



The Jump-Off Creek

Molly Gloss

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A reading group favorite, The Jump-Off Creek is the unforgettable story of homesteader Lydia Sanderson and her struggles to settle in the mountains of Oregon in the 1890s. The Jump-Off Creek gives readers an intimate look at the hardships of frontier life and a courageous woman determined to survive.

The Jump-Off Creek Details

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Author : Molly Gloss

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From Reader Review The Jump-Off Creek for online ebook

Jesse says

This book is about a woman homesteading alone in the late 19th century in the Pacific Northwest. The writing is quiet, emotionally disciplined, restrained, wasting nothing, without a hint of self-indulgence, like the homesteaders themselves who were able to survive an unforgiving wilderness. If you want to know what these men and women were really like, what kind of personality allowed them to spend two generations simply cutting down trees and hanging onto life by a thread just to call a few acres of land their own, this is the book to read. It takes the romantic fantasy out of pioneering but uncovers the awesome integrity and self-reliance of the pioneers themselves.

Susanne says

At first I thought this was going to be another woman homesteader story like all of the others with a woman struggling to survive but succeeding and eventually marrying and living happily after. However, this story is more realistic than most and probably more accurate of the experience even though I am not sure how Lydia actually was able to survive the elements. Thanks goodness for her mule and her goats. What I liked best about this story was not only the strong communities of women and of men but also how all of the scattered neighbors kept an eye on each other and helped each other out. I can also understand why Lydia liked her independence and shunned remarriage. However, as much as she boasted that she was never lonely, I think she did discover how alone she was, how important the other women were in her life, and how much she was beginning to appreciate Tim as a neighbor and as a friend. Is marriage in the future for them? Gloss left this open for the reader, but I don't think it really matters as clearly the two will be helping each other survive, whether in their own houses or together for convenience. The violence in the story surprised me, but it was also very realistic and added suspense in the novel. Although the novel started out slowly, it picked up speed until I could not put the book down.

Denise Novak says

Oh my! I think this is the best book I've read this summer. What a great narrative that reads like non-fiction. I couldn't put it down and after finishing it, I started to read it again. Lydia Sanderson is a gutsy widow homesteading ALONE in the Blue Mountains of Oregon in the 1890's. I've read a lot of 19th century diaries of those hardy and steadfast women who followed their husbands into the wilds of the American West. This book belongs up there with them.

Bob says

A beautifully written story of a single woman struggling to homestead in the mountains of eastern Oregon in the late 1800s. The writing captures perfectly the incredible challenges of mere survival, let alone accomplishment, as the rugged west was being settled. Excellent book club read.

Katrina says

Love books about pioneering people. Especially women. Every time I start to complain about laundry, or the kids are sick, or we have a big storm - I think about these people and I am SO grateful that all I have to do is walk through deep snow to the Haggen, not out to the barn to milk the cows! Still, it sucks when the good people meet bad ends.

Beth says

Beautifully written in sparse, deliberate, precise language. If ever a novel utterly draws the reader into the story & the hearts & minds of its characters which include horses, mules & goats, JUMP OFF CREEK does. Lydia is the brave, determined heroine whom I deeply admire & care for but could never be. Tim is a figure right out of the old cowboys movies but with addition of sensitivity & flaws. The historical details & depiction of the lives of homesteaders in the late 1800s was fascinating & presented in such an authentic manner. This is historical fiction at it's very best. Well done MOLLY GLOSS!

Sundry says

"...she had not ever found much reward for woefulness."

It is not often that I come across a book that inspires me to reframe my thinking about life and how to live it, but this is one of them.

I'm also in awe of Molly Gloss's prose style and storytelling chops. After reading two of her novels, I believe I've found a new literary idol. Of course, I don't want to be just like her, but I would love to impact my readers in the way she impacts me.

Looking forward to reading the rest of her work.

Maura Heaphy says

Beautifully written, low-key, with the truthfulness of life itself.

Molly Gloss excels at stories of life on the edge: one of my very favorite novels is "The Dazzle of Day," her beautifully written, low-key and truthful story of a group of Quakers who flee political and ecological chaos on Earth in a generation starship headed for a distant star. "The Jump-Off Creek" reverses the polarity of Gloss' imaginative time-machine, and recreates world of the 1890s Oregon frontier, and the life of Lydia Sanderson, a young widow who has sold up all the baggage of her unhappy marriage and bought a smallholding in Oregon, with little more ambition than, for the first time in her life being her own boss, and keeping body and soul together.

Encounters with her neighbours -- fellow smallholders, scraping a living from the land during a depression that is adding to the general struggle to survive, their wives, who raise and bury children, and long for brief opportunities for female companionship, and "wolfers," embittered young cowboys who scrape a living from the bounty they receive for killing the wolves that prey on cattle and sheep -- build up to a narrative of her first year in her new home on the Jump-off Creek.

I can't think of any way to put it better than the late, Blessed Ursula Le Guin, who described it as " ... the West behind the swaggering and hokum." A marvellous story of the quiet courage that went into the settling of America.

Joy says

Molly Gloss is rapidly becoming one of my favorite living writers-I'd equate her to Haruf, probably. This book, a tale of a widower who settled a neglected homestead in a remote part of Oregon sticks with you. Although *Hearts of horses* is probably a better written book, this book is worth the read. Towards the end of the book, I flipped to Gloss's bio and found a kindred spirit when she said she admitted to find a shamefaced love in westerns and especially the tough women in L'Amour's novels.

Laurie Notaro says

Love this book. want to read nothing but stories about lady pioneers from now on. I love Molly Gloss.

Michael says

A female homesteader...yes! I teach *Westward Movement* to fourth and fifth graders every other year, and it's important for them to understand that pioneer women were every bit as hard core as the men. In fact, they were harder, because everyone treated them worse. This stoic, recently-divorced heroine stays remote from the reader - her physical features, her sex - Gloss clearly intends to keep her anonymous. She's an idea, a bundle of intention and willpower. Molly Gloss, employing the cold and blood and death that Cormac Macarthy so aptly does, paints a raw picture of the West, and for that gains entry into my short list of Most Gifted Western Writers. She and Annie Proux oughta hang out, maybe rope some steers together.

Trixie Fontaine says

One of the most bluntly elegant things about this book is how hard & deeply-needed simple intimacies were scattered in periods of intense isolation: a look, a hug, an awkward visit ... a very few economical words. And just how inevitable loss is.

It's always good to be reminded of how important being careful with resources is/should/can be too when living mired as we are in waste, abundance, and just shitty fucking quality of life and bought products.

Linda says

4.5 stars

Have you ever read a story and you didn't want it to end? The Jump-Off Creek was like that for me; it was realistic and interesting. The characters worked their way into my subconscious. I found their plain talk quotable. Often, the weather shaped the historical narrative. Simply said, it reflected depictions of everyday experiences. If I had to use *one word* to describe my observations, I would say they were *earthy*.

earthy [ur-thee]

Part of Speech: adjective

Definition: unsophisticated, down home, folksy, homely, natural, rough, simple, unrefined

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The young widow bought two mules with no names and some goats. Freed from an arranged but debilitating marriage, Lydia Sanderson bought the deed to Mr. Claud Angell's land. She intended to farm only what was necessary to avert starvation. She *"was quite as thin as six o'clock"*. The year was 1895; Lydia planned to raise cattle near the Jump-Off Creek in the mountainous terrain of Oregon.

She soon learned that her closest neighbors were the cowpoke bachelors, Tim and Blue. Between the two of them, they owned roughly 1,300 acres with an assortment of cattle. They were men of few words.

When she arrived at her new 'home' *and I use that word loosely because it was more or less a shack*, she was apprised of two young squatters. And vermin, dirt and a lonely, aching cold. Lydia was a brave soul. I knew I never would have had the courage to do what she did: homesteading in a place and era that was not conducive to single women.

There were *"three seasons in these mountains and that's Winter, Thaw and August."* A peculiar small group of men were portrayed as the villains: **riffraff**. But they were not evildoers as much as men who **had no purpose**. They behaved the way they did to survive even if *what they did* was wrong.

Sadly, I wish I had read this as a buddy-read. I think this wonderful story was meant to be discussed. The author used aphorisms, cacophonies, various tones and a few foreshadowings as literary devices to relay the plot. Early feminism, prejudices and friendship were just a few of the topics found in The Jump-Off Creek.

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## Kimberly says

Beautiful! So much heart in so few words.

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## Cheryl says

Hard won independence...

THE JUMP-OFF CREEK is the third Molly Gloss tale I've read over the last two days, after "The Hearts of Horses" and "Falling from Horses." That should be your first clue on how highly I am enjoying these books.

Lydia Sanderson, widowed, leaves Pennsylvania and moves across the country with two mules and two goats and all her worldly possessions to homestead a small piece of property in the Blue Mountains of Oregon. It is during the Depression of 1895 and times are very hard for most everyone.

She meets her close neighbors, ranchers Tim Whiteaker and Blue Odell, right away and they are able to help each other out. But Lydia is determined to make it on her own.

Lydia is a strong, determined female protagonist - one who I would love to meet in real life. The details of living in this bygone time are interesting and bring this era to life for the reader. The dialogue flows effortlessly. It is not surprising that this first novel of author Gloss won literary awards.

I highly recommend this unique tale of a single woman, battling the elements and braving life alone in a run-down shanty - to history buffs, lovers of Western dramas and advocates of self-sufficient women.

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