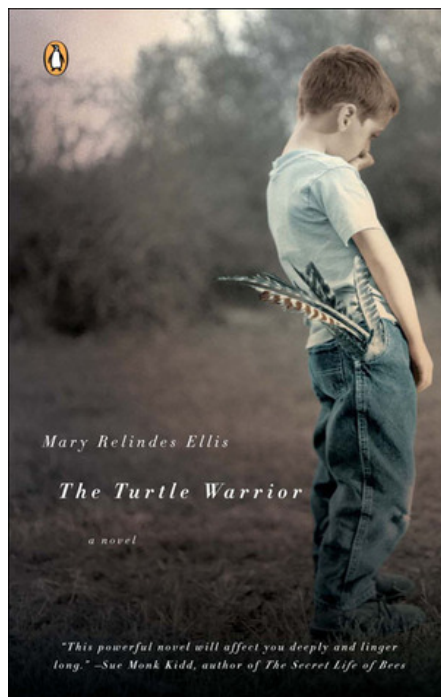




The Turtle Warrior

Mary Relindes Ellis

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The Turtle Warrior is the story of the Lucas family, who live in a beautiful and remote part of Wisconsin inhabited by working-class European immigrants and the Ojibwe. By 1967 the Lucas farm has fallen into disrepair, thanks to the hard drinking of John Lucas, who brutalizes his wife and two sons. When the eldest, James, escapes by enlisting to fight in Vietnam, he leaves young Bill alone to protect his mother with only his own will and the spirit of his brother to guide him. Beautifully written and deeply felt, *The Turtle Warrior* takes readers from the heartland of America to the battlefields of World War II and Vietnam weaving a haunting tale of an unforgettable world where the physical and spiritual, the past and the present, merge.

The Turtle Warrior Details

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Author : Mary Relindes Ellis

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From Reader Review The Turtle Warrior for online ebook

Jean says

I enjoyed this a lot, though much of it is extremely sad so it might not be for everyone. Follows 2 families for many years, and I liked how the author gave perspectives from each character at different times. There was a point in the book where it dragged a bit, about 2/3 way through. However it resolved (and maybe I was just tired?) and I was sucked back into it. Thought provoking as well as disturbing and sad, I feel like I was a fly on the wall and got to know each character in a deep and satisfying way.

sue says

Great Book

Robyn says

Mesmerizing

A story of hauntingly beautiful characters; each given their voice intermittently throughout the novel. Eerie, lonely, lovely, remote northern Wisconsin before, during and after the Vietnam War. Each character experiences change: heartache and growth in painful, sometimes sweet, heart wrenching ways. A wonderfully written story which ultimately leaves the reader with hope and wonder at the strength and vulnerability of the human spirit.

Sonya Mirus says

I'm surprised that so many reviews say that this book is "well-written," since I found it to be clunky and awkward. The author spends pages telling the reader what a character is thinking or feeling (instead of letting the reader figure anything out on their own) but then the action is confusing and hard to follow. The author also jumps to a different character's perspective with each chapter and switches between first and third person; it's a tough thing to do well, and frankly, the author is not talented enough to pull it off. I came away from the book feeling like I never really got to know or care about the characters, or their story.

I also have some possibly petty nitpicks about the setting, which feels researched, and poorly so. I realize the town of Olina is fictional, but since I have lived my whole life in north/central Wisconsin or northern Minnesota, I want to be able to place it. Olina is described as being near both the Chippewa River and Lake Superior--which in real life are at best 40 or 50 miles apart--and also being near the real-life towns of Washburn and Bayfield--which are maybe 75 miles as the crow flies from the Chippewa River. And if Olina was near Bayfield, there's no way the characters would be making casual day trips to Madison, a real-life five or six hour drive. And if Olina was anywhere near Lake Superior, it's doubtful that Bill and Jimmy's parents would have been able to get the cheap land the book mentions--even in the 1950s there was a thriving tourism economy. These issues could have been solved by simply using a fictional river, and fictional names for all the towns (and, ideally, a bit more study) but I feel like the author wasn't really sure where the story was taking place, either. The setting is as ambiguous and unformed as the characters and

story.

Jim Johnson says

This is a very good and very readable novel from 2004. It is about two families who reside on neighboring farms in northern Wisconsin. The period covered by the narrative is from 1967 to 2000. One family has two sons whereas the other is childless. The family with sons is headed by a ne'er-do-well father who abuses both his wife & children and is a confirmed alcoholic. The other family has a loving husband of the same age who seeks to act as a surrogate good father to these troubled boys. The action includes one son's involvement in the Vietnam War with a tragic outcome. His younger brother is troubled by this loss and has problems of his own with his abusive father. The novel explores the problematic history of abuse within a multi-generational family as well as the vagaries of fate to which all of us are subject. Despite these serious emphases the novel is overall heart-warming and positive for the reader.

Barbara Stoner says

If breaking my leg last May accomplished nothing else, it has left me with a summer's worth of reading to report on in the Bookhouse. One of these is *The Turtle Warrior*, by Mary Relindes Ellis, sent to me by my friend Bonnie.

It's set in northern Wisconsin, familiar territory for me. I know those poor farms, that stony land, old barns with outdated, broken down machinery. I know the lure of the woods, the quiet depth of snow. Settling into *The Turtle Warrior* was, in some ways, like going home.

I'm lucky. I don't know first hand the pain of abusive marriage or gross parental cruelty. But I have known a few victims. One of the characters in my first novel, *The Year of the Crow*, was such a one.

The Turtle Warrior was a slow read for me. I read a chapter a night, taking only as much beauty and pain as I could swallow at one sitting. But isn't that one of the reasons we read? To remember beauty or discover beauty we never knew? To live for a moment in pain we can't otherwise know? Or to revisit the pain we do know, searching for footprints in the snow that lead to redemption?

Noémie says

Un depaysement, une famille déchirée , une belle écriture. Une surprise inattendue que cette lecture!

Kim Miller-Davis says

This book is not an easy book to read and yet I loved it. When I say that it is a difficult reading experience, I do not mean that Ellis's writing style is dense or obscured by artistry. In fact, the narrative is marked by its clarity, so visceral in its depictions that the reader is transported to rural, Vietnam-era northern Wisconsin where the characters are so authentically drawn that they become lodged in the chest, their trials creating such emotional havoc that one's throat begins to ache with the pain of holding back sobs. This is what makes

the novel difficult...reading it is a gut-wrenching experience. Yet, it is a beautifully told story, one that resonates with healing and redemption.

At the center of the novel are Jimmy and Bill, two brothers living on a secluded farm desperately trying to thrive despite the terroristic attacks of their alcoholic father whose contempt for the world is regularly unleashed on the boys and their mother. The brothers seek solace from the inhabitants of a neighboring farm, Ernie and Rosemary, a childless couple who willingly accept their role as surrogate parents. Ernie, who battles the grief of childlessness by silently replaying the sage advice given by his Ojibwe father, heartily embraces the parental role. For years, the couple provides a haven for the boys, a place where their physical and emotional needs are both anticipated and fulfilled without cost. Unfortunately, despite the refuge offered by Ernie and Rosemary, when Jimmy, the older of the two brothers, comes of age, he escapes by enlisting in the marines. For Bill, Jimmy's flight to Vietnam initially feels like a personal rejection--an abandonment that leaves him openly and thoroughly vulnerable to their father's abuse. For their mother, Jimmy's enlistment is a heralding of sorts, one that awakens a long-dormant desire to start living—to relinquish the hate spewed by her husband and turn instead to the unconditional love given by her sons. She vows to change their lives once Jimmy returns from combat. As she and Bill await Jimmy's return, they find comfort in his letters. Jimmy's expressions of homesickness help strengthen their bonds to him and to each other, and the money he stashes in the envelopes helps them imagine a future without the father's drunken rages. At the same time, both Bill and his mother are filled with yearning for Jimmy and the fear that something might happen to him. Therein lies the sadness that permeates the novel: the unbearable presence of absence.

As the novel progresses from 1967 to 2000, the characters navigate the emotional twists and turns of love and loss. Ultimately, their emotional pain is an indictment of societal values—that to fight is masculine, that guns are items of beauty deserving of our worship and canonization, that the American way is the best way, and that to kill for one's country is honorable. Although there are times when their sadness is excruciating for the reader, the author mitigates our discomfort by imbuing the narrative with an abiding sense that the Lucas family, along with Ernie & Rosemary, will eventually reach some type of peace. Without these threads of hope, this novel would be unreadable. Fortunately, just as the characters' pain functions as an indictment, their eventual peace functions as redemption—a reminder that even though none of us is immune to the evils that exist in the world, we can save ourselves through our own human decency—by honoring our commitments to ourselves, to each other, and to the earth.

Kimberley says

Wow. Completely worthy. This is a novel with many layers,...and I don't quite know how to describe it. The writing is excellent, the storyline is of a serious and harsh nature, but also speaks to the triumph of the human spirit and the kindness of other people.

Kelley Thomas says

This book lingered with me for awhile after I finished it. It deals with difficult subjects for sure, but is well written and thought provoking.

Varlet says

Titre de la traduction française : Wisconsin

Amy Russell says

Heartbreaking but beautifully written. A little boy who survives awful abuse.

Cheryl S. says

Very close to 5 stars for me. Hurts your heart, but makes you cheer, couldn't put it down.

Carey MM says

So much detail. Too little prose

Catherine Krabath says

I love when I find a book that I simply cannot put down. A book that I can't stop thinking about long after I've read the last sentences. This book is amazing!! Written with real emotion that sometimes I forgot It was a work of fiction. The depth and character develop is a talent few authors possess. A must read!
