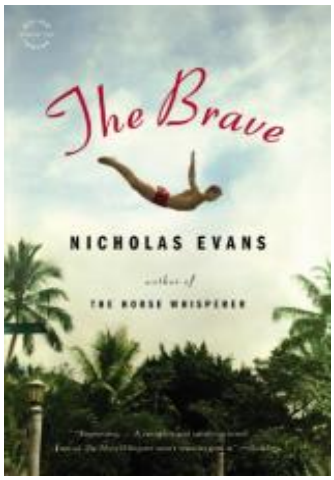
ReadingGroupGuides
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The Brave

by Nicholas Evans



About the Book

Tom Bedford is living alone in the isolated wilds of Montana. Having distanced himself from his own troubled past, he rarely sees his ex-wife, and his son, Danny, is away in Iraq and hasn't spoken to him for years. Tom hasn't always been so removed from society. As a boy, his mother was a meteoric rising star in the glitzy, enchanted world of 1960s Hollywood. There, she fell in love with the suave Ray Montane, who played young Tom's courageous onscreen hero, Red McGraw, the fastest draw around. Tommy and his mother lived in a glamorous, Hollywood version of the Wild West. Everything was perfect, until the gold flaking on their magical life began to chip away, revealing an uglier truth beneath. Ray was not who he seemed. Tommy and his mother fell into a deadly confrontation with him, and they fled Hollywood forever, into the wilderness of the real West.

As a man, Tom has put all of that behind him --- or so he thinks. Unexpectedly, his ex-wife calls, frantic: Danny has been charged with murder. In the chaos of war, his son has been caught in a violent skirmish gone bloodily awry. The Army needs someone to pay for the mistake. Tom, forced into action, is now suddenly alive again and fighting to save the son he'd let slip away. To succeed, he must confront the violence in his own past, and he finds that these two selves --- the past and the present --- which he'd fought so long to keep separate, are inextricably connected. As father and son struggle to understand one another, both are compelled to learn the true meaning of bravery.

Beautifully interlacing the past and present, the author of **The Horse Whisperer** reminds us that we are tied to the glories and mistakes of our own history. The Brave lives up to its name, as one the most courageous and full-hearted novels of our time.

Discussion Guide

1. The Brave opens with the last time that Tommy sees his mother, after she?s been sentenced to death. What do you think of their interaction here? Is Tommy right to be so upset? How might Tom reflect on it now, as an adult?

2. What do you make of young Tommy?s childhood obsession with cowboys? Do you think that his experience of them as an English boy would have varied from that of an American youth?

3. Tommy is devoted to his older sister, Diane, who he later learns is his mother. What did you think of this revelation? Was Diane right not to have told Tommy for so long --- or to have told him at all? What might you have done in Diane?s shoes?

4. Conversely, what did you think of the role that Diane?s parents played in this decision --- and in Tommy?s life in general?

5. Moving from boarding school in England to Hollywood is a major change in landscape for Tommy. How might Diane and Tommy?s lives have gone differently had they stayed home?

6. Decades later, Tom leads a solitary life in Montana. Is his solitude incidental or chosen?

7. How would you connect Tom?s early obsession with cowboys and Indians with his later interest in the Blackfeet tribe? How do his ideas about Native Americans change? Why do you think that Nicholas Evans chose to make this a theme of the book?

8. Tommy?s childhood hero, the actor Ray Montane, turns out to be a violent man. How do themes of violence in the novel relate to the Hollywood setting? Is there something about both that is particularly ?American??

9. Later in the book, we learn that Diane made a sacrifice for her son in the aftermath of Ray?s death. How did this decision affect the direction that Tom?s life took?

10. Tom and his son, Danny, disagree about the Iraq war, and they hardly speak to each other. What do you make of this disagreement between father and son? Which one of them is more likely to change the other?s mind?

11. After Danny is accused of a war crime, Tom reinserts himself into his son?s life to try and help him. Was Tom right to suddenly reappear like this? How would you feel about it if you were Danny?

12. How are the ideas of the ?Wild West? and heroism related in the novel?

13. Where do you think Tom and Danny will be in their relationship five years down the road?

14. What do you make of the book?s title?

Author Bio

Nicholas Evans was born and grew up in Worcestershire, England. He studied law at Oxford University, graduating with first class honors, then worked as a journalist for three years on the *Evening Chronicle* in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He then moved into television, producing films about US politics and the Middle East for a weekly current affairs program called "Weekend World." It was during this time that he traveled a lot and got to know the United States.

In 1982 he started to produce arts documentaries --- about famous writers, painters and filmmakers, several of which won international awards (films about David Hockney, Francis Bacon, Patricia Highsmith). In 1983 he made a film about the great British director David Lean (*Lawrence of Arabia*, *Doctor Zhivago*, etc). Lean became a friend and mentor and encouraged Evans to switch from fact to fiction.

For the next 10 years, Evans wrote and produced a number of films for television and the cinema. In 1993 he met a blacksmith in the far South-West of England who told him about horse whisperers --- people who have the gift of healing traumatized horses. Evans started work on what was to be his first novel.

Published in the fall of 1995, THE HORSE WHISPERER has now sold about 15 million copies across the world. It has been the number one bestseller in about 20 countries and has been translated into 36 languages. It was also made into a movie, starring, produced and directed by Robert Redford.

Evans wrote four more novels: THE LOOP, THE SMOKE JUMPER, THE DIVIDE and THE BRAVE. He passed away on August 9, 2022 after suffering a heart attack.

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