in the midst of serious, physical grief, the kind where your body is taken over by sadness and is simply a vessel for your shaking and sobbing and wailing. Oh the wailing. You will wail. And not in the Wayne's World sense. It's the kind of thing that you can't let anyone else listen to, because what the wailing is is the pain leaving your body. That pain, floating about untethered,

can do serious injury. That's why you do it alone.

So the same day I'm holding my cousin's 14 hour old baby in my arms, and the knowledge that my own mother won't be there when I hold my children in my arms for the first time- or any time- comes searing through my blood, I find this book.

Kate's parents are both killed in a car crash when she is seven years old, on a day that had begun like any other. As an adult, Kate returns to the year following her parents death, when, to prevent the family from being broken apart more, Luke, the oldest, then 19, decides to raise Matt, 17, Kate ,7, and Bo, 1, on his own.

Perhaps it is hardest for Kate. Losing both parents at seven years old. Such a vulnerable age. Her fear is palpable. If one of her brothers is late coming home, she is certain, until she sees his face, that he is dead too. It's heartbreaking. When you think about it, how often do you get a window into a grieving seven year-old? Though the book is fiction, it has the vividness of an autobiography.

Amid the complication, the arguing, and the desperation among them all, love is present: it is clear and pervasive and strong, and nothing short of miraculous. While this poor child is swallowed by fear, she loves her brothers. And they love her. Grief is a lifelong plague- but the love she has for her family is continually extricating her from it, even into adulthood. Its a fascinating look at time. It is fascinating to see what she carries with her- because its all the right stuff.

As a younger sister, as a victim of parental loss, as someone who is seeking to define herself as an adult in the face of grief, and as someone who has a family (albeit a broken one) I found this book to be enormously powerful, perhaps because it is so relevant. But the writing is simple and beautiful. It is a stunning portrait of familial love (we take its potency for granted.) The story is phenomenally complex but equally simple. Love simplifies things. By the end of the book I was struck dumb, totally overcome with one truth the story brought to light: No love is ordinary.

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## Snotchocheez says

### 3.5 stars

Spare and somber (but not overly so), Mary Lawson's *Crow Lake* is evocative of Carol Shields' Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Stone Diaries* but (to its credit) isn't quite as overladen with flowery prose (or twee cutesiness). Both novels are set in rural Canada (*Crow Lake* in the northern-most inhabited reaches of Ontario, *Stone Diaries* in stone quarry-filled central Manitoba); both feature a female narrator whistfully looking back on their hardscrabble rural pasts. In the right melancholic frame of mind, I enjoyed both of these, but *Crow Lake* ultimately wins out with a more relatable story.

Kate Morrison, twenty-eight year-old environmental biology professor at an unnamed (but probably Toronto-based) university, reminisces about her life in Crow Lake, a sugar beet farming community with little more than a schoolhouse, a general store, and a Presbyterian church to barely mark it on the map. She focuses back to when she was eight years-old, on the two years following the tragic deaths of her parents, and how she and her three siblings (two much older teen brothers Matt and Luke, and infant sister Bo) try to keep what remains of their family together. The Morrison family, despite living in a farming community that prioritized (by necessity) crop returns for survival's sake, valued education above all. So the elder Morrison

boys, university-bound, are faced with the decision of either shelving their academic dreams (and working the fields, an Herculean task when you've got two young siblings to take care of) or submitting to the wishes of distant family willing to take them in (but in doing so breaking up the sibling bonds that tie them together.)

This is not a particularly splashy novel, but it is quietly affecting, and not nearly as depressing as the jacket info led me

to imagine. I believe this was Ms. Lawson's first novel; I'd like to visit her more recent works as I'm plenty certain she's got more lovely stories of rural Ontario life and family to share with us.

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### **Amanda says**

Book #26 of 2009

Back to the serious side of things I guess... I've been chewing on this book for a couple of days now, never being really invested in it to make a big to finishing it, certainly not devouring it like the last five books or so. I'm not even really sure how I feel about it. Its almost anticlimatic in a way. The whole book builds up to this supposedly huge catastrophe, which isn't really a catastrophe at all, but a decision moving life one way instead of another. But the supposed catastrophe isn't even really the point of the book, it's the narrator's view of said catastrophe that is really the purpose of the book it seems, and the climax is such a small mental shift in the way she looks at "the catastrophe". The narrator herself isn't really an overly likeable character in my opinion. When she talks about her younger self she just seems so selfish. But then again, she was a kid so I guess that is to be expected. And when she talks about her adult self, she seems so aloof, emotionally uninvested in much of anything.

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### **Wanda says**

I feel like I've just been hit by a truck—this book blindsided me and despite the impact, I adore it. This may be because it ticks so many of my personal boxes, but I've been wandering the house since I finished it, ploughing my way through laundry, dinner, dishes, trying desperately to find my footing again, while I'm processing.

Within the first few pages of the book, Katherine's parents are killed in a car accident, sending the four children on a confusing, agonizing struggle to put their lives back together again. Katherine is only seven years old—I was 34 when it happened to me, and my life was blown apart and has never fully recovered.

"You make it sound like it was centuries ago," Daniel said. "If you parents died when you were seven, it's barely twenty years."

"It feels like centuries," I said.

Lawson nails it with that tiny bit of dialog. Although it's been 18 years since my parents' car accident, some days it feels like yesterday—other days it feels like I never had parents. And I completely relate to Katherine's numbness, the reluctance to feel anything about anyone—if you care, there's a good chance that they will get yanked away from you. Not caring seems like your only defence against heart wrenching pain. The only problem is that it doesn't work. People like Katherine's boyfriend Daniel worm their way into your life and you reluctantly begin to care about them, all the while struggling to see them as temporary and frustrating the hell out of them, as they wonder what is wrong with you.

I clearly remember the day that I put my emotions on ice—it was about a year and a half after the funerals and I remember thinking, “I’m so tired of crying.” So I quit. It has taken years to thaw that permafrost and I’m still unsure that the process is finished. Still a bit freezer-burned, I guess.

It’s taken me eighteen years, but I’ve finally been able to engage with my family again—they’ve been very patient, they waited and I’ve been accepted back without reservation. Knowing this makes me love them fiercely—after being emotionally frozen for so many years, the strength of that love surprises me on each and every occasion that I spend time with them.

I also have a farm background like Katherine and used university as a way to do something different—I even started my university career as a biology major until I was seduced by so many other interesting subjects and wandered away into the arts and social sciences. But I have so many fond memories of wandering the coulees of home, identifying wild flowers, scooping snails out of the pond, and studying the ground squirrels as I emulated my personal idol, Jane Goodall [chimpanzees were in short supply, but ground squirrels were plentiful on the prairies].

So I may have been predisposed to love this book—still, I cannot recommend it highly enough. It is worth more than 5 stars to me.

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### **Carol says**

This was a simply told and captivating family drama with a northern Ontario setting. I’ve never been there but the author’s observations of that area in Canada established such a powerful sense of place that the story came alive for me. I grew up in the high plains of eastern Colorado (Kent Haruf “territory”) and there were parts of this novel that echo my own rural background – especially her description of life for farm families.

The story details the struggles of four siblings who were orphaned when their parents are killed. It’s told through the eyes of the adult sister, Kate, who was seven years old at the time of the deadly car accident. She reflects on her childhood as she reluctantly prepares to return for a family gathering. Her account slowly reveals details of the broken dreams and sacrifices that they all made in their efforts to keep the family together. Nothing very dramatic happens yet it elegantly portrays events that affect most families – hopeful aspirations, misunderstandings, missed chances and sibling rivalry.

I have several brothers and sisters of my own so parts of this story provoked reflections of my own life. I thoroughly enjoyed this finely crafted and bittersweet tale of survival and love of family.

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### **Pamela says**

A caterpillar, within a cocoon over a set period of time, transforms into a butterfly. But it is the struggle to emerge which allows it to thrive, transformed. Figuratively, humans who have experienced tragedies are like caterpillars; except that the cocoon period varies from individual to individual, as does the degree of struggle required to resurrect anew from the experience. In that sense, tragedy can be a beautiful miraculous thing.

Mary Lawson, in her novel “Crow Lake,” not only weaves a beautiful story of tragedy and transformation

she does so with an impassioned pen and with a deep understanding of nuances, frailties, strengths and imperfections of the human experience.

The Morrison family along with all other major/minor characters are well-developed, readily identifiable and ultra realistic. From their mannerisms to personality traits to speech patterns to physical attributes, nothing felt contrived or artificial; everything was purposeful and complementary to the story. And the atmospheric setting - "the wild terrain of northern Ontario" – mirrored in the beautiful, hauntingly stark book cover, adds paralleling depth and contrast to this dramatic novel. A novel I'm delighted to have purchased because it touched me deeply and I can reread and cherish it for years to come.

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### **B the BookAddict says**

Very basically, Crow Lake is the story of four orphaned children in a remote farming community. Kate, the third child, narrates the story twenty years later, looking back on their childhood from her now removed life in Toronto. Her relationship with her older brother Matt was paramount in her childhood and his passion for nature helped nurture her love of the ecology; in turn, leading to her profession as a zoologist. Through now adult eyes, Kate sees the struggles, heartbreak and hardship in the family and also those the community battled which she was not aware of as a child. She is also forced to see what Matt sacrificed so that she might excel in her chosen field.

Mary Lawson has that rare gift of being able to place her reader so exactly in the shoes of the narrator. You don't hear or see the story; you feel it as Kate does. She builds a slow burning tension throughout the novel that finally explodes with a shocking revelation. Wonderfully paced and beautifully written. A huge thank-you to Heather in AAB who recommended this novel to me. Lawson is an author whose books I will continue to visit. 4★

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### **Zoeytron says**

*'... just one more dropped stitch in a family tapestry full of holes.'*

This is a story of strong familial bonds forged early in life, then eroding from deep-seated resentments, guilt, and an ingrained reluctance to speak the truth and set things straight. Smiling on the outside, hurting on the inside, even simple eye contact too uncomfortable to maintain.

This author has a knack for writing characters so vivid that you would recognize any one of them if he or she came knocking at your front door. Luke, Matt, Katie, and Bo Morrison, orphaned early in the novel, are struggling to make a life without their parents. I can still almost hear baby Bo clanging those pots and pans playing on the floor while big brother Matt tries to study at the kitchen table. You will make the acquaintance of their neighbors, the tragic Pye family, with their messy lives and mean secrets. I cannot say enough about the author's skill with character development. Major and minor players alike are fashioned with care, and I reference old Miss Vernon, she of the rattling teeth and long whiskery jaw, 100 years old and a most extraordinary storyteller.

Small, quiet, and unassuming, this story will stay with me for a bit. Excellent.

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## Terry says

I wanted to like it, I did. I just didn't. It just didn't feel "new" to me. And I didn't find the writing style especially evocative. The narrator of the story speaks and thinks like a 50+-year-old, and I kept shaking my head to clear it when I was reminded that she was in her late 20s.

And I REALLY. REALLY. REALLY. hate books that keep "the big moment!!!!!!!" until the last few pages, but spend the previous 300+ pages muttering dark asides such as "But that was before...it...happened" or "If I only knew what was about to happen, I wouldn't have stayed" or "He didn't realize his life was about to change" or variations upon that theme, so that "the big moment!!!!!!!" ends up feeling anticlimactic at best.

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## Marita says

**“I believe we have choice. The idea that we are carried along by fate, unable to resist or change direction, sounds suspiciously like an excuse to me.”**

Kate Morrison, Assistant Professor (Invertebrate Ecology), faces a problem. She has been invited to her nephew's eighteenth birthday celebration which she plans to attend. However, the invitation extends to her bringing a friend, and the current man in her life has seen the invitation. The problem is that much as she cares for Professor Daniel Crane, she is not keen to introduce him to her family or her past. Her reticence is becoming a problem in their relationship, as she often accompanies Daniel on visits to his parents who are both academics. Kate feels an enormous gulf between her world (or the one she has more or less left behind) and that of the Cranes. In addition, she simply finds it difficult to share: *“Understatement was the rule in our house. Emotions, even positive ones, were kept firmly under control. It was the Eleventh Commandment, carved on its very own tablet of stone and presented specifically to those of Presbyterian persuasion: Thou Shalt Not Emote.”* Kate is not good at “chit-chat”, and she doesn't like the teaching aspect of her job as she finds it difficult to relate to students; she prefers her research. It is not that she does not love anyone; she simply finds it very difficult to express her feelings. Daniel on the other hand is open and uncomplicated, and he is baffled and hurt by her evasion or lack of empathy as he sees it. Can a relationship survive if there is no mutual sharing?

The invitation causes Kate to reflect on her past, on the years of growing up in Crow Lake, Northern Ontario, and on the day when everything changed. The day when her parents were killed (this is not a spoiler as the book blurb mentions her being an orphan). At the time Kate was but a little girl, her younger sister Bo was a toddler and her two brothers were in their upper teens. I won't go into the details of what happens immediately after the tragedy as that is for you to read, but suffice to say that the brothers end up looking after the little girls, and they do so to the best of their abilities. Luke optimistically believes that everything will be OK, whilst Matt worries about the lack of funds and just about everything else. Luke is the main housekeeper and is adored by Bo, but Matt sees the chaos of the household and equates that with the general state of their lives.

Since the time of their great-grandmother Morrison, obtaining a good education has been a primary consideration in the Morrison family as it provided not only good opportunities, but also choice which meant that one could choose to live on a farm in the middle of nowhere if one wanted to, as her father did: *“In the living room of his house he had a bookcase full of books, and rarer still, he had the leisure time to read them. If he had settled in a farming community it was because he felt at home with the values he found there. The*

*point was, he had a choice. That was what they had won for him.*" Choice is an important theme in this novel. Luke, the eldest boy, although not the brightest in the family, does better than expected at school and has the opportunity to further his studies. Younger brother Matt is brilliant. However, with both parents dead, circumstances have changed, hopes have to be modified and new plans need to be forged. Ironically Matt's choices are a problem for Kate. Will she come to terms with the fact that those choices were his, and that they are not her responsibility, but that Matt has to live with whatever decisions he made.

Not everyone else in the neighbourhood has the luxury of choice either. The Pye family has a reputation for family violence, each successive patriarch in the family perpetuating the violence. The Pye children have to work on the farm night and day. They do have simple choices such as leaving, but their choices are very limited and don't include education. The fates of the Pyes and the Morrisons eventually become intertwined, but no more details from me. It is quite interesting to note that in these outlying communities the girls seem to have a better education than the boys as the latter are required to do farm work, whereas girls who finish schools can do the bookkeeping and perform other clerical duties on the farm. But finishing school does not necessarily mean further education. One of Kate's students tells her that: "*She had won a scholarship to university. Her father had been both astonished and annoyed when she said she was taking it up. He couldn't see what good a degree would do her. A waste of time, he said, and a waste of money. Her mother was proud of her, but mystified. Why would she want to leave home?*"

#### **Quotes:**

(view spoiler)

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#### **Erin ? \*Proud Book Hoarder\* says**

**"I have pursued your dream single-mindedly; I have become familiar with books and ideas you never even imagined, and somehow, in the process of acquiring all that knowledge, I have managed to learn nothing at all."**

Beautifully written and emotionally moving, Crow Lake is told through the point of view of a young woman who has lived through a certain type of family hell and survived it. Sort-of. Four children, different ages with different temperaments, are forced into bonds and responsibility that weighed them down when tragedy struck their family in a small town. Ultimately the book is about sacrifices people make and how they come to terms with it.

There isn't any surprise revelation at the end - the book didn't need that - but it was a sense of awakening for the protagonist, Kate. She finally opens her eyes and loses some of the blinders she had on for most of her life. I felt bad for not liking her some of the time because I kept reminding myself she was a vulnerable person drowning in tragedy at one point and that I probably just couldn't understand her view enough, but I can't help it - there's a small selfish, unlikable vibe she has going down.

The bonding of siblings with small town people who act like heroes was maybe the best part. I could care

less about the twisted side story of the neighboring family, but the author took pains to inject foreshadowing and hinting galore about them - even opening the story by comparing the two. Really the book would have been just as good without that family and the secrets, but I suppose it did add another dimension to the storyline and where one character ended up, just probably not as strongly as the author intended it to.

Despite how beautifully written it was, how well the author handled the ups and downs of small-town life and tragic struggles, the book held little content other than a small step in the direction of personal growth. It leaves a bittersweet feeling in the chest that sad stories often imprint. It was a telling of how four lives evolved and how four people beat the odds in different ways, but my interest didn't raise above a three star by the end of it.

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### **Camie says**

The Morrison children have been left orphans in the farming community of Crow Lake which is part of the wild terrain in Ontario, causing them to become a project of sorts for the townspeople. Meanwhile a nearby family the Pyes, are having plenty of tragedy themselves. The eldest two Morrison boys have worked on the Pye farm on occasion throughout the years and it's no surprise that the two families are drawn together in grief. This is Mary Lawson's debut novel(2002) She has written a book with rich characterization and lyrical descriptions of place. It was chosen as a Today's Bookclub read, where most of the books picked are very popular. I personally kept hoping for a bit more plot, but it's still a nice read. 3 stars

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### **BookLover says**

I read this book several months ago and am still having a hard time reviewing this properly. To say I loved this book would be a huge understatement. It was such a powerful story and one that stays with you for a long time to come.

This is the story of Kate Morrison and her tragic childhood, after being orphaned quite young. I found myself quite emotional throughout the book... not because the subject matter was sad, but because Mary Lawson made me feel everything. The story was told in such a subtle way so that I felt everything but wasn't manipulating into feeling it. (That's a fine line in writing)

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### **BrokenTune says**

*"I remember reading somewhere a theory to the effect that each member of a family has a role – 'the clever one', 'the pretty one', 'the selfish one'. Once you've been established in the role for a while you're stuck with it – no matter what you do people will still see you as whatever-it-was – but in the early stages, according to the theory, you have some choice as to what your role will be."*

This was one of the books on my "Canada" reading list. Most titles on this list are books and authors I had never heard of before setting myself a challenge to read up on the place I'm going to visit this summer. So, I knew nothing of Crow Lake before I started reading. Unfortunately, I also read parts of the Ferguson brothers' How to be a Canadian at the same time - and the Ferguson's acerbic description of what makes the quintessential Canadian novel seemed to very much apply to Crow Lake.

*"Understatement was the rule in our house. Emotions, even positive ones, were kept firmly under control. It was the Eleventh Commandment, carved on its very own tablet of stone and presented specifically to those of Presbyterian persuasion: Thou Shalt Not Emote."*

Don't get me wrong, Crow Lake has got a great premise and interesting characters but the dysfunction and hardship described seemed rather prefabricated.

I also found it hard to relate to Kate, the main character, who is raised by her brothers after their parents die in an accident.

But part of me is convinced that it is hard to relate to Kate for anyone because she does not relate to anyone in the book. In fact, one of the issues dealt with in the book is the emotional detachment which people create for themselves as protection against loss.

Another aspect of this detachment, and one which also did not help to endear Kate to me, was her determination to not just shut out her family, but also to use the acquisition of knowledge as an escape mechanism.

All in all, it was an interesting book, but the aloofness (in generous terms) of the main character made it sometimes hard work to want to work with the story and see the characters open up about their lives.

*"Great Grandmother Morrison, I accept that the fault is largely mine, but I do hold you partly to blame. It is you, with your love of learning, who set the standard against which I have judged everyone around me, all of my life. I have pursued your dream single-mindedly; I have become familiar with books and ideas you never even imagined, and somehow, in the process of acquiring all that knowledge, I have managed to learn nothing at all."*

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### **Tea Jovanovi? says**

Ve? sam pisala o lepoti kanadske knji?evnosti... Ovo je jedna od kanadskih autorki ?ije knjige obavezno treba pro?itati... I koje se dugo pamte... A svaka njena nova knjiga s ?e?njom i nestrpljenjem se i??ekuje... Jedva ?ekam da je neko od vas pro?ita i da ?ujem va?e utiske... :)

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### **Jeannie says**

I really enjoyed this book. The story moved along slowly but never failed to keep my attention. I hated to see it end. I look forward to reading more by this writer. Highly recommend.

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### **Betsy Robinson says**

I feel such a commonality with this book—Mary Lawson's style, the movements, the issues, the dialogue that is perfect pitch and as natural as breathing—that it almost renders me speechless. It's a story about children raising children. About no grownups. About being propelled into adult responsibility as a child and the delusions of survivor's guilt. There's a short Q&A with Lawson (<http://www.marylawsone.ca/qa-video/>) where she qualifies the story as complete fiction. I believe her. The commonality I feel is not that I've lived this story because I haven't. What I feel is that, were I Canadian and from similar land, I too might have imagined it as she did.

Recently Goodreader Larry Hoffer wrote: "Did you ever get the feeling you and an author would be great friends (or perhaps mortal enemies), simply based on the books they write and the way they tell stories?" I have that feeling about Mary Lawson. She seems to think the same thoughts and write them the way I would, and it's spooky and I love it and I love this book. It quietly and gently knocked the wind out of me.

Thanks to Goodreaders Esil and Zoeytron for recommending *Crow Lake* in their comments about my review of *Road Ends* . I've found a new favorite writer.

### **5/25/17 A very personal note after a day of reflection:**

I hesitate to share this, but since I've published articles half-assedly alluding to it ( *Me and My Electra Complex* and *The Truth about the Making of The Trouble with the Truth*), I don't know why I should be embarrassed; but I am.

Until I read *Crow Lake*, I never realized the full extent that survivor's guilt has clouded my vision of my dead mother, whose book I edited and published a couple of years ago. I'd imagined that she suffered terribly in life because she never had my solo writer's life--a life that she might have enjoyed more than marriage and a whole bunch of kids who she didn't really want to take care of. (Don't worry, I worked all that stuff out a long time before she died, and we became best adult girl friends.) In my opinion, Mary Lawson offers the best a fiction writer can offer: the possibility for a reader to suddenly have a dark room lit up and realize the monsters you've installed there don't exist. Never existed. That's why, a day after finishing this masterful quiet novel, I'm still vibrating.

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### **Carol says**

This story is about much more than relationships. It is about life. It is about organisms that live in ponds and how they cling to life. It is about family. It is about carrying on the dreams and hopes of previous generations. It is about education and how important it is and how, sometimes, you miss life as it is happening. It is a lyrical and wonderfully magical story that ensnares you in its telling. It is dreamy and haunting. It is one of the better books I've read this year ~~ it is something I was not expecting to read and, now, I wish there was more of it.

There is nothing in this book that seemed out of place or false.

It is said that all good writing must provide a 'sense of place' in which the action occurs, and *Crow Lake* and the surrounding community are almost as important as characters as are the humans in this lyrical and evocative book.

*Crow Lake* succeeds on all levels.

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