



Peace Like a River

By Leif Enger



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Peace Like a River By Leif Enger

Leif Enger's rhapsodic novel about a father raising his three children in 1960s Minnesota is a breathtaking celebration of family, faith, and America's pioneering spirit. Through the voice of eleven-year-old Reuben, an asthmatic boy obsessed with cowboy stories, *Peace Like a River* tells of the Land family's cross-country search for Reuben's outlaw older brother, who has been controversially charged with murder. Sprinkled with playful and warmhearted nods to biblical tales, classic American novels such as *Huckleberry Finn*, the adventure stories of Robert Louis Stevenson, and the Westerns of Zane Grey, *Peace Like a River* brilliantly incorporates the best elements of all these genres and ultimately earns its own prominent and enduring place on the shelf among them. Reuben Land was born with no air in his lungs, and it was only when his father, Jeremiah, picked him up and commanded him to breathe that his lungs filled. Reuben struggles with debilitating asthma thenceforth, but he is a boy who knows firsthand that life is a gift, and also one who suspects that his father can overturn the laws of nature. When Reuben's older brother, Davy, kills two marauders who have come to harm the family, the town is divided between those who see him as a hero and those who see him as a cold-blooded murderer. On the morning of the trial, Davy escapes from his cell, and when his family finds out they decide to go forth into the unknown in search of him. With Jeremiah -- whose faith is the stuff of legend -- at the helm, the family covers territory far more glorious than even the Badlands, where they search for Davy from their Airstream trailer. By the time the journey is over, they will have traversed boundaries of a different nature entirely. Marked by a soul-expanding sense of place and a love of storytelling, *Peace Like a River* is at once a heroic quest, a tragedy, a romance, and a heartfelt meditation on the possibility of magic in the everyday world.



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Peace Like a River By Leif Enger Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #98361 in Books
- Brand: Atlantic Monthly Press
- Published on: 2001-09-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.32" h x 1.04" w x 6.32" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 311 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

To the list of great American child narrators that includes Huck Finn and Scout Finch, let us now add Reuben "Rube" Land, the asthmatic 11-year-old boy at the center of Leif Enger's remarkable first novel, *Peace Like a River*. Rube recalls the events of his childhood, in small-town Minnesota circa 1962, in a voice that perfectly captures the poetic, verbal stoicism of the northern Great Plains. "Here's what I saw," Rube warns his readers. "Here's how it went. Make of it what you will." And Rube sees plenty.

In the winter of his 11th year, two schoolyard bullies break into the Lands' house, and Rube's big brother Davy guns them down with a Winchester. Shortly after his arrest, Davy breaks out of jail and goes on the lam. Swede is Rube's younger sister, a precocious writer who crafts rhymed epics of romantic Western outlawry. Shortly after Davy's escape, Rube, Swede, and their father, a widowed school custodian, hit the road too, swerving this way and that across Minnesota and North Dakota, determined to find their lost outlaw Davy. In the end it's not Rube who haunts the reader's imagination, it's his father, torn between love for his outlaw son and the duty to do the right, honest thing. Enger finds something quietly heroic in the bred-in-the-bone Minnesota decency of America's heartland. *Peace Like a River* opens up a new chapter in Midwestern literature. --*Claire Dederer*

From Publishers Weekly

Dead for 10 minutes before his father orders him to breathe in the name of the living God, Reuben Land is living proof that the world is full of miracles. But it's the impassioned honesty of his quiet, measured narrative voice that gives weight and truth to the fantastic elements of this engrossing tale. From the vantage point of adulthood, Reuben tells how his father rescued his brother Davy's girlfriend from two attackers, how that led to Davy being jailed for murder and how, once Davy escapes and heads south for the Badlands of North Dakota, 12-year-old Reuben, his younger sister Swede and their janitor father light out after him. But the FBI is following Davy as well, and Reuben has a part to play in the finale of that chase, just as he had a part to play in his brother's trial. It's the kind of story that used to be material for ballads, and Enger twines in numerous references to the Old West, chiefly through the rhymed poetry Swede writes about a hero called Sunny Sundown. That the story is set in the early '60s in Minnesota gives it an archetypal feel, evoking a time when the possibility of getting lost in the country still existed. Enger has created a world of signs, where dead crows fall in a snowstorm and vagrants lie curled up in fields, in which everything is significant, everything has weight and comprehension is always fleeting. This is a stunning debut novel, one that sneaks up on you like a whisper and warms you like a quilt in a North Dakota winter, a novel about faith, miracles and family that is, ultimately, miraculous.

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From Library Journal

Fair or not, Enger's first novel will inevitably be compared to the work of Garrison Keillor: both men are veterans of Minnesota Public Radio, and the book very much shares the spirit of Keillor's radio work and fiction, with its quiet, observant gaze capturing the beauty of simple things, related through wise and thoughtful characters in this case, the Land family from North Dakota. Asthmatic youngster Reuben Land tells the admittedly shaggy-dog story of his older brother Davy, who shoots and kills two violent intruders as they break into the family's home; Davy is convicted but manages to flee. Both the Lands and the law follow in hot pursuit, but the family seems to have support from a higher power father Jeremiah himself has

performed a miracle or two in his lifetime (walking on water, healing the afflicted with his touch, and the like). Biblical allusions abound, and fantastic things happen, such as the patriarch's four-mile tour via tornado. "Make of it what you will," says Reuben. A low-key charmer for literary collections.

- *Marc Kloszewski, Indiana Free Lib., PA*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Katrina Frey:

Reading a publication tends to be new life style in this era globalization. With examining you can get a lot of information that may give you benefit in your life. Having book everyone in this world can share their idea. Ebooks can also inspire a lot of people. A lot of author can inspire their very own reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only the story that share in the books. But also they write about the data about something that you need instance. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your kids, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors nowadays always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some analysis before they write to the book. One of them is this Peace Like a River.

Phyllis Tucker:

Peace Like a River can be one of your nice books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but still delivering the information. The copy writer giving his/her effort to set every word into delight arrangement in writing Peace Like a River nevertheless doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource details that maybe you can be one of it. This great information can drawn you into fresh stage of crucial contemplating.

Eric Beckman:

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