

Sweet Land Stories

By E.L. Doctorow

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One of America's premier writers, the bestselling author of **Ragtime, Billy Bathgate, The Book of Daniel,** and **World's Fair** turns his astonishing narrative powers to the short story in five dazzling explorations of who we are as a people and how we live.

Ranging over the American continent from Alaska to Washington, D.C., these superb short works are crafted with all the weight and resonance of the novels for which E. L. Doctorow is famous. You will find yourself set down in a mysterious redbrick townhouse in rural Illinois ("A House on the Plains"), working things out with a baby-kidnapping couple in California ("Baby Wilson"), living on a religious-cult commune in Kansas ("Walter John Harmon"), and sharing the heartrending cross-country journey of a young woman navigating her way through three bad marriages to a kind of bruised but resolute independence ("Jolene: A Life"). And in the stunning "Child, Dead, in the Rose Garden," you will witness a special agent of the FBI finding himself at a personal crossroads while investigating a grave breach of White House security.

Two of these stories have already won awards as the best fiction of the year published in American periodicals, and two have been chosen for annual best-story anthologies.
Composed in a variety of moods and voices, these remarkable portrayals of the American spiritual landscape show a modern master at the height of his powers.

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Sweet Land Stories By E.L. Doctorow Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
As one might expect of Doctorow, the title is ironic. In settings that range across the U.S., most of the alienated characters in the five stories here find life anything but sweet as they struggle to surmount the stigmas of poverty, lack of education and their instincts to gamble against the odds. Three of the male protagonists are passive and amoral; attempting to defend their irrational behavior, each reminds himself that he is not stupid. All of themâ€"a young grifter who dutifully abets his mother's murderous greed on a farm near Chicago ("A House on the Plains"); a love-besotted accessory to a kidnapping in California (the slyly humorous "Baby Wilson"); and a cuckolded member of a religious cult commune in Kansas ("Walter John Harmon")â€"share a capacity for self-delusion and self-preservation. The two female protagonists attempt to alter fate and find themselves buffeted by the inescapable force of male power. The protagonist of "Jolene: A Life" is forced into a cross-country hegira in pursuit of a sweet land where she won't be an outsider. Scared and desperate despite her cool facade, Jolene becomes a victim in every relationship. If the story's denouement veers too close to soap opera, Doctorow's empathetic character portrayal redeems the plot twists. The most riveting narrative, "Child, Dead, in the Rose Garden," describes a presidential administration that is secretive, arrogant and contemptuous of ordinary citizens. In this knowing treatment of the cynical abuse of power, Doctorow uses the spare, laconic style endemic to thrillers and builds suspense with sure strokes. Boring like a laser into the failures of the American dream, he captures the resilience of those who won't accept defeat.
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From Bookmarks Magazine
Each critic professes great respect for Doctorow, who, at age 73 and many awards later, has earned it. However, there the split begins. Many critics hail these stories, four of which were published previously in *The New Yorker*, as an achievement that perfectly captures the American nation’s mood, its aberrant characters, and dark underbelly. But others dismiss the book as a slim, shallow effort that does not live up to Doctorow’s past work. Common complaints? “A House on the Plains” doesn’t fit in with the other four stories, and “Child, Found Dead in the Rose Garden,” which could have been a powerful political piece, doesn’t live up to its promise.

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From Booklist
Starred Review Doctorow is at once a supremely entertaining storyteller and a profound writer of conscience, and he forges an extraordinarily potent blend of artistry, compassion, and covert outrage in his new short story collection, the first since the indelible *Lives of the Poets* (1984). Here are five perfectly honed and sharp-edged stories about faith, love, and the abuse of power. Five ambushing and hair-raising tales featuring intensely compelling characters and impossible situations that unveil key paradoxes intrinsic to American society. Set in the horse-and-buggy era, "A House on the Plains" charts the adventures of an enterprising woman and her grown son, who reluctantly leaves Chicago to accompany her on what turns out to be a diabolical mission in a small Illinois town. The criminal mind fascinates Doctorow, as does the law and its failings, and men's cruelty toward women, tragic realities he sure-handedly explores to powerful effect in "Jolene: A Life," a classic hard-luck, white-trash tale with universal implications. Doctorow boldly takes on the enigma of religious cults in the eerie "Walter John Harmon," and in the scorching story, "Child, Dead, in the Rose Garden," he shrewdly and devastatingly uncloaks the workings of an utterly corrupt White House, and the drastic consequences of such a colossal betrayal. At base, what Doctorow's unique and

electrifying stories grapple with is our longing to trust authority and our realization that, instead, we must always question it. *Donna Seaman*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Tietjen:

In this 21st century, people become competitive in each and every way. By being competitive today, people have do something to make these survives, being in the middle of often the crowded place and notice by surrounding. One thing that often many people have underestimated it for a while is reading. Yeah, by reading a guide your ability to survive boost then having chance to endure than other is high. For yourself who want to start reading any book, we give you this Sweet Land Stories book as starter and daily reading reserve. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

Lisa Knight:

Are you kind of occupied person, only have 10 or perhaps 15 minute in your day time to upgrading your mind expertise or thinking skill possibly analytical thinking? Then you are having problem with the book as compared to can satisfy your small amount of time to read it because this all time you only find publication that need more time to be go through. Sweet Land Stories can be your answer given it can be read by a person who have those short free time problems.

Lena Stubbs:

Many people spending their time period by playing outside together with friends, fun activity with family or just watching TV all day every day. You can have new activity to spend your whole day by reading a book. Ugh, ya think reading a book can really hard because you have to accept the book everywhere? It alright you can have the e-book, having everywhere you want in your Cell phone. Like Sweet Land Stories which is keeping the e-book version. So , why not try out this book? Let's observe.

James Labrecque:

That reserve can make you to feel relax. This kind of book Sweet Land Stories was bright colored and of course has pictures on there. As we know that book Sweet Land Stories has many kinds or variety. Start from kids until youngsters. For example Naruto or Private eye Conan you can read and think that you are the character on there. Therefore , not at all of book are generally make you bored, any it makes you feel happy, fun and rest. Try to choose the best book for yourself and try to like reading in which.

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