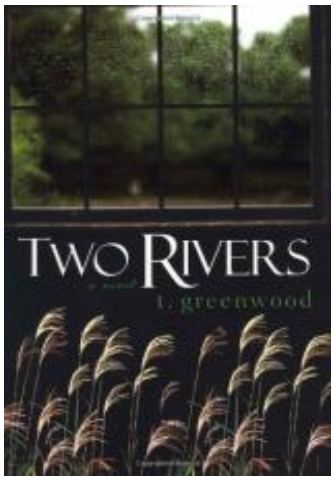
Two Rivers

by T. Greenwood



About the Book

A haunting new novel set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and civil rights movement is an examination of the power of grief, and the importance of forgiveness.

Two Rivers is the story of Harper Montgomery, a widowed, single-father who works for the railroad in rural Vermont. In 1980, twelve years after the tragic death of his wife and the subsequent birth of his daughter, Harper remains paralyzed with grief over the loss of his young wife and haunted by his involvement in what would likely appear to be a horrific, racial crime. Wracked with sorrow and remorse, he wants only to make amends for his mistakes. And then one autumn morning, when a train derails in Two Rivers, and a fifteen-year-old, pregnant, black girl emerges from the water, he thinks he might have found his chance at atonement. But soon, Harper begins to fear that her arrival is not at all the accident it at first appeared to be, and he is forced to not only face the demons of his past but the tragedy that spawned them.

Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of the novel, Harper suggests that twelve years after the incident at the river he wants only to find forgiveness, to make amends for his involvement in the crime. Do you think that by the end of the novel he has done so? Why or why not? Is he forgiven? If so, by whom? Do you, the reader, forgive him?

2. Discuss the role that race plays in this novel. Is the crime against the carnie racially motivated? Does what happened to Harper?s mother factor into this decision? What are Brooder?s motives?

3. Why do you think Harper agrees to take Maggie in? Is it a selfless act or a selfish act? How did Shelly factor into his decision?

4. What role does religion play in this novel? Do you think that Harper believes in God? Of what significance is the scene at the makeshift chapel in Roxbury?

5. Two Rivers, at its core, is a love story. Discuss the relationship between Harper and Betsy (both as children and as young adults). Does the tragedy of losing Betsy justify Harper?s involvement in the scene at the river? Consider the blackberry imagery?both in the description of the carnie?s skin color and the memory he has of Betsy plucking a blackberry in summertime.

6. Discuss the mothers in this novel: Mrs. Parker, Helen Wilder, Betsy. How do each of them reject/redefine/embrace motherhood? Are they victims of their times? Why or why not?

7. Discuss Betsy?s pregnancy. What sacrifices do you think she makes to keep Harper from going to Vietnam? Did she have a choice? She blamed her father?s stroke for trapping her in Two Rivers, so how do you think she feels after he died? Does she still feel trapped, now by her own pregnancy?

8. Is Harper a good father to Shelly? Will he be a good father to Wilder? Discuss his relationship with his own father.

9. Why does Harper decide to leave Two Rivers? Could he and his new family have moved on without leaving? Where do you see his relationship with Brenda going, and do you think it could have gone there if they hadn?t left **Two Rivers**?

10. What are some of the stronger images that stood out to you? How do they tie together Harper?s past and present?

11. Discuss the effectiveness of the time period as a backdrop for Harper?s story. How did the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War change his life and shape his views? Would you have made the same choices if you were in his situation at that time? Today?

12. All of the flashbacks to the Fall of 1968 are in the third person point of view except for the last one, which is told through Harper?s first person account. What is the significance of this change?

13. Discuss the symbolism of the Two Rivers and their confluence.

Author Bio

T. Greenwood grew up in rural Vermont in the 1970s. She began writing stories at seven years old and wrote her first "novel" at nine on her dad's electric typewriter.

Since then, she has published 16 novels. She has received grants from the Sherwood Anderson Foundation, the Christopher Isherwood Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Maryland State Arts Council. She has won three San Diego Book Awards. Five of her novels have been Indie Next picks. BODIES OF WATER was finalist for a Lambda Foundation award, and KEEPING LUCY was a Target Book Club pick.

She teaches creative writing for San Diego Writer's Ink and online for The Writer's Center. She and her husband, Patrick, split their time between San Diego, CA and her family's camp on a pond in Vermont. They have two grown-up kids and two dogs.

She is also a photographer.

Critical Praise

"The premise of **Two Rivers** is alluring: the very morning a deadly train derailment upsets the balance of a sleepy Vermont town, a mysterious girl show up on Harper Montgomery?s doorstep, forcing him to dredge up a lifetime of memories --- from his blissful, indelible childhood to his lonely, contemporary existence. Most of all, he must look long and hard at that terrible night twelve years ago, when everything he held dear was taken from him, and he, in turn, took back. T. Greenwood?s novel is full of love, betrayal, lost hopes, and a burning question: is it ever too late to find redemption?"

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