



The Leper

Steve Thayer

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A veteran of World War I, John Severson becomes a school teacher in a tough, working-class St. Paul neighborhood where a high school diploma is a rarity. Severson has dreams, aspirations. But something had happened to him during the war, something awful. And it follows him home and changes every part of his life. John Severson becomes a leper. Instantly he is torn from his dreams, disconnected from his beautiful plan, ripped from the woman he loves. But Severson is determined to reclaim what he lost, to overcome the horror that is leprosy, to dream again.

The Leper Details

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From Reader Review The Leper for online ebook

Kathy says

Very good

Valerie says

Heartbreaking story about shunned, despised people who lose all their rights. They cease to exist in the eyes of the public.

Julie says

Steve Thayer nailed another one. I loved this book.

Teresa says

Good book. Parts of it are set in the East St. Paul/Harding High School area so that made it interesting to read his descriptions of places I've grown up around.

Anna says

Although I am not fond of writing a negative review, (I am guided mostly by the classic questions: is it true? is it kind? is it necessary?) I feel compelled to do this. I was drawn to this novel as it was recommended in another's review of Molokai by Alan Brennert, a book that I liked very much. This book, on the other hand, did nothing but disappoint; at times causing me to roll my eyes in response to the cliched writing, the trite similes and short, choppy, boring sentences. I can't believe this book actually had an editor. It felt to me like the first draft of a novel written by a high school student. So one might ask, why did you continue to read it? Good question. The storyline was compelling enough for me to need to know what happened in the end. Am I glad I stuck to it? Not really. I am none the richer for having read this novel. I didn't really learn anything from it except perhaps how NOT to write.

I think my main issue with the book was the main character, John Eric Severson, "the School teacher" "The former marine", "the leper" "the mathematics teacher" , and all the other nameless ways he was addressed by the author. He really lacked flesh and bones. Although he was meant to be the protagonist in the novel, he, in my opinion, had no redeeming qualities. I just couldn't like or dislike him, as he had no personality. And although he was meant to be incredibly handsome, I could never picture him as such, as a matter of fact, i couldn't really picture him at all.

The story line although compelling enough to drag me to its dragged out ending, was really too far fetched to be given any real credibility. My eyes really did roll on many occasions. As the kids, say, whatever.

In closing, would i recommend this book? Not to anyone I know and like. If you have read The Island by

Victoria Hislop, or The Pearl Diver by Jeffrey Talarigo, or the aforementioned Molokai, and want to read another engaging novel about lives lived with leprosy, don't expect the same kind of enjoyment from this novel as from those. You won't get it. Maybe men would enjoy it more than other women. Who knows. I just know that had I not read it, I would not have been lacking in any way.

arkygirl34 says

Moving story

I was drawn into the life of John Severenson felt his loss and his triumphs. Never have I been so engrossed in someone's life story as his.

Marvin says

This is the story of a WWI soldier who contracts leprosy in Europe, becomes a dedicated and popular high schoolteacher in the Twin Cities before his symptoms present, then is committed to a leper colony near New Orleans and finally to Molokai, where he spends the remainder of his life as sheriff of the leper colony. The story held my interest despite amateurish writing--excessive melodrama, a death by violence body count to rival Shakespeare, and terrible sex scene writing, besides just a general inconsistent and inelegant style--and even more amateurish copyediting and proofreading, with frequent misspelled homonyms and inaccurate use of apostrophes and punctuation. This is not to mention that the author's fundamental point, that leprosy is barely contagious, is undermined from the outset by basing the story on 3 soldiers who had incidental contact with lepers in Europe all contracting the disease. Anyone interested in reading fiction about this topic would be better served by reading more subtle Moloka'i by Alan Brennert.

Anita B says

The Leper - The story is a very interesting one.

This was an amazing story about leprosy! To think that a disease from the Bible is still in existence today!

Carol says

Overall a really good read. There were parts that I felt were a bit unbelievable, just like some TV shows where the good guy survives a hail of bullets, none of which come close to hitting him. But all in all I found it fascinating and at times couldn't put it down. The author obviously had done lots of research about leprosy and the settlement in Hawaii. Would recommend it to anyone interested in this subject.

Karenschaff says

After having lived on Molokai, and read the book by the same name, this title caught my eye in the library. It is wonderfully written, a story of a man who as a Marine during WWI came in contact with leprosy and unbeknownst to him he had contracted a mild, latent form of the disease. When he finally gets to teach Math in Harding High School in St. Paul Minnesota he is in his element. Finds hope and shares it with kids that might never have had a chance in life, gives them a reason to graduate and do something with their lives...etc. He falls hopelessly in love with one of his female students and they secretly get engaged to marry, not to expose the news until after the graduation. But that is derailed. The news of his possible exposure to leprosy in the war sends the officials to the school to "capture" him and send him off to the encampment for lepers in Louisiana - no mail, no contact of any kind with people other than those in the colony with leprosy. The world is filled with fright about this disease and "suspects", pretty much anyone who MIGHT have had contact with leprosy is taken into this colony and kept away from the rest of the world. Big floods, swamps, difficult to escape...KKKKlan watching over the colony and ordered to shoot anyone trying to escape...fascinating story, and of course sad for the people stuck there unable to make contact with their friends and families back home...The marine later ends up on Molokai, in the Kalaupapa leper colony there, as Sheriff. But he never forgets his beloved fiancée, Bernice...Definitely a good read!

Danielle says

This was a difficult book to start. Knowing what was to come, from the title and book jacket, made the beginning very bitter sweet. The protagonist is a difficult person to like because he makes some pretty selfish and immoral choices. Maybe that makes him more real. However, once I reached the point in the story where he is diagnosed, the book became difficult to put down. This is the first novel about leprosy that I have read, and it was interesting. One thing that struck me after finishing the book is how our fears doom us to repeat the mistakes we should have learned from in history.

Shaun Slater says

You can't have a leper as the hero?

A fascinating telling of the abusive treatment and effective life imprisonment and/or extrajudicial killings doled out to lepers in the US in the twentieth century. Recounted by an almost mythical character spanning the period from the end of the Great War to the Regan presidency. The story was gripping, the sense of injustice all enveloping and the ultimate conclusion both inspiring and year jerking. I highly recommend this book

Diane Sametz says

Fascinating juxtaposed against Molokai I am torn as to which book I loved more. Both are incredibly haunting. I was in tears by the end of *The Leper*, seriously I seem to be drawn to books about insiders and outsiders, and if a leper isn't the quintessential outsider I can't think of anyone more deserving of the title. This is a fast paced, sometimes incredible story of one man's journey to find peace and serenity after being diagnosed with leprosy. His heroic tale is simply fantastic as he travels from World War I France, to Minnesota, and then to a leprosarium in Louisiana by the name of Carville, to the famed island of Molokai. This book is hauntingly beautiful.

Dianne says

Last night I finished, “The Leper,” and Thayer has restored my faith in modern writers as story tellers.

I tend to avoid modern writers because they simply can’t tell a story properly. The reader is forced to flip back and forth in the book, searching for clues to seldom-referred-to characters or situations (at times I’ve longed for flow charts!). Or we’re “treated” to gory details that serve no useful purpose other than to remind us of the horrendous depths of human depravity...when that same point could easily have been made without leaving images in our brains which led to nightmares. Or – and this is one of my pet peeves – writers write the story in the literal slang or accent of the characters, making it ‘purdy-dern nigh impossible’ to decipher in a flowing manner.

Thayer, on the other hand, is a true story teller. He carried me along through Severson’s life as if I were his relative getting regular updates from him myself. He made his points, but he didn’t cram them down my throat. He made me think about the book during the day while at work and look forward to getting home to read the next section.

I really, really liked the section titles. It’s been ages since I’ve seen something like that. How nice to have that teaser of a title there to prepare me for what was coming, to keep me entranced.

My only complaint is that the editor needs to pay much better attention. I found simple editing errors throughout, to the point that I went back to see which publisher he used, wondering to myself how on earth a publisher could miss so many mistakes!

I note a few here:

Pg. 268 “He took the killing personal.”

Pg. 288 “Each new kiss grew a little bit longer and little less chaste.”

Pg. 316 “I think I know whose behind the killings.”

Pg. 332 “She couldn’t of given us leprosy.”

Contentmo says

Kudos to the author who tackled a taboo subject and turned it into a well-written, informative story. I laughed, cried, and thoroughly enjoyed the rich tapestry of characters, history, and locales all blended into a book you cannot miss! My Kindle version was well-edited and easy to read. Please put more of your books on Kindle Unlimited, Mr Thayer!
