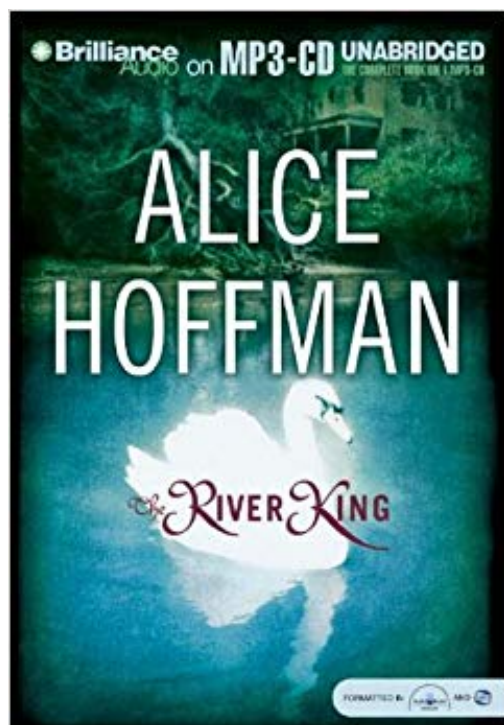


The River King by Laural Merlington, Alice Hoffman



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For more than a century, the small town of Haddan, Massachusetts, has been divided, as if a line was drawn down the center of Main Street, separating those born and bred in the village from those who attend the prestigious Haddan School. But one October night the two worlds are thrust together due to an inexplicable death, and the town's divided history is revealed in all its complexity. The lives of everyone involved are unraveled: from Carlin Leander, the fifteen-year-old girl who is as loyal as she is proud, to Betsy Chase, a woman running from her own destiny; from August Pierce, a boy who unexpectedly finds courage in his darkest hour, to Abel Grey, the police officer who refuses to let unspeakable actions—both past and present—slide by without notice. *Entertainment Weekly* has declared that Alice Hoffman's worlds are "replete with miracles" and *The Boston Globe* has praised her "iridescent prose, taut narrative suspense, and alluring atmosphere."

"An inventive, romantic, and insightful storyteller, Hoffman touches everyone and everything with her magic wand, illuminating the power of emotion and exquisite mysteries of life." —*Booklist*



Reviews of the **The River King** by Loral Merlington, Alice Hoffman

INvait

It was a pleasure to immerse myself again in one of Ms. Hoffman's mystical universes, where weather, plants and wildlife influence and reflect the characters' joys and tragedies and vice versa. I was once again touched by the compassionate honesty with which Ms. Hoffman renders tragedy. That said, *The River King* seemed like *Turtle Moon* transplanted to a different setting and not quite so effectively. There were so many characters, so much activity, and so much time spent on the omniscient narrator's description of the environment, that the two main couples never came fully into focus. In some cases developments in their respective stories were created with such hurried brushstrokes that they seemed like afterthoughts. Betsy and Abel never achieved the burning intensity of Lucy and Julian; the journey of Carlin and Gus is rendered tenderly and emotionally, but also hastily at times.

Na

I love Alice Hoffman's books; but I thought nothing could compare to "Turtle Moon" (for it's quirkiness) and "Practical Magic" (for it's supernaturally infused homey adventure). "The River King" is a little of both, I think. I don't want to sneak in any spoilers, because the suspense is wonderful. It's a complex story, with complex characters. I couldn't put the book down. Each time I thought the story was winding down, the author would throw a surprise, and I'd get revved up again.

kewdiepie

I've never found anything by Alice Hoffman that I didn't like. Her prose is beautiful, and I love how she entwines it with the natural world. This book is, among other things, a study in the damage done by rejection born of superficial values. IMO it underlines the misery inflicted in our schools. It is about enduring love as well.

BOND

To truly experience Alice Hoffman's work, you need the ability to suspend all rational thought for a bit. Hoffman's tales are conjured with both a writer's voice and a magician's wand. She is never boring.

In *THE RIVER KING*, Ms. Hoffman tells the story of a small town in Massachusetts...she divides the town into the haves and the have nots. An elite private school adds to the class distinctions. When one of Haddan School's students is found drowned in the troubled Haddan River, city and students alike are effected.

Haddan School's own troubled past becomes part of Hoffman's tapestry. The fragrance of roses appears in the middle of winter. Fish appear out of nowhere. The dead boy's image shows up in photographs. Bees swarm in October. Mysterious illness strikes students. No one rests until the mystery is solved.

THE RIVER KING is one of Hoffman's best efforts. It is not light, easy, summertime reading. It is to be savored and will linger with you long after you've finished. Like Hoffman's past work, some mysteries are solved. Some will never be.

That's what it's like to read a good Alice Hoffman story.

Enjoy!

Kann

Alice Hoffman never disappoints. For those who saw the movie *The River King*, as with *Practical Magic*, you do not know the books. Rich characters and a flow to the stories that carry you along for the ride. And what a fine ride it is. If you want fast paced action or high drama, read James Rollins or Dan Brown. But if you want to immerse yourself in character, with just a little magic thrown in --- and not always white kind --- this book is yet another Alice Hoffman win.

Hinewen

I like Alice Hoffman as a writer, and this book certainly had the potential to be a pot boiler. Great characters, nice magical references, but it appears Alice got to a certain page and decided to wrap it up. No rhyme, no reason.

The plot did not deserve this ending. I'm left feeling very unfulfilled. I'm not even certain of the reason for the name of the book, let alone why one of the better characters is killed off early on and we're not ever given a satisfactory reason. And then other characters appear but don't seem to stay around or have any purpose, like Sean Byers.

And Betsy running away with Abe???? The pharmacist suddenly discussing everything with his wife. This isn't the result of magic, but lack of imagination maybe? None of the actions or character/plotline prepares the reader for the way Alice wraps up a tidy little ending, unfit for the great beginning. Quite a let down. Did Alice run out of steam on this one? I won't give up on Hoffman, but this was not her best effort.

Rare

Leaves begin to change, the days start to shorten, a chill is in the air, and kids start back to school. The kids in Alice Hoffman's new novel are attending the prestigious Hadden School near Hamilton MA. Hoffman manages to wonderfully convey an atmosphere rich with the changes of the seasons. You can almost smell the scent of burning leaves, and wild roses. At the center of the novel are a series of love stories, and here she somewhat reworks her previous themes of star crossed lovers and hopeless pining. Woven through this is the kind of light handed mysticism she writes so well about with a death of one of the characters and his reemergence in one of the characters lives. Although I didn't enjoy this book as much as some of her earlier books such as *"7th Heaven"* or *"Second Nature"*, it's still a charming story to curl up by the fireplace by.

...many men might pick up this book and think that it's a women's book, but do yourself a favor and read it, along with *Practical Magic*. She writes with a prose style that makes many other authors seem clunky by comparison, moving smoothly from one character to another. It's a style that allows her to examine issues from different standpoints, or to move tangentially, taking the narrative into a sub-issue. Rather than characterize her writing as a landscape, I'd say it compared well to a symphony.

Ms. Hoffman's subjects are quite moving. While death and love are her subjects, the possibility of love bridging the gulf between life and death is gently, subtly probed. In my own case, it's not minnows. It's red balloons.

A fine work; you'll find yourself looking up from the book from time-to-time and savoring the images she has invoked, and of loved ones living and dead.

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