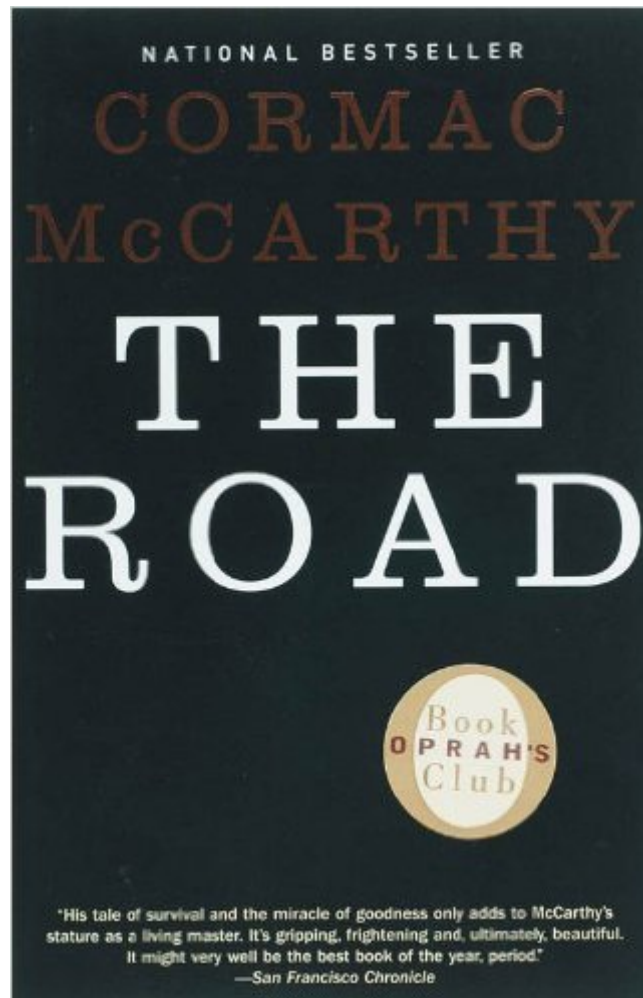


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The Road



Synopsis

NATIONAL BESTSELLER PULITZER PRIZE WINNER National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist
New York Times Notable Book One of the Best Books of the Year The Boston Globe, The Christian Science Monitor, The Denver Post, The Kansas City Star, Los Angeles Times, New York, People, Rocky Mountain News, Time, The Village Voice, The Washington Post
The searing, postapocalyptic novel destined to become Cormac McCarthy's masterpiece. A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other. *The Road* is the profoundly moving story of a journey. It boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which the father and his son, "each the other's world entire," are sustained by love. Awesome in the totality of its vision, it is an unflinching meditation on the worst and the best that we are capable of: ultimate destructiveness, desperate tenacity, and the tenderness that keeps two people alive in the face of total devastation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The nights were blinding cold and casket black and the long reach of the morning had a terrible silence to it." "...Creedless shells of men tottering down the causeways like migrants in a feverland." I neither buy nor read collections of poetry. I can count the poems I know, at least the non-limerick ones, on a single hand. I'm not a fan of poetry, and I truly see much of it as overblown, a good thing taken to a ridiculously inflated extreme. This book isn't poetry, but it's also not pure narrative. It's

somewhere in the gray between, and I enjoyed every single page of it. McCarthy had me on the 14th line when I read "granitic beast." No, I didn't have to be told this was a reference to stone. Its use here, early in the work, deliberate, familiar yet uncommon, communicated to me exactly what this book would be about, and more importantly how it would be told, and I couldn't wait to ingest it. The contemplated and intentional use of this word in this place told me of texture and color and temperature, and its context told me of fear, uncertainty, cruelty, and the close specter of menace. I was hooked before the first page was done. I enjoyed this book's writing style immensely, its story simple and told in a manner that came to me clearly, instantly creating depth with a minimum of prose. Words like "envacuuming," and phrases like "isocline of death" were absolutely brilliant--I bite my hand melodramatically wishing I'd written them. This highly evocative austerity was mirrored in the father's and the son's conversations, in which so little was said, but in which I was seeing absolutely clearly the cant of a head, a look in the eyes, the faintest curl of smile.

"The Road" is a work of stunning, savage, heartbreaking beauty. Set in the post-apocalyptic hell of an unending nuclear winter, Cormac McCarthy writes about a nameless man and his young son, wandering through a world gone crazy; bleak, cold, dark, where the snow falls down gray; moving south toward the coast, looking somewhere, anywhere, for life and warmth. Nothing grows in this blasted world; people turn into cannibals to survive. We don't know if we're looking at the aftermath of a nuclear war, or maybe an extinction level event -- an asteroid or a comet; McCarthy deliberately doesn't tell us, and we come to realize it doesn't matter anyway. Whether man or nature threw a wild pitch, the world is just as dead. The boy's mother is a suicide, unable to face living in a world where everything's gone gray and dead. Keep on living and you'll end up raped and murdered along with everybody else, she tells the man. The man and his son are "each the other's world entire"; they have only each other, they live for each other, and their intense love for each other will help them survive. At least for a while. But survival in this brave new world is a dicey prospect at best; the boy and the man are subjected to sights no one should ever have to see. Every day is a scavenger hunt for food and shelter and safety from the "bad guys", the marauding gangs who enslave the weak and resort to cannibalism for lack of any other food. We are the good guys, the man assures his son. Yet in their rare encounters with other living human beings, the man resorts to primitive survivalism, refusing help to a lost child and a starving man, living only for himself and his son, who is trying to hold onto whatever humanity he has left.

By now we all know that Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* is a disturbing post-apocalyptic novel

centered around an unnamed man and his son and their struggle for survival. As was expected, many things in the novel are horrific yet described with McCarthy's ability to see beauty in the grotesque (it is this fact, by the way, that makes me see him as more of Southern writer than a Western one). Most of these things are known about the novel by reading the first paragraph of the many, many reviews, but none of these things have anything to do with what makes the novel good or bad to me. I recently read *A Farewell to Arms* and in many ways I was reminded of the war sections of that book while reading *The Road*. Not only are we looking at, in both, the ability of man to persevere even when all hope is gone, but one scene in *The Road* of the man considering hiding out in a barn seemed so reminiscent of a similar scene in *A Farewell to Arms* that I had to read it as some sort of tribute. Also we could look at the one image of hope in McCarthy's novel as also taken from Hemingway, as Jennifer Egan notes in her essay "Men at Work" from Slate.com. The comparisons to Hemingway end there. The language of *The Road* may be verbose, more descriptive, but this is much bleaker than anything I've read by Hemingway. McCarthy, through repetitive struggles, similar scenes and the perpetual ash, pushes the reader into feeling some of the hopelessness felt by his characters. The lack of chapter breaks in the novel also helps to force us along. I made the mistake of often reading the book before bed and I fell asleep then with the images of burn and barren, ash-covered landscapes and the feeling that someone was always behind me, following, just out of sight.

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