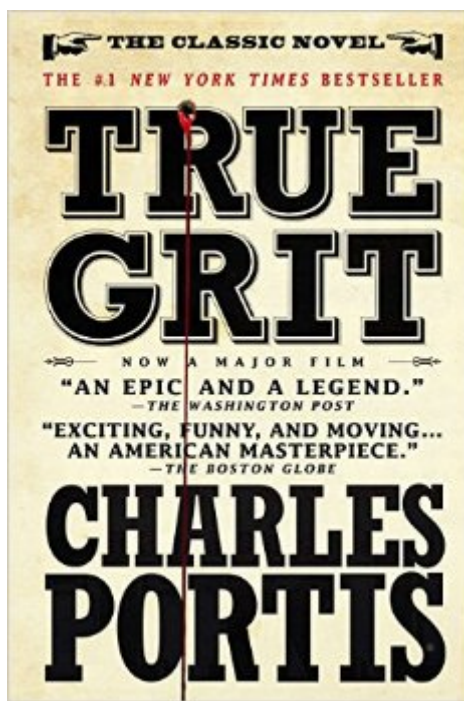


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True Grit: A Novel



Synopsis

Charles Portis has long been acclaimed as one of America's foremost comic writers. True Grit is his most famous novel--first published in 1968, and the basis for the movie of the same name starring John Wayne. It tells the story of Mattie Ross, who is just fourteen years of age when a coward going by the name of Tom Chaney shoots her father down in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and robs him of his life, his horse, and \$150 in cash money. Mattie leaves home to avenge her father's blood. With the one-eyed Rooster Cogburn, the meanest available U.S. Marshal, by her side, Mattie pursues the homicide into Indian Territory. True Grit is eccentric, cool, straight, and unflinching, like Mattie herself. From a writer of true cult status, this is an American classic through and through. This new edition, with a smart new package and an afterword by acclaimed author Donna Tartt, will bring this masterpiece to an even broader audience.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: The Overlook Press; Mti Rep edition (November 5, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 159020459X

ISBN-13: 978-1590204597

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviewsÂ (526 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #6,079 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Classics #34 inÂ Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Classics #73 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > TV, Movie, Video Game Adaptations

Customer Reviews

I love this novel, having stumbled across it in a used bookstore some 20 years ago, having read it expecting not much more than stilted prose and shootouts, and having returned to it again and again since that first reading. It's written in the first person, kind of like a memoir, by an old woman describing a youthful adventure. And what an adventure! Shootouts are the least of it. Mattie Ross, the adolescent girl, is stingy, opinionated, unsentimental, and as tough as John Wayne, if not as big and strong. She conforms to Northrop Frye's concept of the "ironic" hero -- too naive to understand the things she's dealing with, like Voltaire's "Candide." When her ability to keep up during the pursuit of some outlaws is questioned, she answers defiantly, "Pappa took me on a coon hunt

once." Camping overnight with the two lawmen, she registers a succinct complaint, "One of the officers made a wet snoring sound. It was disgusting." But the prose is delirious throughout, like the events they describe. There's a laugh on almost every page, far too many to give examples. I should mention too that the prose is historically and regionally accurate. About a bucket of milk, Matty says, "It looks like bluejohn to me." I looked up "bluejohn" in the Dictionary of American Regional English, and there it was, an old term used in and around Arkansas for skim milk. Likewise, kerosene becomes coal oil. Tall scrubby weeds are a "brake." And all of these regionalisms are woven into a prose style that is memorably idiosyncratic and unintentionally funny as all get out! Rooster Cogburn intends to shoot an unsuspecting man in the back because, "It will give them to know our intentions is serious." Now that's a sentence to savor. First of all, there is the absurdity of the plan.

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