

A river runs through it essay

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A River Runs Through It Norman MacLean's autobiographical novel, A River Runs Through It, is story of two boys, their father and the common passion of fly fishing.

The father in this story is a minister Reverend MacLean treats fly fishing with the same intensity as his religion. The novella begins " In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly-fishing". Reverend McLean a strict parent, but encouraging and obviously involved in his sons day to day life, though the deepest part of their communication is done via the lessons in fly fishing He expects perfection of his sons and the older son, Norman worked hard to please his father and succeed.

The younger boy, Paul was distracted and impulsive. The family bond is strong but there is always a sense of the need to strive to be perfect or better. The message from the father to his sons is that if you can learn to fly fish correctly, to understand the river, the fish and yourself, and fish without one wasted motion, you will have acquired some useful skills. Joining with nature and understand the earth is a goal for the Reverend and what he wants his sons to strive for as well.

The role of perfection plays out throughout the novella. Reverend MacLean was rigid and perfectionist but also a lover of nature with the ultimate respect for the earth and its creatures. His four-count rhythm for fly casting was an example of this organized style where things were only done right.

As Norman states in the book, " If our father had his say, nobody who did not know how to fish would be allowed to disgrace a fish by catching him." As the boys grow up, Norman leaves for colleges and ultimately

has success as a Professor of literature. Almost surprisingly, Paul also finishes college though he stays in Montana and become a well known writer. Paul love of Montana is so that he would not consider leaving for college. He says he will never leave Montana. For Paul, perfection seems to involve being be at home, satisfied by what come naturally to him and what he has talent for.

He is the best fly fisherman. Unfortunately Paul's drinking and gambling haunt him and his life throwing him off and resulting in the tragic ending of his life as he is murdered. The role of achievement and perfection runs throughout the story as Norman strives to achieve and fulfill his first goal of being a minister like his father and later a professor.

Paul has his own success as he better fly fisherman and becomes a well known and respected writer as an adult. Paul's perfections seem to come from pure talent and love rather than the hard work and focus of his brother. For Paul, a degree of perfection dominates his life as he always strives to be better and analyzes his mistakes. For Paul the lessons of perfection in fishing do not carry over. As they were growing up, Norman seems so

obviously the smarter, perfectionist brother who has great understanding and analyzes life. Paul, rather than analyzing and striving, simply is his life and yet reaches his own success and perfection in that way. I think is the important message in the book. The book, though told through fishing and religion as the two major actives of the family, is not really about either of these things.

The story has more to do with family bonding, communication and the different way individual people utilize the lessons learned into their own home. Though the MacLean boys grew up together with identical experiences, the lessons and messages from the parents, primarily their father, played out differently for each of them. The Reverend MacLean's attention to perfection regarding fly fishing and religions did not extend to actual communication in the family. In fact, the time they spent together, while no doubt important and bonding was never able to fully replace the needed communication. Communication was a weakness in this family and all of the attention towards perfection in other areas could not make up for the weakness. Norman wonders later in the book if he could have done something differently or better, that might have changed the course of his brother's life and saved him. The book notes that fishermen see the world of fishing as separate, perfect world that is apart from the rest. While fishing, Paul always seemed to be in perfect sync with the world and was skilled and graceful.

Grace was of utmost importance to his father. The perfection didn't always follow in to the rest of the world, where Paul succumbed to his problems with drinking and gambling. For the MacLean's, the river is a source of healing and reconciliation. No matter what happens in the world away from fly fishing, its beauty, grace and perfection can be found at the river.

Paul was perfection at the river, fly-fishing.