



Spooner

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Warren Spooner was born after a prolonged delivery in a makeshift delivery room in a doctor's office in Milledgeville, Georgia, on the first Saturday of December, 1956. His father died shortly afterward, long before Spooner had even a memory of his face, and was replaced eventually by a once-brilliant young naval officer, Calmer Ottosson, recently court-martialed out of service. This is the story of the lifelong tie between the two men, poles apart, of Spooner's troubled childhood, troubled adolescence, violent and troubled adulthood and Calmer Ottosson's inexhaustible patience, undertaking a life-long struggle to salvage his stepson, a man he will never understand.

Spooner Details

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From Reader Review Spooner for online ebook

Barbara Wahl says

Tenero è Spooner

Ammaliata dalla saporitissima descrizione dell'infanzia di Spooner, bambino autodistruttivo, lunare, che si caccia in guai molto più grandi di lui e reagisce alle ingiustizie nel suo personalissimo modo - pisciare nelle scarpe degli antipatici, di notte, e farglielo trovare nel frigo - a fatica mi sono dovuta staccare da lui ragazzino per entrare nel mondo sgangherato dello Spooner adulto, ancor più alieno del bambino, fuori fase, sempre a rompersi qualche osso essenziale alla deambulazione, serissimo e innocente, un alto esempio di incapacità a vivere.

Naturalmente, Spooner è uno scrittore, e valga la citazione di una sola frase come solo Proust se la può permettere, sinuosa e perfetta, così lunga che non arriverò alla fine, ma ecco l'aperitivo:

"Da mezz'ora Spooner continuava a rigirare quella stessa pessima frase, dandole un colpetto qui e uno là, come una vecchia dolce cagna che cerca di rianimare un cucciolo nato morto e ora si interrompe, grato dell'interruzione, e osservò la figlia che percorreva gli ultimi cento metri, ammirando il modo in cui arrivava alla cima senza rallentare, ricordando la sensazione che provava lui quando all'improvviso si metteva a correre verso casa a più non posso, per l'unica ragione che poteva farlo, e rivide con esattezza le proprie selvagge galoppare sulla discesa lastricata che si diramava dalla strada principale di Vincent Heights..." e va avanti così per altrettante righe, finché perdiamo il fiato come il bambino che corre.

Accanto a questo essere speciale, fuori asse, descritto con tenera ironia, una sola persona stempera la freddezza dell'ambiente: Calmer, l'uomo che non gli è padre (andiamo per sintesi...). Calmer tira fuori Spooner dai formicai giganti, da sotto le macchine, dalla madre asmatica. Un uomo roccia, la cui vecchiaia un pò demente è descritta come un fumetto divertente.

Non so che cosa faccia esattamente Dexter, difatti, leggendolo mi trovo a ridere in momenti assolutamente disperanti, a provare tenerezza per un cane cannibale o a sentirmi l'unica persona al mondo in grado di capire Spooner, il bambino strano, il futuro uomo dalle nove operazioni al femore, il Zeno di un'altra storia...

Da non perdere le ultime divertentissime pagina di ringraziamenti in cui Dexter prende in giro chi ringrazia, ringrazia chi deve ringraziare e ci dà una lezione sul modo di dire le cose che non si possono dire.

Kevin says

I recently read the brilliant *Nobody's Fool* by Richard Russo, and this is a similar character-led barnstormer of a novel, full of table-slapping humour, built from Dexters' easy-on-the-ear prose. The writing style is playful, conversational, instantly accessible, and hugely enjoyable, like hearing an old friends' anecdotal reminiscences over a cold beer.

Unlike the charismatic slacker Sully in Russo's novel, Spooner is a more troubled and tormented soul, prone from an early age to the pleasurable feelings wrought from his oddball behaviour (like breaking into his obnoxious neighbours house and pissing in his shoes).

In searching for his own place in the world, he finds friendship in unusual acquaintances (he seems to see bedraggled flea-ridden mutts as kindred spirits), he attracts violence and injury like a horse attracts flies, and yet in a Forrest-Gumpian way, is able to stumble through life's rites of passages (career, marriage, kids) like any fully functioning adult, despite his obvious deficiencies.

Spooner is an uncommon hero, who suffers an uncommon amount of bad luck, but his life makes one hell of a good read in Dexters' hands.

Kathy says

This book is beyond entertaining, chock full of hilarious yet sometimes heart-wrenching episodes. I had never read this author's work prior to the reading of this book and it certainly took my mind off mundane things like how many more inches it will snow today. In between shoveling, this book was a hoot!

At one point late in the book a "reconstructed" family is living on Whidbey Island and having neighbor problems. To frame it simply, there is a grandson who showed up and moved in with his grandfather uninvited. He doesn't like his grandfather being friendly with another old codger, Spooner's father. The two old men like to sit down by the vegetation shooting off guns and drinking beers. The grandson calls the police to complain and along comes the local deputy, a woman.

Spooner tries to bring it down whilst the complaining grandson stands about pointing and accusing. "'There's been a misunderstanding, I think,' he said, dripping maturity. 'They're just plunking at some cans and bottles.' The deputy jumped at the sound of his voice and then screamed at him to get down. 'Get your ass down! Now,' pointing at the ground to indicate the correct direction...And then she turned and screamed in the other direction, bawling at the old men to drop their weapons. 'They can't hear you,' Spooner said. 'They put toilet paper in their ears.' 'I'm telling you for the last time,' she said. 'Get down.' The grandson shifted his weight, dropping off his haunches to a knee. 'It's partly my fault, officer,' he said to the deputy...she moved to the side, trying to duck up toward the front of the car, but took only one step and then lost her balance and rolled a little ways downhill. How do ducks do it, anyway?'"

Kathy says

Making room on my Shelf of Honor for this one!

Some favorite lines:

'He [Arlo] never asked what had happened, just let Calmer tell him about it in his own time, his own way. Arlo was everyone's favorite, and there were reasons for that.' (41)

"And Spooner knew that something terrible had happened, or nearly happened, not because the Ford had rolled down the hill but because Calmer had gone crazy inside, not knowing what to do about him [Spooner]." (122)

"*Losing your marbles* was an expression pleasing to Spooner's ear from the first time he heard it, back in Vincent Heights. Early in life, he'd liked the idea of a head full of marbles, like a gumball machine, and later, after he'd had time to look around a little bit and meet a few psychologists, the expression seemed to put exactly the right timbre on the study of mental health.

"Not that he dismissed mental health entirely. He knew from experience that it could be disorienting, walking around without your ordinary number of marbles and trying to put your finger on where you lost the ones that were missing. The key, therefore, from early on, had been not to get so attached to your marbles that you would miss a few if they escaped. Thus Spooner's excellent mental health." (246)

"Or, absent that, if his mother could have brought herself to get it out of her system some other way, to scream at them -- *You drunk bastards ruined the roast!* -- and throw a pan at Calmer's head, or at Spooner's head (he wouldn't have minded) and then a week or two later drop him a post card saying *Sorry about your*

head, instead of a nine-pager [letter] containing the story of her life. The difference being that Spooner would never hold a lump on the head against anyone." (310)

"The doorbell rang again, and Calmer came back into the kitchen carrying a ham the size of a pygmy." (316)

LeeAnn Heringer says

The back cover of this book promises so much: vitality, funny, anecdotal, profound. And yet, it failed to charm me. Kindergartners expelled for getting boners and litters of mice being roasted when reprocessed cars catch on fire, being permanently crippled in bar brawls and a dog eating his master's grandson just didn't strike me. I guess it's the kind of novel where you have to be in the right mood, in the right black humor where the world is against you and you're the dumbest guy in the room, hard wired to pee in adults' shoes.

I guess you would call these spoilers, but this was a guy rambling through a miserable life where everyone has the jump on him and this kind of unhappiness happens and I wasn't feeling the need to feel superior to some joe-six pack. I didn't get it.

Snotchocheez says

3 stars...

...but it ~~could've~~ should've been so much better. In the Acknowledgments at the end of *Spooner* (the strangest acknowledgments I've ever encountered, by the way, from someone who'd eschewed them in his six books prior) Dexter mentioned that this was an 800-page behemoth manuscript, pared down (probably due to publisher demands) by 1/3 of its original length. As rambling as this occasionally gets at times, I contend that the original submission should have been left *in situ* because it often seems the core essence of protags Warren Spooner's and stepdad Calmer Ottosson's lives have been excised with the chaff.

It's a shame, too, because there are so many outstanding passages here that left me giggling uncontrollably. While *Spooner* is not exactly a comedic novel, Pete Dexter's playful, wry wit shines through with each sentence (much like John Irving's in his heyday.)

This is Spooner's story and stepdad Calmer's story, spanning close to fifty years of their lives. Spooner's a strange kid from the get-go, a five pound lump that refuses to leave his mom's womb, then after his father's untimely death shortly after his birth, grows up a basket-case in training in Milledgeville, Georgia, breaking into neighbors' houses and peeing in their shoes (among plenty of bizarre acts). Spooner's mom, as young single mothers are wont, marries Calmer Ottosson, a kind, patient man (and officer in the Navy) to help raise this strange kid. Calmer and Spooner's mom squeeze out two remarkably intelligent siblings for Spooner, but despite Calmer's best efforts, Spooner keeps getting weirder and weirder, sucking on his fingers and getting expelled from kindergarten.

The story follows their lives in snapshots thereafter, Spooner developing into a troubled adolescent and young adult, stepdad Calmer raising Spooner and his gifted siblings. They go from Georgia to a Chicago exurb, then to South Dakota, Calmer trying to advance his career as a school administrator, Spooner aspiring (it seems) to break every bone in his body. Then more snapshots as Spooner reaches adulthood: Philadelphia (where, after a long stint of homelessness and dumpster diving for meals, somehow lands a job as a

newspaper columnist (?!?), and somehow finds a wife); then Whidbey Island off Puget Sound in Washington (where Spooner in middle age, now a novelist (?!?), moves with his wife and daughter in the bucolic, sylvan beauty success has afforded him.)

Okay. Two big problems here. The biggest (and maybe not Dexter's fault:) between snapshots, huge swaths of Spooner's life have been summarily tossed aside, making it almost impossible to connect with this guy, making it inconceivable that this accident-prone idjit with *zero* common sense (and almost no formal education) could somehow be a successful writer. I'm guessing Dexter's sorta describing his own career arc here, but I just can't buy it. And second, of smaller import (but no less troubling, and I very much blame Dexter for this one:) Female characters in this novel really get short shrift. It's not just little things like refusing to address them by their given names (like his mom Lily is almost always referred to as "Spooner's mom", his wife as "Mrs. Spooner", his daughter *with no name whatsoever*), it's that every female character seems to exist in the periphery, and only as overly prim natterers ("Spooner's grandmother") or bitchy, sickly shrews ("Spooner's mom" or "Calmer's Wife"). My GR friend Kathrina aptly opined that Dexter is a "man's writer", but sheesh: never since John Updike have I experienced an author's seemingly latent misogyny.

Still, holy crap! Dexter can compose a sentence with the best of them. While *Spooner* didn't quite float my boat, there was enough amazing writing on display here to make me seek out his other titles, especially his National Book Award-winning *Paris Trout*.

Joe says

I have to admit, right off, that I've been looking at Pete Dexter's sentences for a long time, and thinking,, "wow, so that's where those words really belong". Also, by confession, I grew up in the Philadelphia that Dexter writes about quite often. I read his Daily News columns when they were new. And I remember the pictures from the hospital bed that appeared in the paper of Pete, and boxer Tex Cobb,(aka Stanley Faint) in the aftermath of the true to life adventures in Devil's Pocket. (which also lent its name to Dexter's first novel, but not exactly)

But, we're talking about Spooner now. You've probably already seen most of the other peoples comments, and have a pretty good idea of what Warren Spooner came from, lived through, and eventually settled into. What you haven't decided yet, is why should I read this one. Sure, there are a few things that will make you scratch your head. Like, with what we know about Spooner as a child, nothing really prepares us for the idea that he might become a writer of anything more coherent than a shopping list on the back of an overdue electric bill. But, there it is. Right place, right time for his lap to be open, and ready for something to fall into it. I don't know how much of the young Spooner really is Pete Dexter, but you can get the sense that his (Spooner's) ability to boil something very complicated, (life itself) into something as simple to understand as sitting in a mound of fire ants, is a quality shared with the author. Dexter's sentences do that. You'll find things in Spooner that you will laugh about the first time, and then, when you read it again,, are still funny, but this time, they're also dripping with a basic truth, that you wonder why you didn't think of it that way already.

Ok, enough of why I read everything Pete Dexter writes,, well, except for Paper Trails, which I probably will now,, but haven't because I thought it would just be newspaper columns that I've already read. If you're new to Pete Dexter, read Spooner, but not first. Go get "Paris Trout", then the amazing "Deadwood". Follow those little slices of offbeat Americana with the grit of the big city, "God's Pocket", and "Brotherly Love". Then, when you think you know who this guy might be, grow up, but not quite, with "Spooner".

Elizabeth says

In this book's Acknowledgements, Pete Dexter admits to basing this novel on his own life's experiences. The book is funny, sad, and confusing, but not all in the same places. However, through it all, Dexter proves that he can turn a phrase better than most writers, dead or alive.

Warren Spooner, the book's title character, is born in 1956 to a mother who never quite grows to love or understand him. A mother who is described as being only happy twice in her life ("the night JFK was elected president and the day that Richard Nixon quit the White House"), who hates the rich and the Republicans, who suffers from and fakes suffering from asthma, and who married Spooner's stepfather Calmer Ottosson, "the greatest man that he (Spooner) had ever known, or at least the greatest man who had ever known him."

The story intertwines Spooner's life (becoming the fiend of Vincent Heights by breaking into his neighbors' houses to pee on the floor or their possessions, being "sexually unfit for kindergarten," playing football under a sadistic high school coach, ruining a baseball career by shattering his elbow, meeting a woman with an "elegant bottom" and making her Mrs. Spooner, being severely beaten by an angry mob in Philadelphia, becoming a successful columnist, etc) with his stepfather's (being kicked out of the Navy for botching a congressman's burial at sea, turning a car over almost single-handedly, being demoted or fired (depending on your perspective) for his honesty and integrity, caring for his stepson despite his constant shenanigans, etc). The story is episodic and sagged in the middle portion. The best (and funniest) part is when Spooner is a columnist in Philadelphia while the most tedious is when Spooner is in high school. However, only Pete Dexter can summarize a family get-together with the succinct quote: "And that was really all that happened. Five humans of various blood relations got together for a weekend, four of them drank beer and went hunting, three ate some beef out of the garbage."

David says

Dexter writes this novel in a very easy voice. Not at all rushed or forced, it just lets the story unfold. It is a voice that pulls me in as a reader, makes me lean in to listen better.

It's a great story, too. Humorous and emotional, really great style on the humor.

What I think I like best, though, is how Dexter handles Spooner as a child. It really is marvelously done. It comes across more as someone watching Spooner, but you still get a good look. He captures Spooner's child confusion well. Perfectly child-like particularly in his misunderstandings of both the happenings around him and himself.

Kathrina says

I felt super-fortunate when I found the ARC to this title at a consignment shop, only weeks after the hardcover was released. This book was getting a lot of media hype, and Dexter was 3 years overdue on his contract in getting this one out, so I was really looking forward to it. In the ARC he includes a letter to the reader, apologizing that this may be the roughest ARC ever distributed, and he's not exaggerating. There are so many typos, repeated phrases, run-on sentences and other grammar horrors in this draft that some paragraphs require repeated readings just to get the gist. But I must admit, the gist is lovely, and worth the re-reads.

Dexter's at his best in creating real characters in quiet, small moments. His plot construction is erratic, and most times he'll give you the effect of an action long before the set-up and the action itself. It makes the reader work to keep up (especially when tripping over funky sentence structure and multiple typos), but his characters are so well-drawn, that these gaffes are quickly forgiven.

I like Dexter, but he's definitely a man's writer. His women are all flawed, pictured as either long-suffering, nagging, and needy, or befuddled, crazed-at-the-wheel torment-makers. The only female portrayed with any dignity is Margaret, but she's still poked at for being too smart -- always playing the game so well, but without enough creativity to ever break the rules. Dexter obviously values an ability to break the rules, as that pretty much defines who Spooner is.

Elizabeth Kennedy says

This may be one of the best books I have read in a long time. It is the story of one man's life and his relationship with his world. It starts the day Warren Spooner is born alongside a dead twin, the result of hours of the worst labor anyone had ever seen. His dead twin secretly becomes his mother's favorite child as she could carry on the mourning for him and gather sympathy forever. Warren's father does not attend the birth because he is dying. What follows is the story of Spooner's life, including his brilliant brothers and sister, his asthmatic and selfish mother, and his loving and level headed stepfather. Through layers and layers of circumstances and poignant examples, the reader learns of family relationships that affect Spooner for life. Rich metaphors and stark language that plainly tells the tale lend themselves to a beautiful story that is, at times, hysterically funny, heartwarming, horrifying, lonely, full of gratitude and at the end one that will stay with me for a long time. I would recommend that anyone who reads this review pick up a copy and read this book. I couldn't stop reading it to see what happened next. One of my friends says that when you feel this way about a book and you don't want to read another, that you have a "book hangover". That is exactly how I feel. I LOVED this book!

Jan Rice says

This is a very good book that someone deposited in my Little Free Library. I looked it up, then decided to read it. Just now I was looking through it for a suitable quote to demonstrate how the author writes, but then I started reading it again instead of writing a review.

It's strange how I decided to read it, what with all the books I have waiting to be read. Sometimes I rebel against what I'm supposed to do, that is, read all those other books, even though I'm the one who decided to read them. But, anyway, once I began, it hooked me right away. It's the kind of book that can make you stay up all night reading--except that I didn't, or at least not enough to finish it rapidly, since I did have other demands. I did it in fits and bursts, and sporadically it made me stay up too late.

This author, Pete Dexter, won the National Book Award in 1988 for *Paris Trout*. I had heard of that but didn't remember the author nor had I read any of his other books. We live surrounded by riches: so many great writers of whom we may never have heard, much less read.

Basically the book becomes the story of a boy and his stepfather. The boy, Spooner, is sort of a bad seed, and the stepfather dedicates a portion of his considerable energies to his upbringing. That's how it starts. The boy is born in Milledgeville, Georgia, in 1956, and that's part of what hooked me, too, the '50s being the era in which I was raised, and Milledgeville a small town around 100 miles southeast of Atlanta, (in)famous for

having been the historical location of the state mental hospital (which, however, doesn't figure in the novel). Milledgeville is why I thought it was a southern novel. But the action didn't stay there and ended up all over the country, finally coming to rest in the Pacific northwest. I'm thinking I need another bookshelf for "country" or "rural, USA," apart from my "southern" shelf.

This is also a story about how life takes on a life of its own, independent of whether that's good for the particular individuals living the life in question. Spooner has a scary gene for bringing the roof down on his head. His step-father is programmed completely differently--for competence and capability--yet nevertheless stumbling blocks intrude on him as well, life sometimes becoming an endurance contest.

The book is very funny yet sometimes so sad. In the middle of the book I had moments of discouragement. Would there be any redemption whatsoever? The answer is, yes, the characters can blessedly get breaks, too--also seemingly outside their control. As through a glass darkly Spooner eventually sees his way toward becoming less self-destructive.

Obviously I didn't set out to read this one to learn specific facts or explore a particular area. On the other hand, neither is it empty calories. I don't do empty calories; such books are not any fun, and if I begin one that seems to be that, I don't finish. So, what did I learn? Something about the way life is, so, then, some philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology, and so on....

There are a multitude of really funny lines--the metaphors and similes, just the way he writes. Maybe four or five that are beneath the rest, as though out of a bad sitcom, but that's out of hundreds, maybe thousands.

He wrote acknowledgements at the end; said he hadn't done so for his other books, so this was kind of acknowledgements for all of them.

James Ellroy must be a very nice man, generous with his time. This is the second author whom I've read recently who said Ellroy was a source of support to him.

The author wrote another book, *Deadwood*, whose plot seemed to have shown up unauthorized in the HBO TV show of the same name. I don't watch much TV, but my daughter and son-in-law have this one, so I'd heard of it and seen an episode. How this could happen without redress, I don't know. I read about it in this *Guardian* article, and then in the author's acknowledgements. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/201...>

Who gets widely read and who doesn't is unpredictable. Winning the National Book Award didn't do it. His books aren't even out on audio except abridged, something you don't usually see. It's good for a change to read a novel that's not a dry experiment and that, if you step into its current, pulls you right along.

The *New York Times* review from Sept. 25, 2009: <https://nyti.ms/2mICQxt>

Lissa says

As odd as Spooner is he is all of us, or at least one feels a sympathetic kinship with the poor misfit.

The story of Spooner is funny, painful and pathetic but not exactly depressing. The prose is well crafted and well honed to best convey the character

Of Spooner in such a way so as to make us love him and yet feel sorry for him.

It reminds me of John Irving's writing in that the author relates idiotic tragedies that befall strange people in outlandish situations without burying us in pathos but still conveying the heart of life.

Laura says

Pete Dexter is a talented writer and with Spooner he's created a rambling, witty, expansive story (and character) that brings both delight and consternation to the reader. From the day he was born Warren Spooner has been fighting his way through life, always living in the shadow of his stillborn twin -- his mother's favorite. Surrounded by brilliant siblings Spooner stands out as the troubled child who never ceases to amaze in his ability to make the wrong choice. From petty thievery to star pitcher to rogue reporter, Spooner's life always has a way of crumbling in on itself. As Spooner's life drifts from bad to worse, the reader begins to wonder when Spooner will steer himself toward calmer waters. But Dexter's amazingly creative flow of language and witty sense of juxtaposition keeps Spooner from becoming a depressing soul. When the aptly named Calmer Ottosson enters Spooner's life as stepfather we see a glimmer of hope. Calmer is enthralled by the perspicacity of Spooner's sister Margaret, but over time he develops a deep and lasting bond with his errant and wayward stepson. Mayhem may be following Spooner everywhere, but there's a real sense of joy in Dexter's imaginative descriptions of life lived on the far side of luck. Nearly every chapter has some unexpected turn of phrase, some delightfully bizarre description. Spooner is a wild ride through a bumpy landscape of farce and family.

Edward says

His sister asks Spooner, "Had he thought about therapy? . . . It would be like picking up a hitchhiker on the interstate without slowing down," Spooner responds. That captures the rambling episodic nature of this story of a man who comes close to self-destructing any number of times. Almost any episode of his life would be enough material for a lot of novels, but SPOONER doesn't slow down enough to examine any single one of them in therapeutic detail. It just races ahead to the next crisis in Spooner's life.

At one point the novel alludes to John Cheever's story about a man who swims all the way home through suburban swimming pools, and in a sense, this is what Spooner does - he "swims" to the end of this book and a near-reconciliation with his stepfather, Calmer, through one near "drowning" after another. But he makes it, and when you come to the end, you're relieved, Thank God Spooner is still in one piece.

His early beginnings as a child were disturbing - he is gleeful at sneaking into neighbors' houses and peeing in their shoes. Later, he plunks himself down in the middle of an anthill, a childish suicide impulse. As an adult, after nearly being beaten to death in an alarming act of foolishness, he has a vision of himself as a spectator, and in a sense that is the essence of the book. We read reports of Spooner who is himself a reporter (no doubt autobiographical as Dexter was a newspaper columnist in Philadelphia). He identifies with Stanley, a boxer, who is good at what he does, but not good enough to be a champion; instead he takes terrible beatings in the ring but keeps coming back for more.

Dexter could have stopped the action of Spooner's life at any point. For example, he could have examined his dysfunctional family where his mother, perpetually dissatisfied with her life, copes by having asthma attacks and disappearing into her bedroom. His stepfather perpetually tries to "fix" things and is taken advantage of - another character Spooner relates to. But the aim of the book is not analysis, nor is it to fill in the transitions

of Spooner's life that get him from one stage to the next. He begins as a child with zero self-esteem, has brief success as an athlete before wrecking his elbow, floats to limited success in chronicling others' misfortunes as a reporter and columnist, and ends on an island on Puget Sound, taking care of his failing stepfather. All of Spooner's "adventures" are like newspaper columns made up of moments of that day.

It's an unconventional approach to a novel, and the lack of coherence bothered me at first. But as I thought about it, how much "coherence" does a novel need? This book is about a guy who has had some incredible things happen to him, most described in funny ways, and you take him for what he is, what has happened to him in his life. The gaps are not filled in, but that's not the intent of the story, any more than we expect a columnist to explain how he got from one column to the next. I wouldn't want a steady diet of this kind of writing, but here it works.

wally says

up to page 45 or so, after the burial-at-sea. comic. dexter has a fine way w/words. says something? that a burial-at-sea can have any comic elements? i'm reminded of my...mother's burial, maple hill...grandma decided she needed to sing a song and my uncle bonehead cracked a grin. course, i didn't see it, my bro told me about it.

too, i read the acknowledgement...correction....i read parts of it. like maybe 1%. heh! he talks/writes about padgett powell, still there at the university of florida, far as i know (go gators, give em hell, charlie pell)...and padgett must have read the manuscript?...and suggested some titles, or a title....from the reading?

yeah, sounds familiar. maybe one day. or not. whatever. onward and upward.

treat yourself. read this.....

....somewhere in one of the blurbs on my copy, someone said something like, this is the book dexter was born to write. ...yeah, on the back, "comes the novel he was born to write..."

this is a hilarious, comedic story. if you need a laugh, and don't we all, then maybe this is the cure? spooner is a hoot. some of the things he comes up with....dexter is not right...i suspect there is something big time wrong here....but maybe it's a good thing he writes, gets it out of his system?

one of the best stories i've read this year.

this story, one, moves around in time, covers a lot of time...years....spans a big chunk of time in spooner's life.

the story moves from place to place....georgia, south dakota, philadelphia, other places.

hilarious, fun to read....the story is fair and over the fence...if dexter was born to write this one, we were all born to read it.

Roger says

I used to read Pete Dexter's columns in the Philly Daily News in the 1970s (I bought it because of the great sports writing, but when I discovered Dexter there was another reason to read it). I then read all of his books, believing them to be better than the columns. Therefore, I was really looking forward to his semi-autobiography. I actually bought it a year ago and wanted to savor its reading at the right time. So a cross-country car trip turned out to be the right time. Yes, I was disappointed. After his last novel, *Train*, which was so different from his earlier titles, but equally as good, I couldn't imagine that this book would disappoint me, but it did. Even though there are biographical elements here, it still seemed like he was moving outside of his comfort zone. One of my other favorite authors is John Irving (who has from time to time disappointed me with a book in a similar manner). But Spooner reminded me of an Irving book in his long timeline and its introduction of multiple (sometimes unnecessary) characters. And the ending reinforced that feeling--a totally unexpected, weird occurrence that didn't really resolve any issues that remained open. Now this book isn't bad in any way. It is very entertaining and funny. But compared to Dexter's previous works, it is definitely a letdown.

Bill Khaemba says

On my decision to read something different, I chose this weird book that ended up being one amazing read...

Pete Dexter's writing style is quite interesting and humorous, I felt like he was reading me a bedtime story and it was so good that I didn't want to sleep. The concept that surrounds this book is a coming of age story around a boy named Spooner and his former navy Step-father Calmer, we follow their relationship, trials, mischief and get introduced to funny characters along the way... I have to say how the author show the relationship between them was kinda why I loved this book... It was this warm feeling that comes with it

Overall this was amazing and I will surely re-read it in the coming future

Jenna says

I liked the storytelling and many of the characters, but once I noticed that his wife had no name but "Spooner's wife," "Spooner's woman," "Mrs. Spooner" and, on more than one occasion, "the woman with the elegant bottom," that was hard to get past. His daughter's cat is named Witlowe. His daughter is named "Baby Spooner" or "Spooner's daughter."

It was whatever. I finished it because I don't like not finishing books. Spooner's story was interesting, and Calmer's was deeply engaging for me, but once you see that the female characters tend to be without names and personalities (and the only significant one with both, Spooner's mother, is difficult at best), that can really hamper the experience. Or not.

If you like 500 page books about white guys interacting with other white guys, give this one a read. If you have better things to do with your time, and I really hope that you do, skip it.

Liza Martin says

So many other readers gave "Spooners" harsh reviews, but I thoroughly enjoyed Pete Dexter's storytelling. Don't get me wrong, as a writer this man can definitely create a compelling sentence, but he is a bona fide storyteller -- and there is a difference.

True, nothing really "happens" in this novel. There is no major "problem" or even a turning point in the book. It is simply the story of a more or less likeable American guy who more or less stumbles through a mediocre life, but you keep turning the pages because Dexter knows how to narrate it. And Dexter doesn't take his characters too seriously, meaning he doesn't take life so seriously either, so just enjoy this for what it is: a fun read.

I suppose I just like books such as "Spooners." It reminded me a lot of the "Rabbit" novels by John Updike, a man who also knew how to create an interesting, if somewhat "average" character whom you learn to appreciate and curiously follow. To me, the books that authors such as Dexter and Updike have written are real, and the characters and lives they lead are real, too.

What I wonder is why this isn't enough for some people.
