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# Crow Lake



*Par Mary Mobbs*  
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**Par Mary Mobbs : Crow Lake** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Crow Lake:

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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurCrow Lake is that rare find, a first novel so quietly assured, so compelling, and with an emotional charge so perfectly controlled, that you sense at once that this is the real thing - a literary experience to relish, a book to lose yourself in, and a name to watch. Here is a gorgeous, slowburning story of families growing up and tearing each other apart in rural Northern Ontario, where tragedy and hardship are mirrored in the landscape. Centre stage are the Morrisons whose tragedy is insidious and divisive. Orphaned young, Kate Morrison was her older brother Matt's protegee, her curious fascination for pond-life fed by his passionate interest in the natural world. Now a zoologist, she can identify organisms under a microscope, but seems blind to the tragedy of her own emotional life. She thinks she's outgrown her family,

who were once her entire world - but she can't seem to outgrow her childhood or lighten the weight of their mutual past. Extrait PROLOGUE My great-grandmother Morrison fixed a book rest to her spinning wheel so that she could read while she was spinning, or so the story goes. And one Saturday evening she became so absorbed in her book that when she looked up, she found that it was half past midnight and she had spun for half an hour on the Sabbath day. Back then, that counted as a major sin. I'm not recounting that little bit of family lore just for the sake of it. I've come to the conclusion recently that Great-Grandmother and her book rest have a lot to answer for. She'd been dead for decades by the time the events occurred that devastated our family and put an end to our dreams, but that doesn't mean she had no influence over the final outcome. What took place between Matt and me can't be explained without reference to Great-Grandmother. It's only fair that some of the blame should be laid at her door. There was a picture of her in my parents' room while I was growing up. I used to stand in front of it, as a very small child, daring myself to meet her eyes. She was small, tight-lipped, and straight, dressed in black with a white lace collar (scrubbed ruthlessly, no doubt, every single evening and ironed before dawn each day). She looked severe, disapproving, and entirely without humor. And well she might; she had fourteen children in thirteen years and five hundred acres of barren farmland on the Gasp Peninsula. How she found time to spin, let alone read, I'll never know. Of the four of us, Luke, Matt, Bo, and I, Matt was the only one who resembled her at all. He was far from grim, but he had the same straight mouth and steady gray eyes. If I fidgeted in church and got a sharp glance from my mother, I would peer sideways up at Matt to see if he had noticed. And he always had, and looked severe, and then at the last possible moment, just as I was beginning to despair, he would wink. Matt was ten years older than I, tall and serious and clever. His great passion was the ponds, a mile or two away across the railroad tracks. They were old gravel pits, abandoned years ago after the road was built, and filled by nature with all manner of marvelous wriggling creatures. When Matt first started taking me back to the ponds I was so small he had to carry me on his shoulders through the woods with their luxuriant growth of poison ivy, along the tracks, past the dusty boxcars lined up to receive their loads of sugar beets, down the steep sandy path to the ponds themselves. There we would lie on our bellies while the sun beat down on our backs, gazing into the dark water, waiting to see what we would see. There is no image of my childhood that I carry with me more clearly than that; a boy of perhaps fifteen or sixteen, fair-haired and lanky; beside him a little girl, fairer still, her hair drawn back in braids, her thin legs burning brown in the sun. They are both lying perfectly still, chins resting on the backs of their hands. He is showing her things. Or rather, things are drifting out from under rocks and shadows and showing themselves, and he is telling her about them. Just move your finger, Kate. Waggle it in the water. Hell come over. He can't resist. Cautiously the little girl waggles her finger; cautiously a small snapping turtle slides over to investigate. See? They're very curious when they're young. When he gets older, though, he'll be suspicious and bad-tempered. Why? The old snapper they had trapped out on land once had looked sleepy rather than suspicious. He'd had a wrinkled, rubbery head, and she had wanted to pat it. Matt held out a branch as thick as his thumb and the snapper chopped it in two. Their shells are small for the size of their bodies, smaller than most turtles, so a lot of their skin is exposed. It makes them nervous. The little girl nods, and the ends of her braids bob up and down in the water, making tiny ripples which tremble out across the surface of the pond. She is completely absorbed. Hundreds of hours, we must have spent that way over the years. I came to know the tadpoles of the leopard frogs, the fat gray tadpoles of the bullfrogs, the tiny black wriggling ones of toads. I knew the turtles and the catfish, the water striders and the newts, the whirligigs spinning hysterically over the surface of the water. Hundreds of hours, while the seasons changed and the pond life died and renewed itself many times, and I grew too big to ride on Matt's shoulders and instead picked my way through the woods behind him. I was unaware of these changes of course, they happened so gradually, and children have very little concept of time. Tomorrow is forever, and years pass in no time at all. CHAPTER ONE When the end came, it seemed to do so completely out of the blue, and it wasn't until long afterward that I was able to see that there was a chain of events leading up to it. Some of those events had nothing to do with us, the Morrisons, but were solely the concern of the Pyes, who lived on a farm about a mile away and were our nearest neighbors. The Pyes were what you'd call a problem family, always had been, always would be, but that year, within the privacy of their big old gray-painted farmhouse, offstage as far as the rest of the community was concerned, their problems were developing into a full-scale nightmare. The other thing we didn't know was that the Pye nightmare was destined to become entangled with the Morrison dream. Nobody could have predicted that. There's no end to how far back you can go, of course, when you're trying to figure out where something started. The search can take you back to Adam and beyond. But for our family there was an event that

summer catastrophic enough to be the start of practically anything. It took place on a hot, still Saturday in July when I was seven years old, and brought normal family life to an end; even now, almost twenty years later, I find it hard to get any sort of perspective on it. The only positive thing you can say about it is that at least everything ended on a high note, because the previous day, our last day together as a family, my parents had learned that Luke, my other brother, other than Matt, had passed his senior matriculation and won a place at teachers college. Lukes success was something of a surprise because, to put it mildly, he was not a scholar. I remember reading somewhere a theory to the effect that each member of a family has a role, the clever one, the pretty one, the selfish one. Once youve been established in the role for a while, youre stuck with it, no matter what you do, people will still see you as whatever-it-was, but in the early stages, according to the theory, you have some choice as to what your role will be. If thats the case, then early on in life Luke must have decided that what he really wanted to be was the problem one. I dont know what influenced his choice, but its possible that hed heard the story of Great-Grandmother and her famous book rest once too often. That story must have been the bane of Lukes life. Or one of the banes, the other would have been having Matt as a brother. Matt was so obviously Great-Grandmothers true intellectual heir that there was no point in Luke even trying. Better, then, to find what he was naturally good at, raising our parents blood pressure, say, and practice, practice, practice. But somehow, in spite of himself, here he was at the age of nineteen having passed his exams. After three generations of striving, a member of the Morrison family was about to go on to higher education. From the Hardcover edition. Revue de presse "A finely crafted debut ... conveys an astonishing intensity of emotion, almost Proustian in its sense of loss and regret."-- Kirkus s (Starred review) The assurance with which Mary Lawson handles both reflection and violence makes her a writer to read and watch has a resonance at once witty and poignant. The New York Times Book Crow Lake is the kind of book that keeps you reading well past midnight; you grieve when its over. Then you start pressing it on friends. The Washington Post Book World A touching meditation on the power of loyalty and loss, on the ways in which we pay our debts and settle old scores, and on what it means to love, to accept, to succeed and to negotiate fates obstacle courses. People Lawsons tight focus on the emotional and moral effects of a drastic turn of events on a small human group has its closest contemporary analogue in the novels of Ian McEwan. The Toronto Star From the Hardcover edition.