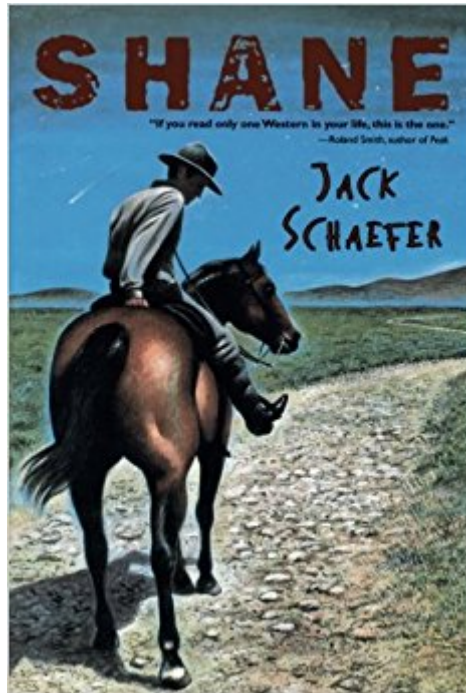




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Shane



Synopsis

I had lain in my bed thinking of our visitor out in the bunk in the barn. It scarce seemed possible that he was the same man I had first seen, stern and chilling in his dark solitude, riding up our road. Something in father, something not of words or of actions but of the essential substance of the human spirit, had reached out and spoken to him and he had replied to it and had unlocked a part of himself to us. He was far off and unapproachable at times even when he was right there with you. The Starrett family's life forever changes when a man named Shane rides out of the great glowing West and up to their farm in 1889. Young Bob Starrett is entranced by this stoic stranger who brings a new energy to his family. Shane stays on as a farmhand, but his past remains a mystery. Many folks in their small Wyoming valley are suspicious of Shane, and make it known that he is not welcome. But dangerous as Shane may seem, he is a staunch friend to the Starretts—and when a powerful neighboring rancher tries to drive them out of their homestead, Shane becomes entangled in the deadly feud. This classic Western, originally published in 1949, is a profoundly moving story of the influence of a singular character on one boy's life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"If you read only one western in your life, this is the one." —Roland Smith, author of *Peak*
"Shane is a work of literature first and a Western second." —St. George Daily Spectrum
"A real superiority here." —Kirkus Reviews
"Its pace is steady. Its tension is of the uncoiling spring variety. It's as clean as a hound's tooth." —Saturday Review

of Literature

“The author has created a tale which captivates the reader’s attention from beginning to end. . . . The book almost demands completion in one sitting.”

Library Journal

Jack Schaefer (1907-1991) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and studied at Oberlin College and Columbia University. *Shane*, his first piece of fiction, began as a short story. Mr. Schaefer went on to write many other stories and novels set in the West, earning a devoted following of readers that continues to grow. Roland Smith is a former zookeeper and leading expert on red wolves as well as an author. He lives on a small farm near Portland, Oregon.

I ordered this book because it is one of the books my daughter has to read for 6th grade Lit/Comp. This is year I have decided to read the assigned books myself so I know what she’s reading, and we can talk about them and hopefully get her more engaged and have our own discussions. I did not have hope or excitement when I picked this up for the first time, which was wrong of me. Why did I assume a western would be boring? I don’t think I had even read a western before. From the beginning I got sucked into the mystery of *Shane*, and then the suspense of the story as tensions and threats grew in their town. After finishing the book I watched the movie yesterday, but I felt the book was much better. Perhaps because with books you can let your imagination make the characters and setting your own. I always thought westerns made people out to be the good guy/bad guy, simple as that. But as in life, the characters in the book show that it’s not so simple to judge, and a person can change. That sometimes the good vs bad, right vs wrong judgements aren’t so simple either. The book shows a time in our history, being that it starts in 1889, and gives you a much more personal idea of what it was like back then.

Jack Schaefer has set his story at the time of Wyoming’s Johnson County “wars” between cattlemen and anyone, like rustlers and homesteaders, who cut into their profits. First published in 1949, the novel also reflects something of the war that had just ended for Americans who fought in Europe and the Pacific. We have a young family struggling to put down roots on the frontier, wanting little more than an ordered life and the opportunity to make a living among a gathering of neighbors who want the same for their own families. But they are prevented by men who want the open range for themselves and their own economic interests, and they’ll stop at nothing to get their way. While the father of the family attempts bravely to hold his own, his neighbors are intimidated, feeling threatened and outnumbered. *Shane*, a man with a shadowy past, arrives in the middle of this

conflict, and while he assumes for a time the life of a hired hand, his gunslinger services are eventually needed to defend the lives and property of the family that has given him a home. We see what we have suspected, that he is a killer, and there's no place for him in their sunny, settled world. He must go back on the trail and disappear. Given the time in which it was written, "Shane" is a commentary on the role of violence in a world where law and order, on an international level, had been in short supply. Americans - and especially returning soldiers - had seen this for themselves. The novel carries this disturbing awareness right into the daily life of home and hometown. The mystery of Shane's identity suggests that what he represents in the story is a darker side of ourselves that does not integrate well with the more honorable aspects of self we prefer to acknowledge. The simplicity of Schaefer's tale, and his choice of a boy as narrator, allow readers to fill in a lot of details and emotions that tap into their own deeper fears and desires. The two men joining forces to uproot the tree stump is like a scene from a dream that wants to be understood - it's not just about a tree stump. But what? While the film for all its widescreen glory is not without merit, it's dated in a way the book may never be. In its 250+ pages, it speaks of elemental forces and how we go about living in a world where we are threatened by circumstances beyond our control. Thanks to the University of Nebraska Press for assembling this critical edition which includes several fine essays providing historical background, analysis of the text, commentary and reviews on the film adaptation.

I understand completely why kids assigned this reading for school did not enjoy it. Though told through a young boy's eyes, the writing style is mature and uses many descriptive paragraphs. Though sometimes impatient with description, I loved the story all the more for the details, but some pre-high-school kids will become bored. It's true that Bob's introspection is unusually discerning for his age. However, some remarks indicate that he could be writing this at a later time in his life, looking back on what happened with a wiser perspective. Either way, the author's depth of observation from an unlikely character can be forgiven as he elicits reader sympathy and understanding. Bob's view of his world may not always be reliable (especially when referring to his hero as "invincible"), but he is always endearing. Reading about Bob's naïf, honest idolization of the mysterious gunman, I wanted Shane to stay, too. And looking beyond Bob's innocent perspective, the mature reader sees things that Bob does not, understanding his parents and Shane even better than he does. This work of art manages to stay short (120 pp.) without losing the substance and quality of much longer novels. Any shorter, and something would be missing. Any longer, and the added words or events would be unnecessary, lessening the "punch" that

perfect length gives this tale. If all Westerns are as captivating as this jewel, maybe I'll try another one sometime!

A remarkable novel. I'd give the movie five stars, also, even though it differs somewhat from the book (as movies always do). The book and movie would make an excellent gift for someone at birthday or Christmas.

Iconic settlers v.s. the ranchers type of western with the pathetic, lone gunfighter helping the helpless. The movie version of "Shane," as great as it was, would have done well to stay closer to the book, especially in how Shane was dressed.

This book is a great Western novel. The characters are well defined and the plot is engaging. Keep this book after you read it as you will want to read it again one day and give to a friend.

Terrific portrayal of worthy characters and their fierce challenges in pioneering the West. The tension builds on the first page, and grows steadily until Shane and his "family" confront the final evil. We sympathize, admire and very much like all of the main characters, and are especially intrigued by the enigmatic Shane. Excellent book. No surprise that it's a classic for young people (and adults too).

THE western classic that everyone should read. An outstanding tale that stands the test of time, and engages every reader, young or old. High quality of printing, and great suggestions for other reading material in the back flap.

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