

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Homestead is a touching and compelling memoir chronicling a woman's life as it starts anew in the open land of the West. Annick Smith moved with her husband and their four boys to the fertile valley of the Big Blackfoot River in 1959. Shortly after they established their home on the 163 acres of ranch land, Annick's husband, David, died; although not unexpected, his death was still devastating.

Her love for the land that serves as a haven for her and her family is evident in this testament of endurance and courage. She writes of her friendship with Norman Maclean, whom she worked with on the production of *A River Runs Through It*, and she eloquently makes the case for preserving the fragile wild environments that are our sacred places.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Annick Smith was born in Paris and raised in Chicago. She married David Smith, and together they decided to try to fulfill their dream of owning a ranch in the open spaces of Montana. *Homestead* is a personal account of the experiences they endured together and those she managed alone, after Dave's death, with her four boys.

In addition to coproducing *A River Runs Through It*, Annick Smith was the executive producer of *Heartland* and a

cofounder of the Sundance Film Institute. With William Kittredge, she coedited *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology* and regularly contributes to magazines such as *Outside*, *Travel and Leisure*, and *Story*. Her short story, "It's Come to This," was one of three selections that won *Story* magazine's National Magazine Award for Fiction in 1991. It was included in *Best American Short Stories 1992* and since then has been anthologized many times.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Is there a special place in your life—another part of the country or world, or perhaps another corner of the environment you live in every day? What does it mean to you and why?
- How does Smith's cultural background shape her experiences? How has your background shaped the experiences in your life?
- Did her husband's illness have an effect on Smith's independence? Do you think her life and experiences with the land would have unfolded in the same way if he had not died at such a young age?
- How does Smith deal with the expected yet tragic loss of her husband? How does she see her relationship to the land as a continuance to the values she shared with her husband?
- Explore the idea of building relationships—with friends and family, the

land, or history. How do these relationships interweave in *Homestead*?

- Have you ever felt compelled to completely relocate, to change your environment? If so, what would it take to follow through on the compulsion? What would prevent you from doing it?
- Which essays were your favorites? Why?

FOR FURTHER READING:

An American Childhood by Annie Dillard (HarperCollins, 1988)

A River Runs Through It and Other Stories by Norman Maclean (University of Chicago Press, 1979)

Young Men & Fire by Norman Maclean (University of Chicago Press, 1993)

The Solace of Open Spaces by Gretel Ehrlich (Viking, 1986)

The Ninemile Wolves by Rick Bass (Ballantine, 1993)

Winter: Notes from Montana by Rick Bass (Houghton Mifflin, 1992)

Hole in the Sky: A Memoir by William Kittredge (Vintage, 1993)

Montana Spaces: Essays in Celebration of Montana edited by William Kittredge (Lyons & Buford, 1996)

Who Owns the West? by William Kittredge
(Mercury House, 1996)

Montana 1948 by Larry Watson
(Milkweed Editions, 1993)

Justice by Larry Watson
(Milkweed Editions, 1995)

OTHER WORKS BY ANNICK SMITH:

Big Bluestem. (Council Oak Books and
The Nature Conservancy, 1996)

The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology.
Coeditor with William Kittredge
(Montana Historical Society Press, 1988)

HOMESTEAD

by Annick Smith

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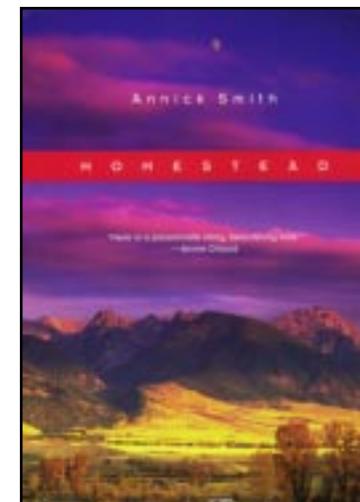
<http://www.milkweed.org>



A MILKWEED READING GUIDE

HOMESTEAD

by Annick Smith



"Here is a woman to admire and love. 'You can fall in love with space and sky,' Annick Smith writes. 'A girl from Chicago can go West and find mountains.' . . . A passionate story, beautifully told."
—Annie Dillard

"Powerful. . . . Perfect for those who love rugged country and understand that wild places own us more than we own them."
—U.S. News and World Report

"Annick Smith may have been born in Paris, but she is a true hero of the American West. . . . She is the real thing. She shoots from the heart. She gives us a lot to think about—talk about. Read her with a friend."
—Sally Smith, A Woman's Place
Bookstore, Salt Lake City, Utah