



All the Earth, Thrown to the Sky

Joe R. Lansdale

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Jack Catcher's parents are dead—his mom died of sickness and his dad of a broken heart—and he has to get out of Oklahoma, where dust storms have killed everything green, hopeful, or alive. When former classmate Jane and her little brother Tony show up in his yard with plans to steal a dead neighbor's car and make a break for Texas, Jack doesn't need much convincing. But a run-in with one of the era's most notorious gangsters puts a crimp in Jane's plan, and soon the three kids are hitching the rails among hoboes, gangsters, and con men, racing to warn a carnival wrestler turned bank robber of the danger he faces and, in the process, find a new home for themselves. This road trip adventure from the legendary Joe R. Lansdale is a thrilling and colorful ride through Depression-era America.

All the Earth, Thrown to the Sky Details

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Author : Joe R. Lansdale

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From Reader Review *All the Earth, Thrown to the Sky* for online ebook

Andy Weston says

This is a perfectly good story from Joe Lansdale but it very much lacks his the tough outer layer that is the trademark of his books. Okay, it's written for young adults, but it's as if it has cotton wool around the edges, like a child's playground in which it's impossible to get hurt, with a soft floor and sharp and poisonous things removed. This isn't what life is like.

I'm not sure *The Thicket* is written for young adults, but it's a much better recommendation for 12-16 year olds. I fear with this many would be bored. It was published in 2011, but the writing, perhaps intentionally, has a 1970s feel to it, with almost a concern of correctness, no attempt to shock. It concerns two adolescents (boy and girl) and a younger boy who are orphaned in the Great Depression in Oklahoma and take off on a road trip adventure. Lansdale isn't worried about the death count, but descriptions seem censored, and notably steers clear of close situations between the protagonists, Jane and Jack. Certainly it is a honed skill to write convincingly about adolescence, consider how the best do it, Patrick Ness, Ruta Sepetys, Markus Zusak, Will Gaiman for example.

Lansdale will remain one of my favourite authors, but I'm not as keen on this as his others.

Andrea Santucci says

Ora mi piacerebbe sapere perché le migliori storie che ho letto e che hanno protagonisti dei ragazzi sono scritte da autori famosi per i loro romanzi pieni di sangue e budella sparpagliate sul pavimento. Una è "Il corpo", scritta da Stephen King poco meno di trent'anni fa, che ancora considero una delle migliori novelle di sempre. E ora c'è Joe R. Lansdale con questo "Cielo di sabbia".

Un romanzo di passaggio e maturazione, tra l'altro del genere che preferisco, quell'on the road in cui non è tanto importante la destinazione, ma quello che succede durante il viaggio. Così Jack, Jane e Tony, la cui età non è mai precisata, ma suppongo siano più grandi di Harry Potter in "La pietra filosofale" e più piccoli di Harry Potter in "I doni della morte" si imbattono in un vasto campionario di esseri umani, e c'è chi offrirà loro una mano amica, e chi invece li ingannerà o anche peggio. Il bello è che tu lettore non sai mai cosa aspettarti.

Il tutto nella grande cornice dell'America della Grande Depressione, che ha colpito la popolazione non solo finanziariamente ma anche nel morale.

Ultima nota sulla traduzione. Spesso le versioni italiane dei romanzi di Lansdale curati da Einaudi fanno davvero pena. La traduzione di Luca Conti non è disastrosa come quelle di Stefano Curton, Costanza Prinetti e, soprattutto, Vittorio Curtoni, ma mi sono ritrovato in due punti a non sapere se ridere o piangere. Intanto dubito che un ragazzino dell'Oklahoma sappia cosa sia la polenta, e che pertanto usi l'intercalare "Santa polenta!". E poi "Pisquano". Perché usare la parola pisquano? Perché allora non pirlotta? Ogni romanzo è più esasperante del precedente, sotto questo punto di vista.

A parte questo, Cielo di sabbia è un buon libro, forse non il migliore di Lansdale, ma comunque è dotato di

una bella storia vivida, fresca e divertente. Sì, Lansdale poteva usare un po' meno il deus ex machina, ma posso passarci sopra perché, alla fin fine, si tratta di una favola.

Thais says

Ok, non è La sottile linea scura. E a me i romanzi on the road non è che piacciono poi così tanto. Detto questo, però, Lansdale è indubbiamente un grande narratore, in grado di inventare personaggi riuscitissimi. Jane, in particolare, è un'adorabile sbruffona bugiarda, che riesce a ingannare chiunque inventandosi avventure ancor più mirabolanti di quelle che i tre protagonisti di questo romanzo si trovano a vivere.

Tre orfani in fuga dalle tempeste di sabbia dell'Oklahoma: Jack, il narratore, ha appena seppellito i suoi genitori nella stalla quando vede arrivare Jane con il fratellino Tony. I tre prendono l'auto di un vecchio morto a causa della tempesta di sabbia e partono per un viaggio che li condurrà fino in Texas, tra rapimenti, gangster, hobos (non so perché nel libro sia scritto "hoboes", io l'ho sempre letto senza "e"), circhi, raccoglitori di piselli, anziane generose e lottatori professionisti.

Un'avventura per spiriti liberi, proprio come Jane. I tre ragazzini si ritrovano ad affrontare situazioni più grandi di loro, ma nonostante tutto Jane rimane sempre spavalda e coraggiosa, e Jack ne è completamente affascinato. Il piccolo Tony è costretto a crescere in fretta, rivelandosi molto scaltro per la sua giovane età. Un bel romanzo che si legge d'un fiato, magari non un capolavoro immortale, ma vale comunque la pena leggerlo.

Annabelle says

FINAL RATING: 2.65 STARS

CATVHALL

Oddly enough, this book touched me. I put off reading it for a long time, a really long time, but by the time I really got around to reading it I was pleasantly surprised. It could have been better, but it could have been far worse. I really only had one major problem that kept this book from getting a higher rating, but I'll get to that later. And check out that title; it's gorgeous!

THE HERO

JACK

It took me a while to connect with Jack, actually, but once I did the connection was inseverable. He was a completely human character who suffered and felt real pain, and had it hard but didn't complain. It wasn't something tho be whined about, it simply was. And that was the way he treated it. He wasn't irritating, just a kid with a run of bad luck, trying to survive.

THE COMPANIONS

JANE

She was, to say the least, an odd character. But then, she was supposed to be. Wild, free, untamable. Jane's the type of girl who needs to move around, who needs to be free to do whatever strikes her fancy. She's admirable and brave, not ready to stand aside in the fare of danger when there's something she can do.

TONY

He was a plucky, brave boy who wasn't about to be left behind, and yet he comes into the story and becomes a character all in his own right, smart enough to make his own decisions and really a role model to children today, who, forgive me, are somewhat lazy. His drive to survive is intense, and he answers it.

THE VILLAINS

"PRETTY BOY FLOYD"

He turned out to be not so much of a villain, and I actually found myself liking him. He was very nice and was always ready to be helpful, even at his own expense. He had a good heart to him, and turned out to be very different than expected.

"BAD TIGER"

As a gangster name, it kind of sucks. It made me giggle every time I read it and I simply could not take it seriously.

TIMMY

Timmy was also ruined as a tough-guy type because I know this Timmy and so I kept picturing him and it just didn't work. I actually would have liked to hear more of Timmy's story, though, because it felt like there was something there in the background, just waiting to be discovered.

THE PLOT

While it seems a bit far-fetched to me, I suppose I don't know a whole lot about gangsters and the Great Depression, so it could be that that's how things really were.

The childrens' mission fit in with the coming-of-age theme, and they really learn to embrace who they are.

The plot moves along at a rapid pace, a bit predictable but also really fun at the same time. I enjoyed the way it progressed, bumps in the road and all.

There were real challenges overcome with a little help from friends, and things to deal with, but the children ultimately come out on top, it seems. Yet somehow this is believable. Plausible, even.

ROMANCE

Romance is almost a staple in coming-of-age novels. But it isn't intense, heavy romance or true love; just young love, finding its first wings. It's sweet and strikes a real chord. There's jealousy and conflicting wants and the feeling that some things might not work out, but over all that there's an underlying romance to it all, that young, sweet love forming for the first time. Lansdale captured that really well.

THE WRITING

Here is my main issue, you see. Perhaps, even likely, Lansdale is actually an extremely eloquent writer. Unfortunately, for this book, he tried to use period-speak, which frankly got on my nerves and made me want to pound my head against the nearest wall. (Dude, this book took me like two and a half months to finish.) Some of it was completely dated and other parts' grammar had me positively cringing. And, oh, God, punctuation. Periods were invented for a reason.

THE ENDING

I usually hate open endings, because I like to know how everything ends and don't like to make it up myself necessarily. But this one worked for me. It fit into the characters and it fit into the book, and really it couldn't have been better. The ending suited everything and made sense, but was also a clear choice for everything, and I really loved that.

WRAPUP

I suppose I might read more of Lansdale's works if I run into them at the library, but I probably won't purchase them or actively seek them out. If the writing wasn't so horrific, I might have, but as it stands I unfortunately cannot. Still, though I wouldn't recommend this to everyone I'd definitely recommend it to some people.

FINE.

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Mosco says

3* e mezzo

Un bel libro d'avventura, incalzante, nel quale c'è una ragazzetta tosta e disinvolta, e a me le ragazzette toste e disinvolve piacciono parecchio, soprattutto quando girano in salopette, sono sporche e impertinenti, intortano e comandano a bacchetta un paio di ragazzini e anche qualche adulto.

Lansdale ha mestiere da vendere: l'ambientazione, negli anni della depressione e delle tempeste di sabbia, credibile; la storia avvincente, senza sbavature, senza incongruenze (ci sono stata attenta, anche alla posizione dei vari cappelli), il linguaggio dei ragazzetti realistico senza birignao ma senza troppi eccessi da adulti. Un paio di forzature, come il tizio che corre col ragazzino sulle spalle per saltare su un treno in movimento e lo smantellamento di una finestra a suon di spinte. Personaggi secondari un po' troppo stereotipati a mio avviso: ci sono i cattivi cattivi, i buoni buoni, e i cattivi dal cuore d'oro. E un po' troppo fitto di disavventure: santi numi in una settimana vengono presi in ostaggio da 3 rapinatori, assistono a un omicidio, scappano, vengono ridotti in schiavitù, riscappano (botta di lezioncina antirazzista), rischiano di essere mangiati da un alligatore, un altro paio di morti ammazzati, un temporalone micidiale, il "funerale" di una madre e due padri, la casa crollata, la gomma a terra, senza soldi... e le cavallette? mancano taxi e tight ma le cavallette ci sono che diamine, si fan mica le citazioni a metà!

Finale dolceamaro aperto, nel quale però i buoni vincono e i cattivi perdono. Insomma, se avessi 14 anni credo che gli darei 5 stelle senza il minimo tentennamento, ma aumentando gli anni mi tocca diminuire le stelle.

Brendan says

An almost perfectly awesome adventure story hobbled by too-poetic title and dull cover that makes it look like one of those "good for you" books. This book is not good for you. This book is awesome. Well, it might be good for you too, but it is first and foremost a rip-roaring adventure story full of bank robbers, hobos, alligators, carnival wrestlers (okay, just one), and three plucky orphan kids on a road trip during the dust bowl. The ending is spot-on perfect, too. Would never have picked this up if I wasn't familiar with Lansdale. I hope other readers aren't thrown by the prestigious packaging because this is a really fun book.

So why four stars instead of five? Well. It's the race thing. Not that there's a hint of racism in this book. Not at all. But (perhaps one might consider this a spoiler, though I don't) our protagonists, three kids raised in two different families in Oklahoma in the 1930's prove to be completely un-racist. And even risk a great deal in order to show kindness to a black character. I mean, maybe that's possible, but it felt to me like Lansdale was trying too hard. (Oh, yeah, and the only black characters we meet are noble and kind. Not, thankfully, magical, but still a little too wholly good to be believable characters). I don't know how to get around this in

historical fiction--if your white protagonists are realistically racist, then modern readers won't find them sympathetic. But if they're not racist at all...well, it just feels too comforting to me to white readers. We can tell ourselves that if we lived in those times and places, we too would have been completely not racist. I dunno. This isn't a book about race or race relations, so that element just felt off. But otherwise, it really is a great story that I really enjoyed and am glad I read.

J.K. Grice says

ALL THE EARTH THROWN TO THE SKY is a great story about a family during the dust bowl of the 1930's. Wonderfully done by Lansdale.

Mr. Brad says

This book really starts out strong. Lansdale creates a dust-bowl Oklahoma that seems as real as the world outside your window, lucid and phantasmagorical with swirling dust storms that swallow everything brave enough to be vertical. However, as the book progresses, the plot becomes predictable and threadbare, the dialogue gets even less believable (far too much anachronism and modern idiomatic speech/slang), the characters even less authentic, and the ending seems something contrived (or not contrived) for an after school special. A search for deeper meaning and for insightful connections to the human condition leave the reader as parched as a grasshopper on a sand-swept Oklahoma dirt farm. I think this would be a good choice for middle readers who don't mind historical fiction that sometimes lacks verisimilitude.

Trudi says

3.5 stars

It was hard to remember when all the earth hadn't been thrown to the sky.

This is my first Lansdale but I've known about him for quite some time. He's one of those authors who mixes up genres in crazy, imaginative ways and writes equally strong across the spectrum of storytelling styles (including gobs of graphic novels). I know him as a horror writer because his name always shows up for the Bram Stoker Awards and he just received the Horror Writer's Association Lifetime Achievement Award. I also know him to be the author of the novella "Bubba Ho-Tep" (available from Amazon for 0.99 cents!) If you haven't seen the film this inspired, don't wait! It has Elvis and JFK in a nursing home ... and an ancient Egyptian mummy!

All the Earth, Thrown to the Sky (great title) doesn't have anything so wild and wacky as all that. In fact, it's a quiet little novel, short and sweet, a coming-of-age tale set during the Dust Bowl of the 1930's. Hardest hit is Oklahoma, resulting in such a huge migration of desperate people from that state they became known as "Okies" (a derogatory term, not one of affection). But this isn't *The Grapes of Wrath* -- it's much closer to *O Brother, Where art Thou?*

Three young people (Jack, compulsive liar Jane and her little brother Tony) find themselves in dire, tragic circumstances -- with no family left, no home, but a stolen car, they hit the road to seek out something better.

Along the way, they become entangled in some dangerous circumstances, but also make friends in unexpected places. All the while, their journey is laced with adventure and humor. I had already started thinking about "O Brother" and then Jane explains to Jack: "We're like Odysseus" and I laughed, because the whole premise of "O Brother" is that it's Homer's epic poem "The Odyssey", set in the deep south during the 1930's.

Like the Coen brothers movie, *All the Earth, Thrown to the Sky* is having fun, but at the same time there are moments of poignancy and underneath all the shenanigans, there is a sobering portrait of hardship and desperation.

When the wind wasn't blowing, the starving grasshoppers was coming at us in a wave so dark it blacked out the sun. And the rabbits. So many rabbits. Everything became a big mess of whirling sand, starving rabbits, and buzzing grasshoppers.

I think Steinbeck would have enjoyed this story very much.

Katlyn Darrah says

You're on your own with both of your parents dead. You don't have a plan on what to do until a former classmate, Jane Lewis and her younger brother Tony show up in your front yard with the idea to steal their dead neighbors car and ditch their town.

"All the Earth Thrown to the Sky" by Joe R. Lansdale, is an engaging novel for young adults. This story throws twists and turns at you in the most unexpected times throughout the book that kept me reading for hours and hours.

Jack Catcher, one of the main characters, is on his own. This book takes place in the dust bowl era, so due to many dust storms his Mother Died of the nasty sickness pneumonia, and his Father of a broken heart- and he wants to get out of Oklahoma, where everything green and hopeful is gone. In order for that to happen, Jack needed a plan. But when former classmate Jane Lewis and her little brother Tony comes wondering upon Jack's house with a devious plan to steal their dead neighbors car, he no longer has to think one up himself. It didn't take much for Jack to go along with their plan but they needed to figure out exactly how they were gonna do it. The only obstacle in their plan that stuck out like a sore thumb, was the thought of having to backtrack to Jane's neighbors house in a climate that was drier than dust itself. With only one jug of water and a couple containers of food, they had to conserve their supplies that they so scarcely had.

Immediately after they took their trip back to Jane and Tony's house, the kids started planning out where exactly they wanted to go. Jack had remembered his parents once telling him that California was a place that was beyond a better way to live. By that they meant absolutely no dust storms and certainly a slimmer chance of getting ill. In all of this planning Jack started feeling very strongly about Jane. He cared about her more, and started noticing all the beauty about her. He was afraid of falling for Jane because he felt as if they were on a mission to escape Oklahoma, not a romantic journey.

In all of Jack's thoughts of him and Jane, they happened to have a little run in with the most notorious gangsters in town. They picked up the information that they were on their way to kill a former member of their "group." After almost risking their lives, they finally escaped from being held hostage. In all of the commotion from their escape, the kids set off to warn the man about his former gangster members coming to kill him.

Without giving away what happens after they inform him about the gangsters coming to kill him, could tell

you that they make it a lot farther away from Oklahoma then they intended. Did they make it to California or not? (read the book to find out!)

Joe R. Lansdale wrote a very detailed book about three very courageous kids who never gave up on what they had dreamed of and planned. It was also a novel of young love growing throughout a long journey. In the end, Jack and Jane May or May not end up having young love and spending many days together while raising Tony. I would strongly encourage anybody who is looking for a book not only about adventure, but a book about love and sacrifices that could change ones life forever.

Andy says

I have read some Lansdale in the past and I am a big fan of his southern setting and his characters and development of those characters. However, while cruising through the library I didn't really remember that Lansdale was around, and I looked at my bookshelf and saw his books, and a switch clicked and I thought, "Hey! Lansdale! Let's see what he has available." and viola! All the Earth, Thrown to the Sky. What I didn't know at the time was that this book was a YA book, but honestly, you couldn't really tell when reading it, because you will become so invested in the characters that you'll just want to read and read it.

The story follows Jack, Jane, and Tony after their parents die (Jack is not related to Mary or Tony, but their parents all meet an untimely end), and they decide that they have to leave Oklahoma. This story takes place during the Dust Bowl, so bring in Depression era story telling and characters to boot, and you have yourself a real treat.

This book is one of the best books I've read this year. I loved the characters, the heart of the story, the camaraderie, and the love that was seen from character to character. This book is a literary achievement that I put on the same level as The Book Thief in regard to YA lit. Loved every minute of it! Woowee!!!!

Lou says

This novel is Lansdales second young adult novel, Boar was his first, it is suitable for all ages, from young-adult upwards.

This was another fine example of the great storytelling that he can produce. The is being suitable for young adult contains no profanity or sex.

This story is about youth and loss, the main character a young man and two other individuals a brother and sister cross paths and bond with common harsh realities in their past and present and so they take to the road on a sort of journey to somewhere better, a place with hope, they set out on this path in search for something better rather than the land plagued with storms and dead kin that they have left behind.

When they travel along they encounter some bad people and get caught up in the middle of something they rather not. Some encounter new found emotions of love and they face some big decision making for young folk.

Amongst the tests they go through ultimately you hope that safety, justice and happiness reaches these main characters.

Lonsdale does so well telling stories that deal with the coming of age, justices and injustices. His stories hook you in with uncomplicated but skilled writing with the right words in the right places and memorable characters be they a villain or a heroine. He places you in his characters and puts you in touch with the human playing field their emotions and behaviors and places them in situations that produce greatness, love, hope, fear, courage, cowardliness and happiness.

Some may think this all sounds over the top but read at least four and let me know.

Read these

Edgar award winning novel The Bottoms

Edge of Dark Water

Savage Season (Hap Collins and Leonard Pine, #1)

Excerpts i chose

“But I didn’t want to be like that. I wanted to be like the heroes in books I had read about, who could stand up against anything and keep on coming. I hated to say it about my Daddy, but he had taken the cowards way out, and I hadn’t never been no coward and wasn’t about to start. Still, I broke down and started crying, and I couldn’t stop, though there didn’t seem to be much wet in me. The world was dry, and so was I, and all the time I cried I heaved, like someone sick with nothing left inside to throw up.”

“California was a place some said everyone ought to go. Said there was work there and there wasn’t no sandstorms and there was plenty of water that didn’t taste like grit. After all that happened, I was thinking on it. It wasn’t like I had a lot to pack.”

“As we rode, I looked alongside the roads and saw the sand piled there, and beyond the edge of the roads was more sand. It reminded me of the pictures I had seen in schoolbooks of the Arabian Desert, and it occurred to me that I had near forgot how things had looked before the great winds had come and picked up all the good earth and thrown it to the sky. Thrown it up there and whirled it around, sorted out what good topsoil remained- and that wasn’t much-and then chucked it all over Oklahoma and beyond. It was hard to remember how things had looked when the woods were thick and the fields were high with green corn and rows of shiny green beans and peanuts and potato tops thick and standing up tall, letting you know if you dug down under them, you’d find some fat potatoes for cleaning, cutting, and frying. Peanuts to parch and crack and eat raw. Plenty of peas to pick and boil up with a chunk of pork rind. All gone now. It was hard to remember the last time I was truly clean. When there wasn’t any dust under my collar, behind or in my ears, or in my hair. It was hard to remember being able to walk to school, or darn near anywhere except a field, and not have to stop to pour dust out of your shoes.

It was hard to remember when all the earth hadn’t been thrown to the sky.”

“I liked hearing her sing. She had a high sweet voice that cut the air like a sharp knife and then came floating down soft as a kitten’s belly.”

Joe R. Lansdale on EDGE OF DARK WATER

My Interview with Joe R. Lansdale

Ryan Thomas says

A bit straightforward for a Lansdale book, but still pretty good. I still prefer his wackier stuff, though.

Steve says

Really good, really well-written coming-of-age story set in/around Oklahoma during the dustbowl era. The author just seems to have an uncanny knack in being able to capture settings and the deep emotions of all of his characters. Quite amazing.

Marvin says

Lansdale's YA novel about three children orphaned and adrift during the Great Depression starts out as not very YA. In the first few pages, one child's father hangs himself, another father dies under a overturn tractor to the indifference of his daughter and son, and the three children are stealing a car. Lansdale was never a writer who would sugarcoat life and he doesn't do it here. Yet *All the Earth, Throw to the Sky* will thrill the teen who wants their protagonists to be full of life and smarter, if not always wiser, than the adults. Lansdale's depiction of Oklahoma and East Texas in the 30s is filled with dust, poverty, and shady characters. In fact, Pretty Boy Floyd makes an appearance and he is one of the nicest adults in the book. I caught a bit of Huck Finn influence in this story with Huck being played by a smart if not too honest little girl. In fact it is Jane, who steals most of the scenes with her smart-alecky ways and her refusal to give up her dreams even if she isn't sure what those dreams are. Compared to *The Bottoms* and The Hap and Leonard series, this novel will probably be considered a lesser work by most Lansdale fans. But I can see a lot of kids turned on by the prose and imagination of Lansdale and seeking out his more adult works. Wouldn't that be a school librarian's nightmare!
