

The river of earth

Food & Diet



The River of Earth The novel River Of Earth by James Still is a story about life in the Appalachia just before The Great Depression. The story provides a very clear description of the problems and challenges the mountain people faced after the settlement of their land. Even though the novel is shadowed by other writings of the time period dealing with poor southern life, it is still considered a great neglected masterpiece. The story is about a family that considers awkward. They struggle to put enough food on the table for the entire family, most of the time the mother barely eats.

They live in a small smoke house that is very cramped and cluttered because of the number of people living in it. The Father is waiting for the coal mines to open so he can work, while the mother takes care of the kids, the family does not complain; they feel blessed for what they have. The father is very proud and doesn't turn anyone away when they need help. In the book he allowed a group of miners to take most of his beans from the garden to help keep their families fed.

The mother is a very strongwilled woman. She never lets anything bring her down; when the family begins to have trouble with food she suggests that they begin growing a garden and providing for themselves. The kids are smart and goodwilled from what they are taught by their parents. They display good moral values in their characters. The garden is a source of life for the family in the book. This is so because as times get harder they grow together and the garden also becomes more and heartier.

They begin to have more food for their dinners, this helps the family keep their spirits up and continue to hope for good blessings to be brought to the family such as the mines opening. As the family grows stronger they begin to

add to their source of food. Instead of eating only soup and vegetables and potatoes, they add begin to eat meat. They own a guinea Chicken which starts to lay a large amount of eggs they let hatch and raise. The kids are not embarrassed about what they eat, they seem happy for what they have.

The father makes the children go to school because he feels that everyone should learn the basics of academics such as reading and writing to help them survive in the world. At first they are scared and don't want to go because they have never been and feel they are too young. As they continue to grow they start to show improvements and gain confidence in their ability to perform in the classroom. They fear for the teacher being run off because the older kids don't like him and some of the parents don't appreciate his teaching methods.

The main character and his sister hope he stays so they will continue to learn. The main character is sent by his father to stay with his grandmother. This is where you learn that the strong heart runs in the family. This is true because she is a seventy-eight year old woman and will still patch out two acres of corn and make enough bread for the winter to do what she can to keep her family feed. In her old age she hasn't kept the best health. Some days she is too sick to get out of the bed. The main character takes care of her he cooks all the meals for her and helps her start to feel better.

Living with her he hears stories of his father and how he is an honest man. Also his grandmother tells him about his grandfather and all the great things he would do. Living with his grandmother is a great experience for the main character because she brings him history of his family and teaches him many things on how to live a content life. Also being away from home helps

himself grow as a person. It teaches to stick up for himself and make his own decisions without the influence of others. When the main character returns to his family he learns that the baby had died from croup.

Also the family moves to a farm they rented in Flaxpatch on Little Angus. Here they plant crops and farm together as a family. The father has returned from the mines and decides he wishes to move back because he heard they would stay open through the winter. They go and he works there for a while and earns decent money, enough to support his family. During the winter the main character's grandmother dies. It's a sad moment for the entire family. This is so because she was such a strong figure in the book even with her bad health.

After the winter the father decides to stop mining and move the family to a place where he can find a different job or start a farm. In the end the main character imagines his grandmother talking to him about his baby sibling crying. This story gives great detail to a life lived by the mountain families of the Appalachia. It puts you in the shoes of a young boy who is growing up in the hard time period just before The Great Depression. James Still does a great job of capturing the culture of the time period. Unfortunately, this book will always remain a neglected masterpiece.