

LEAVING CHEYENNE


A NOVEL

"A rarity . . . funny, wonderful, heart-breaking, exhilarating."
—*The New York Times Book Review*

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From the Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *Lonesome Dove* Larry McMurtry comes the second novel about love and loss on the great plains of Texas. From 1920's ranching to range cowboys and WWII grief, McMurtry is the undisputed father of the Western literary epic.

Leaving Cheyenne traces the loves of three West Texas characters as they follow that sundown trail: Gideon Fry, the serious rancher; Johnny McCloud, the free-spirited cowhand; and Molly Taylor, the sensitive woman they both love and who bears them each a son. Told in alternating perspectives over sixty years, *Leaving Cheyenne* follows their dreams, secrets, and grief against a changing American landscape.

Tragic circumstances mark the trail, but fans of McMurtry's distinctive style will cherish his unforgettable characters and pathos of the American West.

Leaving Cheyenne Details

Date : Published August 1st 2002 by Simon Schuster (first published 1962)

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Author : Larry McMurtry

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From Reader Review Leaving Cheyenne for online ebook

Nikki Conley says

I read this at least once a year. It may be my favorite book. Written in 3 sections, each from one of the main character's viewpoints, the story is original and heartbreaking just like life.

Marc Faoite says

This is a fine book and one that I must have been quite daring in its day (it was first published in 1962). It follows three main characters - Gid, Molly, and Johnny. Each claim a portion of the narrative in the book's three sections. Set on the sprawling ranch lands of Texas it roughly traces the first half of the twentieth century and features some of the changes taking place, particularly the appearance of the automobile. The characters' relationship to each other, while relatively uncomplicated, is far from conventional - running counter to societal and religious norms. It is beautifully written and at times laugh-out-loud funny. McMurtry breathes life into his characters and the trials of ranch life and life in general, following the characters from vibrant youth to aching old age. I suspect this is a book that will stay with me for a long time. Definitely a worthwhile read. I have a few other McMurtry novels on my to-read shelf. Having read Leaving Cheyenne I'm looking forward to reading them all the more.

Cecilia says

A western love story set in and around Archer County, Texas, Leaving Cheyenne is beautifully narrated by three members of a lifelong love triangle. It is a love story in three dimensions: romantic, plutonic and love of place. The language, characters and story ring achingly true. Gid, Molly and Johnny's story is worth reading for almost any reader. Whether you like romance, westerns, Texas literature or literary fiction you will enjoy this book, as it excels in all these genres.

Paul Wilner says

McMurtry's first novel, prefiguring the rest of his work.

Wonderfully done, with his trademark understanding of the ways of women, and the complicated friendships between men, legacies of fathers and sons...

Doug says

Larry McMurtry is one of my two or three favorite authors. I've read everything he's written since Lonesome Dove and have now gone back to read some of his earlier work. As one might expect, he has refined his craft

as he's gone along. Don't get me wrong, this book was good, but it did not have the breadth of scope of much of his later work. Actually, it is easy to see this book as a presurser to Lonesome Dove in some respects. The main male characters, Gid and Johnny can easily be seen as prototypes for Woodrow and Gus and Molly as an amalgam of the female characters in the later book. I'm glad I found this one - a nice read.

Laurel says

Larry McMurtry is one of my favourite authors. Leaving Cheyenne did not disappoint. This one of McMurtry's earlier works, before he wrote the wonderful Lonesome Dove, which I count among my all-time favourite novels. In fact, Gid and Johnny could be thought of as earlier, less fleshed out versions of Gus and Call. This book is so many things-a coming of age story, an unusual love triangle and romance, and a close-up look at the friendship between two very different men. Gid and Johnny share a great love of nature, the Texan wilderness, and a dislike for non-country living and culture, but frequently disagree as to how each should live his life. McMurtry can put you in the pasture, make you feel the heat as Gid and Johnny strain to dig new fence posts or fix a windmill in the blazing heat of summer. Frequently, I will stop reading, simply to marvel at the pictures he has painted in my mind. I finished this book in one day, and reluctantly turned the last few pages, guessing how it would end- with a lump in my throat and a sadness that this was one more McMurtry piece that I would never enjoy for the first time again. I will return to it another day, as I do with the Lonesome Dove trilogy, when I need to visit the land of great storytelling, where I am guaranteed to laugh and cry in equal measure.

Kathy says

I liked the fact that it spanned sixty years giving each character a voice over a 20 year time span, hard life to be a rancher.

Mike Harper says

I guess I'm a sucker for books like this, books that take me through the characters' lives and leave me happy to have made their acquaintances. I hate it that they don't get everything they deserve, and wish it could have turned out better for them. Their losses, though, are my gain.

This one's a complicated love story - all three characters love one another, even the two men - and, I guess, a nice evocation of Texas life in the twentieth century.

I think it's in a class with Wallace Stegner's Angle of Repose, which makes it one of my all-time favorites.

Kathy says

Larry McMurtry's books are unique. I NEVER thought I'd be one to enjoy a western until I first read Lonesome Dove. That is still my favorite, but I enjoyed this more modern 'western', too. McMurtry's characters are extremely well-drawn and his dialogue addictive. I start talking like a cowboy myself with 3 pages! As far as the PLOT of Leaving Cheyenne...well.. I wish there were actually more of it. A little suspense might be good as well, but the characters and their relationships carry the book - regardless. I was

there.

Lisa Beaulieu says

I read this the first time when I was 25, in a room with no furniture, straight through. I bawled like a baby. Now, 32 years later, it still makes me cry. But at 25, I had no idea how well McMurtry captures the nostalgia we age into, as well as how much of our young selves are still there within us. I can see my friends and husband and myself back at 20 as clearly as Johnny pictures Mary on the last page. Just heartbreaking, but in a good way. I've read this probably 5 times over the years, but I can't read it too much because, ouch!

Patrick says

McMurtry writes good characters, good dialog, and interesting stories. Forty years of a Texas triangle between Gideon, Molly, and Johnny.

Judy says

I love Larry McMurtry. He can get as sentimental as Charles Dickens does and it never bothers me. This was his second novel. Gideon Fry loves Molly, but so does his best friend Johnny McCloud. Molly loves them both but marries someone else. Meanwhile she sleeps with both of them on the side and bears each one a son.

Gideon, son of a rancher, stands to inherit his father's place. Johnny doesn't like to work for anyone else, styling himself as a free-ranging cowboy, but whenever he is out of money he works on the Fry ranch. He and Gideon have been best friends since they were kids. Molly loves men, loves sex, yet is stuck on her drunk of a father's farm taking care of him.

The story follows these three from birth into their sixties and each has a turn at telling how their lives intertwined. Nothing turns out the way they planned but they are always connected. Each one in various ways is about as lonely as a person can get.

I started the Tales of Texas theme with *News of the World* and it continues. The state is so big it could probably hold all the stories of the world and so big that possibly everyone in it is lonely to some degree or other. The stories of these three lives in the first half of the 20th century in north Texas, where the work and the heat and the wind and the dust were continuous, where electricity and cars came late, happen in a place where a person could live pretty much by his or her own inclinations. It has a bit of everything; humor, tragedy, friendship, adventure and some of the best conversations you will ever read. Most of all it is about love in all its oddity.

I laughed, I cried, I wanted to take each character and give them a good shaking, but each one would have done what they wanted anyway. I loved each one equally and I think they loved each other equally, so the love triangle could only be broken by death. Somehow the book was good for me, as all of McMurtry's books have been.

Tiffany Barbour-Bramlett says

What an amazing story.....

I've never read a "western" tour of book before and I'm glad this was my first one. I loved the characters in it so much I just couldn't quit reading it. I read it in just say could of days. What an amazing life these people had and the live that was shared between them was do during it leapt right of the pages at you. I loved Molly and all of her ideas on how easy life really is and how you truly can love someone and spend your entire life with them. It definitely shows how sometimes your chosen family usually are the best tour of family anyone can have. I loved this book I truly did. Nite I'm just wondering if any other McMurtry books will live up to this one out not. I do hope they will be at least this good.

Hollis Fishelson-holstine says

This was recommended to me by a dear 'book friend' as one of her all-time favorites. I was put off at the beginning, thinking 'oh dear - I'm not really into cowboy books', but the sweetness of the story and the characters soon won me over and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It's the story of three friends - two men and a woman - and how that friendship overcomes all the adversity and twists that life throws at us - love, work, and finding our inner selves.

Keri Daskam says

I never guessed I would be such a fan of Larry McMurtry books. The characters are robust and charming and old Texas is a marvelous place for a plot.

Dwight McGill says

Three lives

Beautifully unfolding tale of two flawed cowboys, different as rock and water, and the equally flawed woman who loves them both. It is vintage McMurtry: deceptively simple storytelling and simply wonderful characters who can break each others' hearts -- and the reader's. I miss them already. (Any McMurtry fan will see the seeds of Woodrow and Gus in Gid and Johnny.)

ehnonymus says

this book leaves me with no desire to read lonesome dove, even though heaps of folks think it is one of the best books ever. i think it is because i do not like mcmurtry's style; what some people regard as a lack of sentimentality i think of as being emotionally disengaged. i spent most of the novel being perplexed by the

main characters' motivations, rendering me completely unable to relate to them in any meaningful way. which is probably why i just didn't care about the characters, or for the book at all.

Jeff says

leaving cheyenne doesn't beg a rigorous academic analysis, and having just finished it, i'm not in a mood to provide one.

it's just a beautiful, moving novel i literally could not put down in my few non-working moments.

the characters are fully-drawn and mcmurtry inhabits equally their voices and emotions, dedicating each of the novel's three "books" to one of the central characters' perspectives.

this was my first brush with mcmurtry and i can guarantee it will not be my last; i'm told _leaving cheyenne_ isn't even his best.

it's an effortless read and comes with my strongest possible endorsement.

also, if i call you a "no-count sonofabitch," as i have everyone over the last week, you will know why.

Tim says

This is a pretty good book that almost makes it into the four star category, if it weren't for a kind of niggling thought in my mind that the three main characters, though all likable, seem as if they were painted with a brush that was a little too broad. It's the story of three people, two men and a woman, and the love triangle between them. There are three sections to the novel, and each is told from the point of view of each of the three main characters. Each section is at a different point in time, so the novel actually ends up encompassing the lifetimes of these three characters.

The first section, told from the point of view of one of the men, was fun but a little silly. I wasn't sure if I was going to keep reading the novel at some points in it. The second section, however, was quite a surprise. Told from the point of view of the female character, this section redefines what's happened so far in an intriguing, almost philosophical way. It deepens the events that have occurred already, and raises some interesting questions about marriage, love, children, and consequences. The third section somewhat continues these themes, but in a less pointed way.

Without the middle section, this book would have been a simplistic, entertaining read. The first and the third sections are still pretty much that way. However, the middle section informs the simplicity, and comments on it, and in the end makes it mean more than you would think.

Ron says

Larry McMurtry grew up among ranchers and cowboys, and his familiarity with this rural world makes his early novels set in and around Thalia, Texas, genuinely alive with rich detail and believable characters. He knows this world as it's seen and understood by the people who live there, both young and old. Most revealingly (and colorfully) he knows how they really talk to each other and to themselves -- not in the stereotypical ways often ascribed to country people.

You read "Leaving Cheyenne" slowly (the reference is to an old cowboy ballad, not the town in Wyoming), savoring the re-creation of real times and places, even when the story itself may move with no great urgency. The insights into characters and the observance of their behavior make them come alive on the page, and you simply enjoy the portrayals of them, their values, beliefs, and experiences.

Part I of this novel is told from the point of view of Gideon, a rancher's son, about 20 years old, around the year 1920. There is his friend Johnny, from a neighboring ranch, and the two of them compete for the affection of Molly, a barefoot, independent-minded girl who willfully and unwisely marries another boy, an oilfield roustabout.

In Part II, it is 20 years later, during WWII, and Molly, now widowed, remains friends with the middle-aged Gideon and Johnny, each of whom happens to have fathered one of her two sons. This part is told from her point of view. Gideon has married another woman (also unwisely) and has become a prosperous rancher, while Johnny works for him, content to be a happy-go-lucky cowboy. Molly lives alone, her sons off to war, and yearns for the company of each of her two old friends and lovers.

In Part III, it is again 20 years later, about 1960 (the novel was published in 1962), and the three characters are now much older. Told from the point of view of Johnny, this section is farcically comical. Meanwhile, Gideon is haunted with guilt for his infidelities with Molly, and Johnny, as he says, has never lost a night's sleep feeling shame for anything he's ever done.

Written in 20-year jumps, the novel gives a sense of how quickly life passes and how people remain the adolescents they once were even as they age. We see that choices made in haste cannot be undone and can leave a life-long legacy of regret. Yet there is also solace in affection, loyalty, and tenderness of heart. The novel celebrates the special quality of friendship among friends who have lived their whole lives together in the same small rural community. And over the years, there is the land -- and working the land -- to ground their rural lives with purpose.

I recommend this novel, along with the author's "Horseman, Pass By," to anyone with an interest in cowboys and ranching. McMurtry captures rural western life and character in rich detail.
