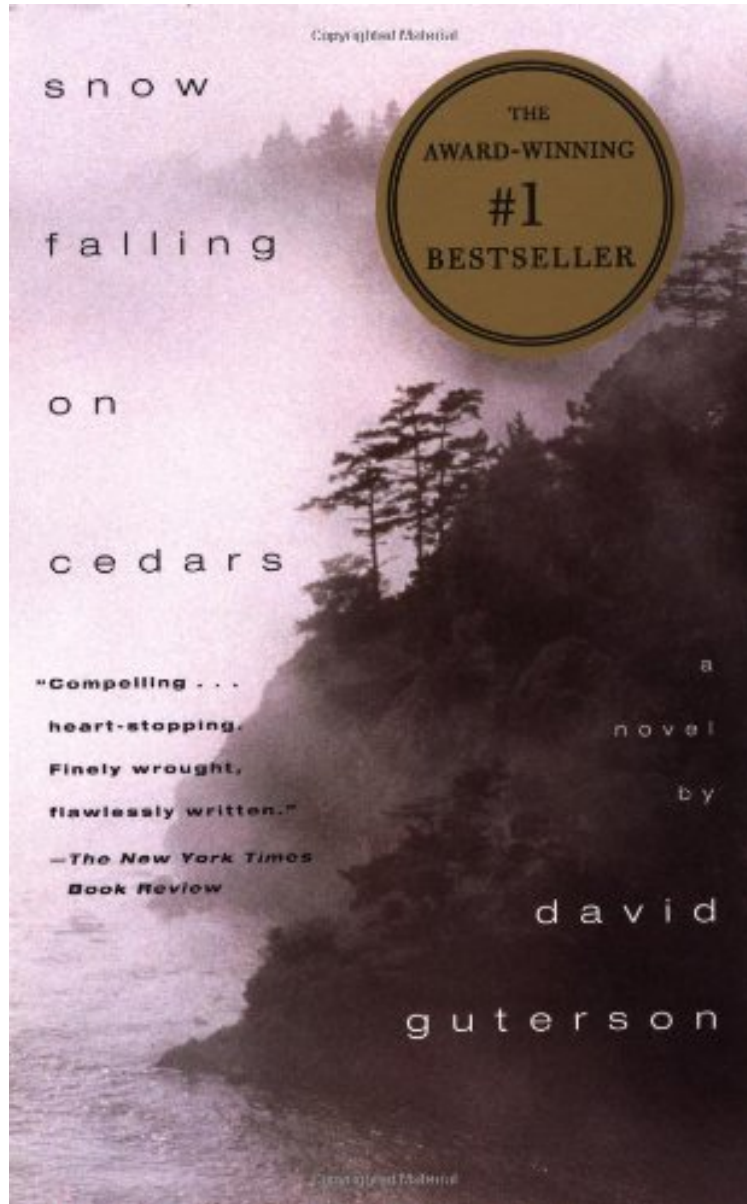


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Snow Falling On Cedars

David Guterson

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David Guterson : Snow Falling On Cedars before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Snow Falling On Cedars:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An island's soul on trial along with a Japanese fisherman. By Perry
The opening scene is riveting: a small-town courtroom on an island in the upper end of Puget Sound on a snowy

day. Having lived in Seattle for a few years, I can really say that his description of the residents of the island, and the geography itself (sounds like Whidbey Island to me) is excellent. Guterson's descriptions of the salmon-fishing, strawberry-growing culture, their houses, boats, and perspectives are wonderfully refreshing. Set in the 50's, it shows the honest simplicity of life in that era, yet gets into the complexity of the personalities and feelings of the main characters. Guterson displays the interactions of the local people as though he might have been one of them. Their social transactions are complex, although properly muted in 50's fashion so there is not a lot of dirty wash hanging out in public. If you like Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion stories from Lake Wobegon, you will probably do well with this book. The alleged murder of fisherman Karl Heine by Japanese fisherman Kabuo Miyamoto kicks off a fury of irrational anger at the otherwise exemplar Japanese population. Having been born in 1945, it reminds me vividly of the comments and prejudices I heard about the Japanese way back in South Dakota where most people had never met such a human -- except on the battlefield. The teenage romance between Ishmael (later the island's sole newspaper editor) and Hatsue Imada (who would finally marry Kabuo) is touching and heart-wrenching, although their conversation and insights into their situation might be a bit too high-level for their time and maturity. It is Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet set in Puget Sound. The sudden hysteria and hatred that boils over when Heine is found dead and Kabuo is accused, jailed and charged based on very circumstantial evidence shows how fine the line is between acceptance, toleration and total condemnation when ethnic groups live together in close proximity. Guterson uses flashbacks to develop the main characters very fully to the point where you think you might be living next door to them by the end of the novel. The murder mystery aspect of this story is only a vehicle for a deep exploration into the heart and soul of humans, as individuals and groups. The ending is predictable and uplifting, but left me with the feeling that the island had a lot of work to do to get back to normal -- years of atonement and reconciliation. This story is a good read for those who allow themselves to be swept away into a beautifully told, tragic story. Real men do not cry when reading storybooks, but I strangely noticed some tears on my cheeks every now and then. This is not a formula-based murder mystery. It is a story that can stick with you and make you look at yourself as though you might have been one of the islanders.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. POWERFUL AND HAUNTING
By Judith A. Verhaag
I read SNOW FALLING ON CEDARS when it was first published years ago and it left such a positive impression that I decided to re-read it recently. This is one of my favorite books of all time and the second time around was just as spellbinding, emotional and gripping as the first. While I discovered more details with my recent reading than I remembered, the overall experience was just as powerful. I've recommended it to numerous people who have also been impressed with the quality of writing and the powerful and emotional impact of this novel. I happen to know quite a bit about gill net fishing and about Puget Sound so felt immersed in this setting. CEDARS creates a palpable "feeling"... not just words...haunting and ethereal at the same time...I was inside the cedar tree with Hatsue and Ishmael, on the boats and at Manzanar. The author is truly a master with words and his novel is a master of literature. I probably will read it again and again.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is one of my all time favourite novels, rife with beautiful writing
By Karin
This is one of my all time favourite novels, rife with beautiful writing, rich characters, excellent description, thoughtful, poignant, at times nostalgic, at times hopeful, but 's words are so lacking here.. It is one of those hard to describe types of novels that defies a simple categorization, and I hate to call it a mystery because while there is one, it is NOT a "mystery novel." They writing is poignant, there is a wonderfully written back story interposed, moral dilemmas, and of course a man is on trial for murder. Set in the 1950s, the flashbacks go to the 1930s and 1940s, both before and during WW II. We see how WW II threw this community with both European and Japanese Americans into a tailspin and with unresolved conflict and issues still simmering under the surface. Ishmael, the protagonist and not on trial, is a one-armed vet who is the town reporter, is one of those with those unresolved issues in his life. I have read this novel more than once from the library, but finally realized I want to own my own copy, and not just buy it as a gift for someone else.

Winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award
American Booksellers Association Book of the Year Award
San Pedro Island, north of Puget Sound, is a place so isolated that no one who lives there can afford to make enemies. But in 1954 a local fisherman is found suspiciously drowned, and a Japanese American named Kabuo Miyamoto is charged with his murder. In the course of the ensuing trial, it becomes clear that what is at stake is more than a man's guilt. For on San Pedro, memory grows as thickly as cedar trees and the fields of ripe strawberries--memories of a charmed love affair between a white boy and the Japanese girl who grew up to become Kabuo's wife; memories of land desired, paid for, and lost. Above all, San Pedro is haunted by the memory of what happened to its Japanese residents during World War II, when an entire community was sent into exile while its neighbors watched. Gripping, tragic, and densely atmospheric, Snow Falling on Cedars is a masterpiece of suspense-- one that leaves us shaken and changed. "Haunting.... A whodunit complete with courtroom maneuvering and surprising turns of evidence and at the same time a mystery, something altogether richer and deeper."--Los Angeles Times "Compelling...heartstopping. Finely wrought, flawlessly written."--The New York Times Book Review

.com This is the kind of book where you can smell and hear and see the fictional world the writer has created, so

palpably does the atmosphere come through. Set on an island in the straits north of Puget Sound, in Washington, where everyone is either a fisherman or a berry farmer, the story is nominally about a murder trial. But since it's set in the 1950s, lingering memories of World War II, internment camps and racism helps fuel suspicion of a Japanese-American fisherman, a lifelong resident of the islands. It's a great story, but the primary pleasure of the book is Guterson's renderings of the people and the place. From Publishers Weekly First-novelist Guterson presents a multilayered courtroom drama set in the aftermath of the internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Haunting. . . . A whodunit complete with courtroom maneuvering and surprising turns of evidence and at the same time a mystery, something altogether richer and deeper." -- Los Angeles Times