



Lime Creek

Joe Henry

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In this wonderful work of fiction, Joe Henry explores the complex relationship between a father and his sons, whose deep connections to one another, to the land, and to the creatures that inhabit it give meaning to their lives.

Spencer Davis, his wife, Elizabeth, and their sons, Luke, Whitney, and Lonny, work with horses and with their hands. They spend long relentless days cutting summer hay and feeding it to their cattle through fierce Wyoming winters. The family bears witness to the cycle of life, bringing foals into the world and deciding when to let a favored mare pass on to the next. As Luke grows older, falls in love, and begins to assert his independence, Spencer strives to impart the wisdom of this way of life to his headstrong son, whatever the cost.

Moving, powerful, and beautifully rendered, *Lime Creek* brings readers into the lives of this unforgettable family and into a world that, though often harsh, is lit by flashes of spectacular grace.

From the Hardcover edition.

Lime Creek Details

Date : Published June 14th 2011 by Random House (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN :

Author : Joe Henry

Format : Kindle Edition 160 pages

Genre : Fiction

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From Reader Review Lime Creek for online ebook

Steve says

I found a copy of this book for a quarter in a Tulsa used bookstore, and read it on a recent trip to Jackson Hole, WY. It was nice to walk in to the bookstore there in town and see it on the "Staff Suggests" shelf for one of the employees (Owen).

A bit of a mixed bag, when he keeps it simple and just tells a story (the work appears to be highly autobiographical) the collection of inter-related short chapters works wonderfully. Set in remote W WY in what seems to be the '70's or so. At times he over writes and attempts to add too much import to the simple day to day. And "add" is the important word here. But the story of putting down the mare, or even (most) of the story of the football game and the team bus getting stuck in a snowstorm on the way home, are wonderful and had me enthralled.

Keep it simple. Don't tell - show. But all in all, I really enjoyed this short book and would rush out to buy any further volumes he might publish.

Melissa says

I had a hard time reading this book. I was very confused at times, and the sentence fragments drive me nuts. Some sections were good, but I failed to see the point in the end.

Ken says

I soured on LIME CREEK quickly. Its author, Joe Henry, is apparently trying to out-Proulx Annie with this paean to Wyoming ranching life, but it turns out to be a pain to read, despite its brevity. Its chief offense is diction. For one thing, it seemed like 65% of Henry's "sentences" (I use the word loosely here) started with the word "And."

And so it started to annoy. And so did his use of sentence fragments. And you know damn well that I'm used to sentence fragments because it's not like they are rare in modern fiction just like run-ons are plentiful too but there has to be a reason damn it and some normal punctuation would be nice and I know the rest of the gang at the University of Iowa Workshop probably loved it but really it drove me to distraction though I would have settled for Casper. And now I forget where I was.

OK. The review. Remember Mark Twain's warning at the beginning of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? He warned that those in search of a plot would be shot. Joe Henry could use that warning, too. Not that it fazes me. I'm not a big "plot" guy, anyway. Characterization holds a higher place in my reading pantheon. Only that didn't quite get off the ground here, either. Not for Daddy Spencer or Mommy Elizabeth or sons Luke and Whitney (Tough cowboy name, eh? I kept expecting him to break out into "I Will Always Love You-u-u-u-u-u-u!") Nope. I was too busy dodging the crazy diction to appreciate any of the Swiss Family Ranchingsons.

And so it went, slowly and painfully (given the ARC is only 144 pp.). Yes, at times the prose is poetic and pretty and batting its eyelashes at you, but never enough to make you forget you were reading a book that

tries too hard.

My recommendation? Wait for Mr. Henry's next effort. Maybe he'll try a little tradition on for size, something to douse his MFA fires with -- the very flames that burned this book like prairie land in an August drought.

Jim Ainsworth says

I don't remember why I bought this book, but I expect it was a strong positive review that appeared in something I read. It could have been because it takes place in Wyoming and there is a lot in the novel about horses and ranching. I also like the simplicity of the title, even the author's name. Just Joe Henry.

The front cover has a blurb from Larry McMurtry calling it "a wonderful book". I won't disagree with that, but I might have used a different adjective. The cover also says fiction, not novel, and I think fiction is a clearer description.

As I read the short book (142 pages), I had the feeling that I was reading a memoir, not a novel. If you like plot-driven novels, this might not be the one for you. This book is driven by characters, words and a sense of place. Weather, scenery and man's struggle with nature are all major characters in this work. There are a lot of long sentences here (think a $\frac{3}{4}$ page-long paragraph without a period). Though this seems to be the norm for literary fiction, I find shorter sentences easier to follow.

Joe Henry, however, has a gift for putting the right words in the right place and pulling his readers into the minds of his characters and putting us right there in a Wyoming winter as a couple raises three sons.

I had already determined that I was going to use lyrical if I wrote a review of this book before I read the author's bio. Joe Henry is a renowned lyricist whose words have been performed by the likes of Frank Sinatra, Garth Brooks, and Rascal Flatts. He is also a poet who dedicates this book to Roscoe Lee Browne, renowned actor and former track star, and Anthony Zerbe. Both actors have performed Joe's poetry.

Joe is a former professional athlete with an excellent education, but attributes much of his learning to his years as a laborer and rancher. That learning is on display in this book. It's gritty and very believable. And there's a nice love story.

Lisa says

If a novel could be a poem, Lime Creek is it.

Arresting in its imagery, surprising and poignant in both its style and point of view, Lime Creek transports the reader in its sharp realism like a stage rambling over an uneven trail, but comforts in the softness of its delivery - like the reassuring embrace of a trusted companion.

That companion is writer, Joe Henry. He is to be trusted. To be appreciated for his fearless depth in telling a deceptively simple tale... elevating ethereal emotion to the point of physical reaction.

This book is a unique experience in the arena of American fiction, and like any adventurous journey, leaves

me hungry for the approaching, longer view.

Matt says

In this book, the author works from a simple premise: Telling the story of a man, the woman who becomes his wife, the sons they raise, and the place where they live. The beauty lies in the manner of the telling. Joe Henry has a distinctive, unique, idiosyncratic, singular prose style that in many instances approaches poetry. The story is told in a series of chapters or, perhaps more accurately, vignettes. Each presents a specific event and the impact it has in the life or lives of the particular character or characters involved. Each is concerned with the learning/understanding of an overriding principle relating to the living of a life in the world of the novel. Though some of these experiences are the result of hard learning, terrible events, or physical or mental anguish, the ultimate arrival at the knowledge being imparted occurs in a manner that might be called gentle. Perhaps these lines, involving the family's arrival at a Christmas celebration on a brutally-cold night may serve as an example: "The sound of the guitar in the delicate clarity of the newborn night made everybody quiet as we approached, the loveliness of it so achingly simple and pure from out of the whelming darkness like an earth-bred accompaniment to a universe cut from glass. With the crunching snow and that simple human refrain on this side of the cold, and the stars so familiar and yet so distant on the other side." This is just a beautiful little book.

Stephanie Cox says

I wanted to love this book. After reading a couple of chapters though I struggled to even like it. It's not a bad story at the core. It's just buried in a bunch of prose and sentences that start with the word and.

Margo says

Beautiful small book with a big impact. Some of the most gorgeous writing I've read in quite some time.

Jenny Shank says

<http://www.hcn.org/issues/43.22/love-...>

Love and loss on a Wyoming ranch: A review of Lime Creek
NEWS - From the High Country News December 26, 2011 issue
By Jenny Shank

Lime Creek
Joe Henry
160 pages, hardcover: \$20.
Random House, 2011.

Woody Creek, Colo.-based Joe Henry studied at the Iowa Writer's Workshop with John Irving, but then detoured from writing fiction to work as a rancher, becoming a successful lyricist along the way. Henry's

ravishing first work of fiction, Lime Creek, must have been inspired by the Western lifestyle he chose: It's filled with exquisite snapshots of life on a Wyoming ranch.

The cadences of his prose are unusual and arresting as he tells the elemental story of the Davis family, beginning when father Spencer Davis -- "whose soul parties with the antelope smelling of sage and horselather and covered by the insubstantial globe of a great tumbleweed" -- meets his future wife Elizabeth on his family's ranch. She's there for the summer with her wealthy Connecticut parents, and after Spencer heads to Cambridge for college, they elope.

The rest of the book is set on the couple's own ranch near the Never Summer Mountains, where Spencer and Elizabeth raise horses and three boys, Lonny, Luke and Whitney. There is some typical Western-rancher emotional distance to the relationship between the boys and their father, but what's more evident is their abiding love. In the moving "Tomatoes," the little boys pelt a fresh white sheet with precious, hard-to-grow tomatoes, but Spencer only pretends to whip them, never actually striking them.

In another outstanding section titled "Love," Henry beautifully conveys the significance of football to small-town teenagers, who attend practice after hard work on their family's ranches: "Almost as if the violence of practice and then of scrimmage released like a nightly catharsis the harsh sum of the highland sun in their backs and shoulders and the hard stiff labor of the day that still formed their hands."

Lime Creek follows the logic of beauty and emotion, not plot, leaving some gaps. Elizabeth disappears halfway through with no explanation, and Lonny appears only briefly. Late in the book, in a section narrated by a grown Luke, we learn "Elizabeth died when they were little." Nothing more is said about when or how she died, and in rare appearances, Elizabeth remains a vague, if loving, presence with "long yellow hair."

Still, it feels churlish to point out what Lime Creek is missing when what it contains is so close to perfect: a pure, tender and lyrical portrait of a ranching family.

Irene says

I received a copy of this book through the Goodreads First-reads program.

This book is a collection of anecdotes by two of the characters: Spencer, the father, and Luke, his son. The stories begin from Spencer's point of view, marrying his wife and his background, and switches to Luke's perspective when Luke is a teenager. There is no plot building in this book, which may bother some readers, but those who enjoy memoirs will enjoy this book very much.

However, this format of writing was a bit confusing at the beginning, because for the first two chapters, the only thing indicating that it was an anecdote were the words at the end of the first sentence for each chapter, "..., Spencer said." The anecdotes are written in first person as if Spencer and Luke are sitting together and we are listening in on their anecdotal conversation. I didn't even catch the format until I reached a chapter in which there was no speaker and everything was suddenly given by a third-person narrator. That was a major shock, and then when a first-person narrator reappeared but the speaker was now Luke, I was confused again. It would have been much easier to read had the speaker remained the same or had it been much clearer who was speaking at any given point in time.

Another thing that bothered me was that beyond the narrow focus of the anecdotes themselves, the reader receives no information about the character's lives and doings. We meet and hear about Elizabeth, Luke's mother, and Whitney, Luke's brother, but at the last anecdote, when Luke is all grown up, we don't know

what happened to Elizabeth and Whitney (especially when something is mentioned and the details are not explained, I won't spoil it for you here); only Luke and Spencer are in the last anecdote and we don't get any closure on the other characters.

Although these things took away from my reading experience, I did enjoy the stories. The characters' actions were simple, yet Henry makes a point to bring out the poignancy of each moment. Henry also has many philosophical moments throughout the book. The quality of the stories outweighs that of the actual words. If I could, I would give this book 3.5 stars.

Becca says

I'm not sure what to rate this. I liked the beginning. I kinda like the middle. I got lost in the snowstorm at the end. It had flavors of books I liked but that it was a mash of several...I just don't know. The long breathless sentences combined with the novel's brevity overall felt like the author said a lot without telling me what I wanted to know.

Ann says

Because this was a short book I finished it, however, I did not like the style that it was written in. I found it very disjointed and the wording was difficult to grasp at times. I like my stories to flow more than this one did.

Gregandemy says

Won an advanced proof copy from Goodread's Giveaways. I think to rate this book fairly, I need to give it 2 ratings, one for each section of the book. I'd give 4 stars to section one. I really enjoyed the first half of the book. It was sweet and touching. The story is about relationships and starts with a young couple and grows into a family. It was so endearing and a nice love story. The writing style is a little hard to get into it- at only 144 pages (and smaller pages with a larger font) I thought I'd have this finished in a night or two. It took a little longer as the reading was slower for me, but once I got into the flow each night, it was fine. Just a lot of descriptive writing.

Now section 2 unfortunately fell flat for me and so I'd give it only 2 stars. One of the sons narrates the books which is alright except that he refers to his parents by name. In most of the first half it was fine, because he was telling the story of his parents before he came along. In the second half though, it bugged me because it seemed to make them just characters in his story rather than creating stronger bonds of parent and child. It could have been a neighbor narrating. The second half for me wasn't as touching of a story. I didn't feel as connected to the sons as I was to the parents. There were several F-words too which I never like, but especially seemed out of place and unnecessary in this style of writing.

Angela says

This book is lovely and reads like the wind. From soft summer breezes to the depths of frigid winters it encapsulates small moments and fine details. The stories were not so connected but rather segmented. It felt

like I was reading a series of shorts. At times the point of views changed. Sometimes it was third person omniscient and at other times it was first person point of view through Luke's eyes and then back to third. A bit confusing and distracting. I would like to know why the author did this. That would be my question for him. I liked this book because it took me away from the serious and dense books that I tend to read. I received it from the Goodreads Giveaways from Random House and was glad I was one of the winners of the giveaway. I love any book that involves animals, farms, horses, wildness, and living in harsh climates. I hope this book does well and that Mr. Joe Henry continues to write and share. He's got a fine sense of emotion in his words and a continuity of script for the reader's imagination.

Rene says

I won this book from the Goodreads giveaways program. It was pretty good and written very well but my dissapointment is that it was too short! Was this not a short story or what? The characters were solid but I wanted to follow them further or from the beginning at least. We only get snippets of their lives and some things are just left unexplained... I'm dying to know more!
