



The Longest Road: A Novel

Jeanne Williams

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The story of a young woman's journey across America during the Dust Bowl years from a *New York Times*–bestselling “master novelist” (*The Denver Post*).

After a violent dust storm leaves their mother dead and the family farm in ruins, twelve-year-old Laurie Field and her younger brother, Buddy, believe their world has ended when their grieving, debt-ridden father brings them to live with their reprobate grandfather in the Oklahoma Panhandle, promising to send for them when he finds one of those fabled jobs luring thousands to California.

Abandoned and afraid, the children find hope in the songs taught them by Johnny Morrigan, an itinerant oil field worker who hitched a ride with the family on his way to Texas. Desperate to escape their brutal grandfather, Laurie and Buddy hop a train clanging west and become fall in with a hobo named Way after he saves them from a sinister tramp.

In California, the children find only heartbreak, so they and Way set out for Texas in the hopes of reuniting with Johnny Morrigan. Like the fellow travelers they encounter on the roads and rails crisscrossing America, Laurie, Buddy, and Way take joy in simple pleasures such as a campfire meal, a starry night, and a song. They learn firsthand the kindness ordinary folk can show to those even poorer. At last, in lusty Texas oil field towns, they find work, Morrigan, and a deadly menace as Laurie grows from innocent girl to vibrant woman.

A riveting story of hardship, adventure, and romance, *The Longest Road* pays glorious tribute to the men and women who kept the American dream alive during the Great Depression.

The Longest Road: A Novel Details

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Revel This says

Great read!

Loved the characters & the setting. Couldn't put it down!!the best book I've read in a while. Will be looking to read this authors work more.

Don says

For the most part I enjoyed The Longest Road. I listened to it and that may have been a mistake. It is read by Patty Duke, so I thought that would add to the book. However at times her voice(s) was too squeaky and irritating, pretty much an uneven performance.

The only fault I would find with the story is that at times the author lists off a series of events as if the reader was completely ignorant of the time period in which the story takes place. The ending was a little anticlimatic, but overall a good story.

Darlenewozniak says

The longest Road

This book started slow, in my opinion. Really got into Laurie and her adopted family
Talk about happy endings. Almost too good 2 b true. Guess that's why they call it fiction.

Jan Lipert says

The writing in this book is simplistic and Polyanna-ish towards the end - BUT - the period detail is fascinating and well-researched; the book is worth reading for that alone.

Bonnye Reed says

NGAB I received a free electronic copy of this novel from Netgalley, Jeanne Williams, and Open Road Integrated Media. Thank you for sharing your work with me.

This was an excellent novel. I read a lot, and it has been a long time since I encountered a novel I hated to see end. Ms. Williams keeps her story crisp, her protagonists balanced and well rounded, and folds her tale seamlessly into the world of oil and dust and war we know as the southwestern United States in the 1930's - 1940's. This is an exciting journey through the hardships and joys, the tribulations and exaltations of that time. It is a story that lifted me, and I will read again in time. I was pleased to see that several of Ms. Williams novels are being reprinted - the perfect time to find and add her to my list of must-read authors.

Pub date July 5,2016

Nancy says

I had great trouble sticking to this book, setting it aside for days or a week then trying it again. The idea of a girl learning to be a folk singer during the Dust Bowl could have been such a great story, but this novel missed the mark for me. I did not think the writing was good and the plot was often improbable. I really wanted to like it, many left such nice reviews and the idea was appealing. For me it just didn't work.

Susan Gaytan says

This is an interesting historical fiction book . A family struggles during the 1930s in the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma . The dad dies and the kids end up riding the box cars . Very good book with several twists and turns .

Mandy says

Not for me this one. The premise is potentially engaging – two young children making their way in Dust Bowl America – but the writing just wasn't up to it. It's a nice enough story, I suppose, if with some rather improbable plot twists, but the author is far too fond of letting her characters explain the historical background so that their speech sounds false and unnatural. It's all a bit too romanticised as well – I imagine life was a lot harder than the way Williams depicts it. It's not enough to describe poverty – you have to make the reader feel it. And the central child character is just too good to be true. So I had to give this one up, unfortunately.

Heather says

I am a HUGE Patty Duke fan. I mean huge. I've met her several times and even my license plate says PDUKEFN. Knowing she narrated this was the only reason I got this from audible but I'm glad I did. I was first concerned that I would be distracted by Patty Duke's narration but it was a GREAT story! I really enjoyed it and she was a fantastic narrator. So good, I often forgot that's why I picked this book! The story

starts in the dust bowl of the 1930s and the hardships remind me of my granny and her family in Kentucky (although a completely different region and circumstances but it felt like something like how my Granny and her family lived). Would definitely pick up another by this author. Also, Anna (Patty Duke) needs to do more books. Really...

Polly Krize says

I received an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

The cruel effects of the Great Depression send twelve-year old Laurie and her young brother Buddy out on the highways of America to live with their grandfather in Oklahoma's panhandle. To escape his brutality, they hop a train to California, which leads to more heartbreak. The songs of Johnny Morrigan inspire them to keep their hopes up, leading them to Texas, Morrigan and life-changing events. Recommended reading.

Marnie Boyers says

I was a bit disappointed in this one. I couldn't make myself finish it. I totally lost interest. Such a shame.

Bev says

Interesting book about the Dust Bowl years. I haven't read much about that time period. Enjoyed the strong characters and all they had to endure.

Denise says

I really enjoyed the first twenty chapters of *The Longest Road*. The hardships of the dust bowl and the Great Depression were brought to life for me. I'd seen the Ken Burns series, and this was exactly what the people in Kansas and Oklahoma lived through. It seemed almost like *Grapes of Wrath*, one of my favorite American novels of all time.

I loved the children, Laurie and Buddy, as they "lit out for the territories" hoping to get to California and find their dad. They showed such spunk, riding the rails and finding a way to get what they needed to survive. The people they met along the way were almost mythic: Way is the flawed savior, travelling with the kids and protecting them from dangerous people. Morrigan is the muse, opening the world of music to Laurie and also providing her with a safe way to make money.

The problems I had with the book was the road was too long. I wasn't nearly as interested in the oil fields as I was with these plucky and resourceful children. I liked the evil grandfather's wife, and the role she played in ameliorating his verbal poison. I had some trouble with the father leaving the children with such a nasty old man, but he was obviously at his wits end and mourning the very recent death of their mother.

These are minor problems. I did enjoy the book very much and will recommend it to my young adult friends

who know little of this era. I received an ARC from NetGalley and Open Road in exchange for an honest review.

Maryvic says

Loved these characters

Held me from first page to the end. A good read! More like this one please and thank you so much.

Kathryn Young says

This was a story of a strong-willed young girl who loses her father and mother in the dust bowl of Oklahoma and travels by train with her younger brother to California and back, encountering a lot of interesting people and adventures along the way. Lots of historical information about America's dust bowl, the lead up to World War II, hobo life and more. A little sentimental, but still enjoyable read.
