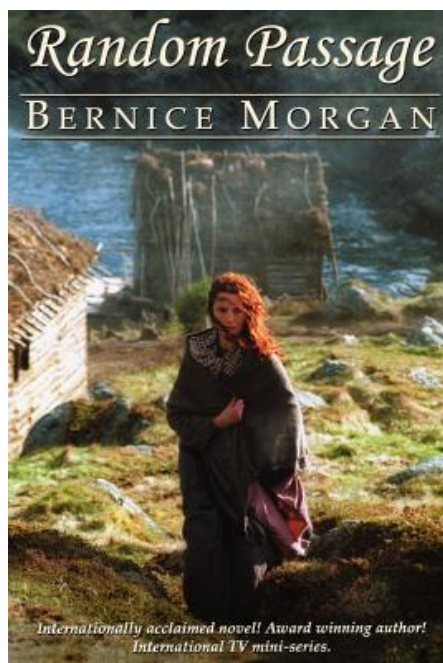




Random Passage

Bernice Morgan

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Forced to flee England, the Andrews family books passage to a fresh start in a distant country, only to discover a barren, inhospitable land at the end of their crossing. To seventeen-year-old Lavinia, uprooted from everything familiar, it seems a fate worse than the one they left behind. Driven by loneliness she begins a journal. Random Passage satisfies the craving for those details that headstones and history books can never give: the real story of our Newfoundland ancestors, of how time and chance brought them to the forbidding shores of a new found land. It is a saga of families and of individuals; of acquisitive Mary Bundle; of charming Ned Andrews, whose thievery has turned his family into exiles; of mad Ida; of Thomas Hutchings, who might be an aristocrat, a holy man, or a murderer; and of Lavinia - who wrote down the truth and lies about them all. Random Passage has been adapted into a CBC miniseries and is now a national bestseller.

Random Passage Details

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Author : Bernice Morgan

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From Reader Review Random Passage for online ebook

Megan says

I really enjoyed this book. I found at times to be a bit muddled with the huge cast of characters and the abrupt change of narrator took a bit to get used to. Overall though I enjoyed going along the journey of the families in Random Passage.

K. says

I read this a few years ago for my Canadian Lit course. Bernice Morgan's *Random Passage* is the brutal and depressing depiction of the lives of the early settlers of colonial Newfoundland, when families lived in isolation and whose survival depended on a bleak and sometimes unforgiving climate.

Reading this is a journey. Many times I felt like I was dragging myself along the very barren land the characters themselves tried to make livable. And truth be told, I don't think I *enjoyed* reading it, I don't know if you're supposed to. It is a sharp and jolting display of the harsh realities of the past. It allows us nothing but admiration for what these characters had to go through, laying the foundation on which we now live. It is not a fun read but it is definitely the kind of experience you'll be thankful for having gone through.

Arm yourself with patience and an open mind.

This story is most rewarding.

Vionna says

I liked the book from an historical point of view. How these settlers survived is beyond me. There were too many characters to keep track of and not all were very well developed. I lost track of who married whom. The narrative was a bit flat.

Allison ?hikes the bookwoods? says

I loved this book just as much the second time around. Bernice Morgan has created a fantastic web of characters and wonderful insight into early Newfoundland life.

Doreen says

Spanning 15 years in the early 1800s, this is the tale of two families living in a remote Newfoundland outpost. It's primarily a story about the struggle to survive, but also about relationships, personalities, and secrets.

Two-thirds of the book is narrated from the point of view of Lavinia Andrews; the last one-third gives the

viewpoint of Thomas Hutchings, a secretive man who is employed to be at Cape Random for the fishery. This second view adds depth to the novel.

The novel includes vivid description of the harsh conditions; one cannot but be struck by the severe isolation and the dependence on each other for survival.

The discussion of the seal hunt provides perspective on its importance for survival of the early settlers of Newfoundland.

This is a must-read for anyone interested in Newfoundland history.

Karyl says

This book tells the story of early settlers to the island of Newfoundland, a place where life was so difficult that the slightest miscalculation in supplies laid in for winter could mean the difference between life and death. It was heart-wrenching to read how fine that line was, how close these families came to death every single winter. I found it especially difficult to read how hard these folks worked, day in and day out, to the point of exhaustion and even beyond, just to make enough fish before the ships came back in to port, as I sat in my comfortable home reading a novel for most of a day.

However, the novel itself, I believe, could have been written better. There were too many characters to keep track of, and few were fleshed out entirely. My copy also had quite a few typographical errors, which surprised me as this isn't a first edition. While I understood why Morgan chose to switch narrative voices, to mirror the diary being passed along, it was disconcerting to focus mostly on Lavinia in the third person for most of the novel, but then switch so drastically to another character writing in the first person. Also I felt that the story dragged so slowly for the first two hundred pages or so, though it really picked up after that. That said, this is a sobering look at the harsh difficulties faced by settlers to Newfoundland in the early days.

Luke Sayese says

Early 19th century Newfoundland is at the heart of Bernice Morgan's novel which tells the stories of the Andrews and Vincent families in the small and isolated outport community of Cape Random. For me, in terms of plot Morgan's novel does not have the usual elements of storytelling such as rising action and climax per se which I think is the point. Rather the book reads like the daily life of the families living in the cape. It should be noted that the title of the book itself, *Random Passage*, implies the random nature of life with birth, death, victories, failures, and suffering all signifying the unplanned and haphazard way our lives carry on. The characters themselves are on a sort of life voyage with a random passage and are vulnerable to the often violent and unpredictable nature of the ocean. The novel also reads as well-rounded historical fiction as it gives you a clear sense of how Newfoundland attained its eclectic and diverse character. Through Cape Random and its surrounding communities, we see a tiny glimpse of how various exiles, rogues, misfits, and refugees came upon Newfoundland and settled upon random parts of the island's shoreline in hopes to find freedom in their new home. They experience hardship as they find that freedom has its limits with either the elites in St. John's exploiting their socio-economic status or falling prey to the harsh environment. As such, there are themes of survival, hardship, and tragedy as the families struggle just to survive another winter. Finally, while I found keeping track of the non-linear storytelling a bit daunting at times, I would recommend it for anyone interested in learning more about Newfoundland literature, history, and the people.

Kathryn Jennex says

When I first moved to the island of Newfoundland I wanted to read local authors who wrote about it. this was the first book that was suggested. Note: it was recommended to me by the most charming owner of one of the most charming bookstores: Granny Bates located on Bates Hill.

I walked around reading this book. I became each of it's characters in my mind.

If only I had known then how much impact this book, about this far off place, and what a significant role it would come to play in my life!

- Random Passage became a television mini-series on television.
- It was a co-production between my would-be "mother-in-law" and an Irish Production Company
- I worked in the film industry, at that time, and became a set-dec. These are the people who work with the designer physically creating his/her ideas of what the set, in this case Random Passage , would look like.
- I met the last love of my life while working there.
- I lived, during the production, in a village where the construction and filming took place.
- At first, I lived with the Set Decorator's Assistant.
- Later, I lived with what would become my future "sister-in-law".
- It turned out the love of my life had a summer home in another community, close to the set. I spent many happy times there and have many fond memories of that time.
- On another local production I met a friend, Lori, who actually was born and raised on Random Island, another community on the bay as the set of Random Passage.

Charles says

An excellent account of Newfoundland outport life(Cape Random) in the 1800's, as seen by new settlers & followed over many years, with its expected overwhelming difficulties(just surviving, fighting wild animals like polar bears, & marginal interactions with the few surviving Indians who come to the shore occasionally, which the uneducated & superstitious but astoundingly courageous & resourceful people face & sometimes overcome, or are crushed by. All aspects of outport life are presented-establishing themselves in crude shelters, building houses & boats from scratch, as well as the equipment necessary for fishing & sealing, the growing of potatoes & turnips, the collection of wild berries-their only fruit- the "making"of fish(gutting, spreading, salting, drying) which is exchanged once a year when the boat from St.John's comes in for supplies(flour, salt, tea..). There's great deal of support & friction in the tiny community of less than 20, but also jealousy, illicit love affairs & unattributed pregnancies. Part of the story is seen through the eyes of an RC priest who was the original settler(coming to get away from the world) & later we are presented with the life of St.John's-crude,bawdy, loud but full of life, where a few of the younger Cape Randomers flee, but fail to find the paradise they had anticipated.

Stacie (BTR) says

The story was too disjointed to justify the effort I spent reading.

Jan says

This is the first of several books by Morgan set in the very early days of Newfoundland. The story is rooted deeply in the experience of the folks who settled this very harsh area and built families and lives on land that was barely hospitable.

Reading Random Passage enhanced my experience of visiting the eastern portion of Newfoundland, even though I read the book after I returned home. This landscape is amazing - both beautiful and daunting. And the people have to be so very strong to survive.

Random Passage provides a similar look at the class and societal structure in England that left some folks very few choices.

Leslie says

I was looking through my shelves of "to be read" books, trying to decide what to read next and came across this book. I had purchased it many years ago and had started it twice only to abandon it both times. I just couldn't get into it. Since then, I have become part of the Goodreads community so I looked it up and was surprised by the high rating. After reading some of the reviews I decided to give it one last try. I quickly remembered why I had given up before. 100 pages in I was struggling to continue. Too many characters are introduced all at once, none of which I liked or really felt like I understood. I was at least 200 pages in before it started to be even slightly entertaining. It wasn't until Part 2 when the point of view changed to Thomas Hutchings that the story really came together for me.

Andrea says

I liked learning about life in Newfoundland at that time but like other readers found the change in narrator strange. Fanny's surprise was not surprising. Overall, I think the book was too long. I didn't like Thomas at all.

Deborah Sowery-Quinn says

This novel follows the Andrews family as they are forced to flee from England and join a small group of people living in an isolated part of Newfoundland. Enjoyable read, turned into a mini-series which I have yet to watch. Lots of drama and strong characters.

Cathy Regular says

4.8/5.0

Hidden Gem:

Learnin' to fish is more important than learnin' to read old books, and it'll be a friggin' sight more important by the middle of next winter. You can't eat learnin'!

Douglas says

An authentic vision of 19th century Newfoundland attached to an uninteresting and bewildering human drama.

The Master says

Hardships and miseries told in vivid detail.

Louise says

Random Passage gives us an honest and humbling look at how life was lived in early Newfoundland. The will of the people within this small community to survive and provide for their families is incredible. How these people came to create a community and learned, through trial and error, to survive the harsh realities of life by living off the land and the harsh Atlantic ocean. Building their extremely bare bones basic homes for shelter to protect themselves from the elements, learning to live in harmony among a group of uneducated people, teaching themselves to not waste even a tiny piece of cloth, for it could be sewed into a growing child's dress.

Learning to be tolerant of each other's personalities, thoughts, loves and opinions. To realize and appreciate the personal hopes and dreams of these poor people trying to eek out a life for themselves in a desolate and sparse land. To watch a small community band together in face of a death imposing illness in the face of impending starvation of the entire community. These people were true survivors!!

Absolutely FANTASTIC novel!!!

Maurita Kling says

Having seen part of the movie version but missing the whole, I was curious about how it ended. Once I got a copy of the book, I found it more complicated than I had anticipated, but easier to sort out the characters & the family ties than in the movie. This is a fascinating story about a very hard way to earn a living & provide for a family in the 1800 s in a very harsh & lonely part of the world. It excels in making the Reader feel one is actually experiencing it all himself, both the physical hardships but also the emotional ones caused by the conditions of the life & times of that era. Additionally, there is the underlying Plot, which when finally realized truly Makes the book the Great Read that it is!

Erin says

Newfound land. Lavinia Andrews, her mother, two brothers, their wives, and their children find themselves departing their Weymouth home for the harsh land that lies across the Atlantic Ocean. Similar to other Canadian novelists, Bernice Morgan doesn't sugarcoat the frigid temperatures of a Canadian winter or how close to starvation the early Europeans were in trying to wedge out a life for themselves. I am not going to mince words this was a bleak book. But it was a story that lured me in and helped me get a great tan on the beach today. If realistic fiction is your jive, this book will fit the bill.
