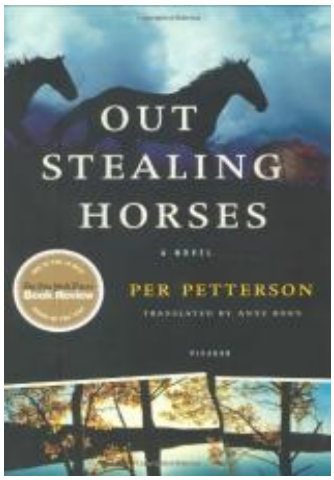
Out Stealing Horses

by Per Petterson



About the Book

Out Stealing Horses has been embraced across the world as a classic, a novel of universal relevance and power. Panoramic and gripping, it tells the story of Trond Sander, a sixty-seven-year-old man who has moved from the city to a remote, riverside cabin, only to have all the turbulence, grief, and overwhelming beauty of his youth come back to him one night while he?s out on a walk. From the moment Trond sees a strange figure coming out of the dark behind his home, the reader is immersed in a decades-deep story of searching and loss, and in the precise, irresistible prose of a newly crowned master of fiction.

Discussion Guide

1. ?I needed to concentrate,? Trond says at the start of the book (pg. 7), explaining his decision to move to the country. Do you think he is happy in his isolation? Is he making a brave choice by withdrawing to the country, as he has always dreamt of doing; or do you think he?s fleeing the responsibilities of his life?

2. Soon after Odd is killed, Trond says ?I felt it somewhere inside me; a small remnant, a bright yellow speck that perhaps would never leave me.? What is it he feels? How does that day stealing horses with Jon, and learning what has happened to Odd, change Trond? Do you see the effects of that loss in him as an older man?

3. Petterson has been widely praised for his descriptions of nature, and of small quiet moments in everyday life. How does his writing make these ordinary moments compelling? Which images of landscapes or domestic scenes remained most vivid in your memory after finishing the book?

4. After his dream at the start of Chapter 5, which leaves him weeping, Trond says, ?But then it is not death I fear.? Do you believe him? If so, what is he afraid of?

5. How do you think Trond?s life would have changed if he had hit the man in Karlstad (pp. 231-233)? Why does he attach so much significance to that decision?

6. Look at the scene in which Trond?s car goes off the road and he sees the lynx in the woods (pg. 65). At the end of the scene, Trond says ?I can?t recall when I last felt so alive as when I got the car onto the road again and drove on.? Why does a near accident, and the sight of the lynx, thrill him?

7. Were you surprised by Ellen?s reaction to her father when she finds him at the end of the book? Would you be angrier in her position, or more forgiving? Has Trond been unfair to her?

8. How has Trond become like his father, and how has he managed to take a different path? What parallels do you see between the lives they lead in the book? How is Trond?s behavior as an adult influenced by the short time he spent with his father as a young man?

9. Look at the book?s final section, after Trond has discovered that his father isn?t coming back. How does his behavior change? Were you surprised by his reaction to the news?

10. How do you think Trond?s life will change after the end of the novel? Will he see more of his daughter? Will he and Lars become friends, or will he return to the isolation he had sought out when he moved to the country?

11. Look at Ellen?s monologue about the opening lines of **David Copperfield** (pg. 197). How do you understand the phenomenon she?s describing, of not being ?the leading characters of our own lives?? Has this happened to anyone you know? Do you think it has happened to Trond? Is it a good or a bad thing?

12. Why do you think Trond?s father doesn?t tell him the story of the Resistance? Why does he leave it to Franz? How do you think Trond?s perception of his father would have changed if his father had told the story himself?

Author Bio

Per Petterson's I CURSE THE RIVER OF TIME won the 2009 Nordic Council Literature Prize, the 2008 Norwegian Book Critics Prize, and the 2008 Brage Prize, and has become an international best seller. His novel OUT STEALING HORSES has been translated into more than forty languages and won the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, the largest international prize for a work of fiction written in any language and published in English. OUT STEALING HORSES was also named a Best Book of 2007 by the *New York Times*, *Time*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and many other publications. Petterson is the author of six novels, including IN THE WAKE and TO SIBERIA. He was born in Oslo to a working-class family and lives in Norway.

Critical Praise

?Read **Out Stealing Horses** by Per Petterson. From the first terse sentences of this mesmerizing Norwegian novel about youth, memory, and, yes, horse stealing; you know you're in the hands of a master storyteller.?

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