



Walking to Gatlinburg

Howard Frank Mosher

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A stunning and lyrical Civil War thriller, *Walking to Gatlinburg* is a spellbinding story of survival, wilderness adventure, mystery, and love in the time of war.

Morgan Kinneson is both hunter and hunted. The sharp-shooting 17-year-old from Kingdom County, Vermont, is determined to track down his brother Pilgrim, a doctor who has gone missing from the Union Army. But first Morgan must elude a group of murderous escaped convicts in pursuit of a mysterious stone that has fallen into his possession.

It's 1864, and the country is in the grip of the bloodiest war in American history. Meanwhile, the Kinneson family has been quietly conducting passengers on the Underground Railroad from Vermont to the Canadian border. One snowy afternoon Morgan leaves an elderly fugitive named Jesse Moses in a mountainside cabin for a few hours so that he can track a moose to feed his family. In his absence, Jesse is murdered, and thus begins Morgan's unforgettable trek south through an apocalyptic landscape of war and mayhem.

Along the way, Morgan encounters a fantastical array of characters, including a weeping elephant, a pacifist gunsmith, a woman who lives in a tree, a blind cobbler, and a beautiful and intriguing slave girl named Slidell who is the key to unlocking the mystery of the secret stone. At the same time, he wrestles with the choices that will ultimately define him – how to reconcile the laws of nature with religious faith, how to temper justice with mercy. Magical and wonderfully strange, *Walking to Gatlinburg* is both a thriller of the highest order and a heartbreaking odyssey into the heart of American darkness.

Walking to Gatlinburg Details

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Author : Howard Frank Mosher

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From Reader Review Walking to Gatlinburg for online ebook

tomlinton says

It's rare recently
that I have a book in hand
that I want to slow down and savor
This a Civil War era thriller
but it's not about the war per se
When you read
keep the unabridged dictionary handy
It will increase your enjoyment
Better yet read it on a Kindle
The dictionary is built in

salinthebay says

Because I am interested in Civil War historical fiction, I checked out the GRs reviews and downloaded it on my Kindle. (After reading Wild, I thought another walking adventure novel would be novel...)
At first, I was delighted with the author's use of 19th cy Yankee vernacular, story line and his beautiful descriptions of Northeast Kingdom Vermont, and the Quaker Underground RR. But, as 30% neared, the plot and sub plots became so confounded that I was eager to put it down, rather than finish it! Morgan, the central character's journey becomes horrific with twists and unimaginable turns that one wonders what hallucinogens the author was taking! Definitely a disappointment.

Sheila Mulcahy says

What a fantastic odyssey of heroic and monstrous proportions as a seventeen-year-old abolitionist leaves his Northern Kingdom home in pursuit of murdering, marauding escaped convicts across the northern and southern mountains while searching for his missing brother, a Union doctor. Episodes of adventure, survival, friendship, hunting and being hunted surround this coming-of-age story during the Civil War. Excellent writing that keeps the story taut, visceral and exciting. Four Stars

Todd Stockslager says

Morgan Kinneson, from Kingdom County, Vermont, does indeed walk to Gatlinburg and even deeper into the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee (but not to the North Carolina side--the water tastes bad there, a mountaineer tells him) during the last year of the Civil War. But this is neither a standard road story nor a Civil War story. It is more fable than historical fiction. It is odd, disconcerting, and elegiac--the closest comparison I can think of in terms of its journey, scope, and reach for the fantastic is Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon: A Novel*.

Morgan starts his quest in search of his brother after he has made a grave mistake in judgment that cost a man who had been entrusted to his care his life. His brother is likewise considered dead, most likely killed in the great conflagration at Gettysburg in 1863. But nine months later, Morgan will attempt to atone for his sin and confirm his faith that his brother is alive.

I use these spiritual terms advisedly, because there is much that is spiritual in Morgan's journey. He sees things, even the gray things of life, through the flinty eyes of a native Vermonter in shades of only black and white. But this is no spiritualized mythology. This is a real journey through a fantastic time and place. At times author Mosher walks the line of fact and fable so finely that you have to re-read to be sure he's meant what he said. Did Morgan really meet a mad old general firing anything he can cram into the barrel of a cannon at the birds surrounding a deserted fort? Did he really inherit an elephant from a dying circus Gypsy, and then use the elephant to tow a canal boat on the Erie Canal and clear a log jam on a river?

The answer is yes, and the wonder is amazing. We see a landscape, a nation, and a people,, even far north of Gettysburg, scarred and changed by war, willing and even forced to see and believe the unfathomable. Morgan see's and processes as well.

And he survives, always taking the direct approach to his adventures and trials, yet coming away changed, as the journey south toward his brother and his destination teach him new ways to think and believe, without changing who he is.

But don't let me scare you away thinking this is a deep mystical book that walks with its head in the clouds. It is firmly planted in joy, pain, and the dirt of real life. Indeed, one may say Morgan is the most optimistic person in the world he inhabits in spite of or perhaps because of his journey.

Oh, and I haven't told you one thing you need to know about Morgan that makes his character the more true yet the more fabulously heroic--he is 17 years old when he starts on his journey, and only 18 when it ends, with a lifetime of wisdom you will only glimpse on the very last page, which you will read to the end.

Best book I've read in a long time.

Jo Ann says

Beacause we were headed to Gatlinburg for a family reunion a few weeks ago, I chose to read this book last month, before the reunion...the premise was interesting and fun, and I tend to love books about the Civil War. Morgan, a 17 year old Quaker, tracks his brother Pilgrim, through NY, PA, Gettysburg, MD, West VA, KY, TN, and has a plethora of adventures along the way...I enjoyed it, but not as much as I anticipated I would.

Kyra says

An old-fashioned picaresque novel but grimmer than expected, centred as it is around the violent aftermath of the most violent war to rend this country. There were spots in this book where I was outright terrified. All in all, an unexpected firecracker of a read. See if you can spot the one editing blooper (hint: its in the caves).

Sue says

This book was touted as "magical and wonderfully strange," but I'm afraid I only found it strange. I wanted so much to like it -- a thriller set in the Civil War with elements of the fantastic sounded right up my alley. After all, I loved *The Terror*, Dan Simmons' mixture of the fantastic and the historical. But the story in *Walking to Gatlinburg* simply could not engage my committed interest. Instead, I found the mixture of the realistic and the fantastic annoying and sometimes silly (really, an Amish woman who lives in a tree?) and the constant movement back and forth interrupted the rhythm of what could otherwise have been a strong historical thriller. All in all, just not my cup of tea.

Kiersten says

There are scores of books that I read and promptly forget about. Some, if I see the cover or read the title, I can remember a bit about. Others escape me completely: I can read a full description of the book and still not remember anything else about it. Howard Frank Mosher's books do not fall into the category of forgettable books. They are so beautifully strange and interesting. He's also a wonderful, lyrical writer. *Walking to Gatlinburg* is set during the Civil War, although, with the exception of one flashback scene, none of the action takes place on the battlefield. It's written in a magical realism style. Think of *Cold Mountain* meets *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Or maybe *Big Fish* would be more accurate. It brings up interesting questions about war, death, good and evil, and the nature of man. However, although it has the feel of a fable or allegory at times, it doesn't come with an easy moral at the end. This book was very violent and quite graphic (both in terms of gore and sexuality) in places, so keep that in mind before you pick it up.

Phyllis says

Good, believable historical story. The people Morgan meets along the journey to find his brother are very interesting.
As with *Chris*, the ending hits you in the face but is acceptable.

Deborah Sloan says

Walking to Gatlinburg: A Novel

It is not often that a writer can successfully integrate the concept of language into writing a book. Howard Frank Mosher in *Walking to Gatlinburg* has not just one dialect (common English) in but 3 or more language dialects including that of the 1860 slaves and hidden from society hillbilly that people rarely are exposed to. I truly would give this book 4 1/2 stars just for the dialects alone. I loved it.

Seventeen year old Morgan Kinneson starts his journey from the small family farm in Vermont to search for his brother Pilgrim Kinneson after first losing his charge of a slave he was delivering to freedom to killers sent to find the slave and a slave girl and boy. With clues from a stone the slave left to him Morgan sets out to find the missing slave girl who travels with a young boy in hopes that it will lead him to his brother Pilgrim who by last reports was a field doctor at Gettysberg.

Morgan's travels along the Underground Railway takes all sorts of interesting turns with the people he meets

and in the process seventeen year old Morgan becomes a man just as one would expect of anyone who lived during such a violent time as the civil war period we witness in Walking to Gatlinberg. Some of these people were downright crazy but we aren't sure if that is just the way these people always are or if it's the war that caused them to be this way. In any case; Walking to Gatlinberg is a marvelous read that I loved giving us just a glimpse into the lives of the people who lived through the Civil War era and I know you will love it too! Be sure to pick up a copy if you love any part of history!

First chapter available online

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Suzanne GT says

I almost gave up on this book. The strange combination of historical fiction and fantasy was disconcerting. I'm glad that I persisted. Mosher is a master at creating scenes that are so clear that they play like movie as you read. It is not surprising to me that some of his other books have been made into movies, it is surprising that this book has not yet been made into a movie. The take away? War is hell and filled with insanity and depravity. There is no moral high ground. All are guilty.

Lori says

really wanted to like this as historical fiction is one of my favorite genres but just didn't. the dialogue was really tedious and difficult to follow

Christopher Hicks says

I really liked the premise of this book...Morgan Kinneson, a young conductor on the Underground Railroad goes off on a quest during the Civil War to find his missing brother. There were three things that Mosher excelled at in this work:

1. Building characters -- A lot of times, novelists can get caught up in the characterization of their own protagonist, foregoing a better understanding of the supporting roles. Mosher, however, built a great cast of secondary characters, all connected to each other in some way. From the opinionated, yet bewitchingly beautiful runaway slave Slidell, to the cavalcade of deviant killers on Morgan's trail, every character is great in its own manner. My personal favorite: Cobbler Tom.
2. Use of regional dialect -- Morgan interacts with the local townsfolk throughout his journey, from the Canadian border to the Cajun Bayou. Mosher masters all the little regionalisms of each dialect to perfection.
3. Creating settings -- Mosher has a way of chronicling the varying landscapes Morgan encounters during his adventure that many have already compared to Charles Frazier's Cold Mountain. That's a very fitting--and flattering--comparison, but one that is well-deserved.

The main criticism I have of this book, however, is the way Mosher glossed over major action sequences. One minute, Morgan is trekking through dense woodlands, the next he's in an all-out fight for his life with a murderous maniac, and then he's back on his way in the blink of an eye. It felt like the final showdown barely lasted a full page. With all the richness of Mosher's characters, it would have been better to delve deeper into the skirmishes among them along the way. Overall, 3 1/2 to 4 stars is an appropriate rating for this story.

Pamela Batson says

I was a little disappointed with the ending. I would have liked more closer on some of the characters.

Cissy says

Though beautifully, creatively written, and though I couldn't put it down, this novel irritated me. It was labeled Civil War-era historical fiction, so I was eager to try it; but it was really more like a dark, almost mystical thriller. During the Civil War. The entire story meandered through such sordid, seedy settings and characters as to leave me feeling like the whole world is purely evil. And though I certainly liked the main character, his journey was so horrific and tragic that it almost became ridiculous. Ugh. Maybe I disliked the novel because it betrayed my expectations.
