

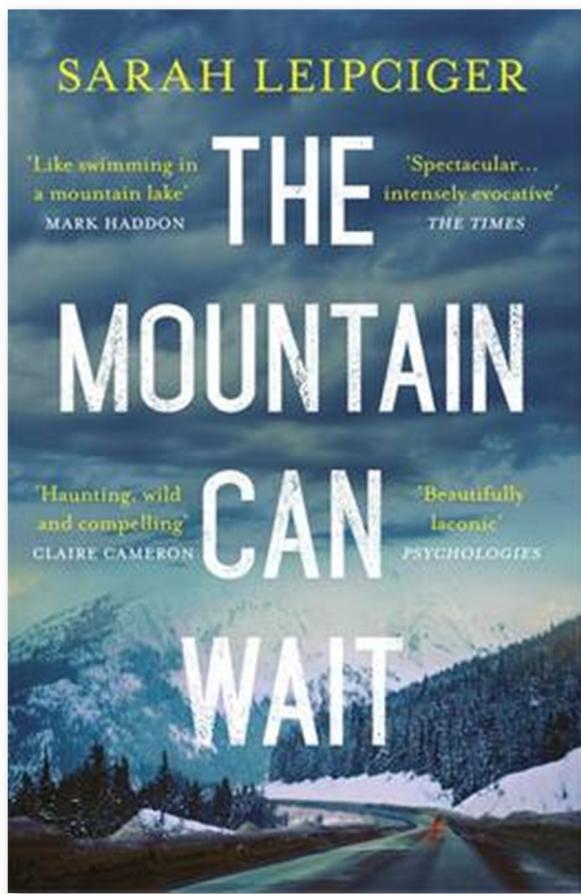


Helping you choose
your next book

Lovereading Reader reviews of **The Mountain Can Wait** By Sarah Leipciger



Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereading members.



Ed Robson

Let's not mess about here – 'The Mountain Can Wait' is an absolute delight. Leipciger's novel explores universal human themes with a deftness of touch and a simple yet profound narrative.

The central character, Tom Berry, is complex and conflicted: it would have been very easy for Leipciger to make him clichéd and emotionless, but she avoids falling into this trap by casting him as someone who is a puzzle to himself, not just to those around him. Using the wild landscapes of Canada as their setting, Leipciger's characters are clearly influenced by Annie Proulx, but

she has her own lightness of touch and although much of the novel is concerned with facing up to responsibility, she avoids any overt moralising. In addition, you never get the sense that the characters are weighted down by fate – the central conflict is not resolved in any predictable sense and there is no trite 'happy ending'.

One of the most impressive aspects of Leipciger's writing is the way she builds her characters through deft, almost throwaway lines that illuminate

personality traits without any unnecessary drama. Much of the narrative has a pathos that is all the more powerful for being underplayed. An example is the relationship between Tom and his mother-in-law; their deep conflict is heightened by the unspoken fact that her existence (isolated and self-sufficient) is one that Tom has yearned for all his own life.

I do not expect to read a more enthralling novel this year.

Rachel Aygin

*This book is really well written. Sarah Leipciger could make folding a paper bag sound interesting. It's not a suspense novel. **The plot rolls effortlessly along with the unspoken secret simmering slowly in the background and the descriptions of Canada's wilderness are amazingly evocative.** You can almost see the trees in front of you. A pleasure to read.*

Alfred Noble

This was a beautiful book. Sparsely written but with beautiful prose. It is the story of Tom, a single father who finds he is connected to his children by guilt. The book opens with a hit and run and when Tom finds he is connected to it, he tries to mend his dysfunctional family and finds he is not the father he thought he was. The atmosphere and settings of the book are helped by the author's prose. The connection with nature and the disconnection with each other is beautifully woven together by the skill of author. **I recommend all to read it.** Thanks to Lovereading for the ARC.

Julie Reed

A debut novel by a writer who delivers a well written and descriptive story.

*This story begins with a hit and run and the aftermath which shatters lives and relationships of those involved. The interesting angle being told from a single father's perspective makes a refreshing read. **Believable strong characters, breathtaking Canadian scenery will transport the reader into virtual reality.** Congratulations to Sarah Leipciger whose storytelling will captivate readers in abundance! Thanks Lovereading for choosing me as a reviewer and to the publisher for the copy of this fabulous novel!!*

Susan Pledger

Very atmospheric, beautifully written.

I really enjoyed this book. You get to know the characters very slowly and find yourself really caring what happens to them. It is one of those books you don't want to end, but must find out the ending.

Phylippa Smithson

Powerful, gritty, flawed but credible characters doing their best, meaty plot, stunning location, this had all the ingredients I want from a very good read.

Tom has largely been a single father to Curtis (19) and Erin (17) throughout their lives after his wife abandoned the three of them – she was renowned for being a troubled person.

However, Tom is a practical man and a practical father. Can fix everything in a home, a car, and so on. He works as a tree farmer requiring absences of weeks on end living in the unforgiving terrain of British Columbia wilderness.

He is not a loving or emotional man. Erin is able to find her way in life despite this, but when Curtis becomes a wanted man by the law, Tom is forced to find something in himself that has lain dormant his whole 40 year life – love, emotional support, care – all the ‘touchy feely’ emotions that have never come easy.

This is quite the very best writing I have seen in a long while. Totally engaging – I am already missing Tom and Curtis from my life and find myself wondering how they are now doing. Descriptions of a part of the world I have visited and seen but to have captured its wonder in words is a mark of super writing.

A must read in my opinion

Emma Barton

This is a beautifully atmospheric story of a family who pull together in a way they didn't think themselves capable of when tragedy strikes.

I really enjoyed this book and think it would appeal to a wide variety of people. It tells the story of Tom, a single parent, who works hard as a tree planter in the inhospitable Canadian wilderness for part of the year, while trying his best to raise his family. The book moves backwards at times in order to explain the family history, and where Tom's wife went, while also focusing on Tom's personal life in the present. Tom is portrayed as a loner and out of his depth as a single parent but that changes after he is called upon to help his son after he gets into trouble with the police.

The book is beautifully written, and magically evokes the beauty of the Canadian landscape and difficult conditions Tom works in. It also shows the strong bonds a family can have with each other without even realising their strength.

I look forward to the next book by Sarah Leipciger.

Jane Ashbrook

Quietly haunting book that stays with you long after you have finished reading.

A book of family relationships set against a backdrop of wild Canadian mountains. The book starts dramatically and then gently weaves you into a hauntingly gripping thriller. Its descriptions of the landscape makes this a very different and engaging read. The depiction of the relationship between father and son is brilliant and poignant and I was completely absorbed into both relationship and landscape. A fabulous debut. I would love to read more from this talented author.

Edel Waugh

This is a story set around a single father called Tom and his two children Curtis and Erin. Their mother Elka left them years ago and Tom is doing his best at being a parent but he can only do so much. I loved the setting of the story in Canada I could almost smell the trees and fresh air. What I liked least was Curtis, I felt nothing for this character or what happened to him but I did like Tom and Erin, Tom was a bit of a hero as far as I am concerned and Erin was an inspiring young woman who after having no mother figure turned out a well-adjusted young woman . If you enjoy a story which is a mix of mystery, adventure and heartbreak with realistic family dynamics then this is the story for you.

<http://edelwaugh.blogspot.ie/2016/02/the-mountain-can-wait-by-sarah.html?m=1>

Sarah Davis

Beautiful writing about life in Canada.

'The Mountain Can Wait' is a beautiful and evocative novel set in the Canadian wilderness. Despite the dramatic and violent opening the book is a gentle story of a single father who is emotionally distant towards his adult son and teenaged daughter.

*The novel after it fast starts slows down as we learn all the nuances of the main characters. Every character is believable and I really cared about them– the character of Tom is so well developed that it is hard not to feel his internal pain. Sarah Leipciger seems to become her characters. The vast scenery of Canada is beautifully written and to me is also an important character in the book. The descriptions of tree planting were fascinating; I felt that I was actually in the environment. The book gripped me and I almost didn't want it to end! **Anyone that enjoys a book about family tensions and emotions and the way the environment can impact on lives will like this book.***

Les Wood

A private man determined to deal with his families' demons.

*I usually complain about too much peripheral detail and not enough action in my reading material but, whilst this novel presents these two attributes, it dispels my narrow minded prejudices. It is difficult to state just where the beauty of this book is; is it the simple lack of action, the quietness of the main character, the detail of the wilderness in which he moves or something else? All I can humbly say is that **this book left me moved by its simplicity** and, as I said at the start, whilst it is not the type of book I would normally choose, it left me feeling humble, almost embarrassed by my comparative lack of understanding of people's needs. It is a novel that I am recommending to my reading friends even if they look initially puzzled when I say 'it's an amazing book although nothing really happens and I can't explain why it grabbed me so much'. Read it!!!!*

Teresa O'Halloran

A very moving story of the often difficult relationship between a father and son - and the love that can remain unspoken between them.

I enjoyed this book, but it didn't 'wow' me, and I expect this is simply because I was anticipating a crime novel. While there was a crime committed this was not a crime novel as such. In fact the author appears to forget about the crime for the most part, probably because the book is focusing more on other elements in the story. The majority of the novel involves the building of the characters involved for the reader to understand them and where they are coming from.

This book was about a broken relationship between a father and son, and as the book, and indeed their lives progress, the break in their relationship just deepens, until they can no longer talk to each other.

A sad book, in which you feel there can be no happy ending for anyone in this situation, but perhaps deeper understanding of each other and stronger family relationships.

I look forward to the author's next book.

Natasha Motton

Story of a father and his relationships with his children, friends and the environment in which he lives. A gentle, descriptive prose that is simple and engaging.

A meandering tale of a man who prefers his own company and dreams of living on his own in the Canadian wilderness. His plans are destroyed when his son commits a crime and he is forced to rethink his future. This book describes the Canadian countryside beautifully and the story unfolds gently and easily. It revolves around Tom's relationships with his children, friends and the environment in which he lives and works. I have to say I was a little disappointed with this book as I do not think the initial blurb reflects the nature of the book. I was expecting this to be more of a thriller which focused on Tom's search for his missing son. However, the search was a very small part of the story, which actually focused on Tom and his relationships. I prefer faster paced books with a more complicated storyline.

Lynne Morgan

This book was definitely worth waiting for - it was brilliant!

In her writing, Sarah very cleverly evokes the vast landscape of the Canadian mountains so well that you really feel you are there experiencing this wild but beautiful wilderness yourself - without leaving the comfort of your own home. And this landscape can certainly be very wild and harsh. The descriptions of the hardships that the planters experience when working in the great forests really do make you feel uncomfortable at times.

The main character - Tom Berry - is also a bit wild and untamed, preferring to live a simple life in the wilderness. But Tom is a single father, and he has responsibilities - to bring up his two children, Curtis and Erin. When his son Curtis, gets into trouble and goes missing, Tom is forced to come down from 'the mountain' to help him sort it out.

Not only does Sarah evoke the genius loci of the mountains, she also masterfully captures the essence of the relationship between father and son, skilfully exploring feelings, misunderstandings and their past mistakes, in a powerfully moving way.

I would definitely recommend this book and can't wait for Sarah Leipciger to write another.

Helen Claire

I was delighted by this wonderfully descriptive novel set in Canada, the focus is the bond between a Father and Son and it is tense at times and highly emotionally charged. A great story and a superb debut.

Sarah Harper

A sparse and yet breathtakingly powerful story set in the unforgiving Canadian wilderness. This is a stunning debut.

A series of flashbacks whisk us through time and build the story of Tom and his family layer by layer. Tom is a loner, practical and pragmatic he locks his emotions in deep. He's perfectly suited to his life leading a team of planters, working in remote areas of felled forest in the Canadian wilderness. Freezing rain, soul-destroying mud and hard manual labour for weeks on end don't seem to affect him at all. In fact he finds this harsh existence easier than thinking

about his relationship with Carolina or interacting with his kids Curtis and Erin. To them he remains detached and distant despite raising them himself as a single parent. But this all changes when Curtis comes to him for help. There's been an accident. A momentary lapse of concentration. A bad decision with consequences so dire they could cost him his life. He needs someone to turn to but with a family fragmented by past events, will his father even hear his cry for help? Alone and on the run, his strange, reclusive grandmother and her isolated island existence seem to be his only option. Curtis must first understand his past in order to be strong enough to make the right choice for his future and only his father can show him the way.

Paired down to its bare bones, we are told just enough to make this story breathtakingly powerful. The sparse writing style is surprisingly effective, working in combination with the reader's imagination to create a detailed picture, be it of the harsh Canadian wilderness or a characters innermost hopes and fears. This is a stunning debut.

Olivia

It's never too late for a Dad to get involved.

The opening chapters give a great insight to the main characters and the story has a promising start. Curtis is driving home from a party, off his head and inattentive, he meets a moment that will change his life forever. But with a mother who has abandoned him and a fragile, distant relationship with his father, who does he have to turn to?

After such a promising start, I was disappointed with how the story developed. The Author clearly has a great affinity with the Canadian setting and it is well written. However, I found it difficult to engage with the detailed descriptions of the scenery and Tom's tree planting work, which didn't seem to add much to the story. It almost felt like padding out the story and I nearly lost interest half way through. I'm glad that I persevered though as I appreciated seeing the development of Tom's relationship with Curtis after he goes on the run to try and escape the terrible incident that is bound to change his life forever.

I also appreciated that all the characters felt very real and there was no fairy tale ending but rather an adjustment to life around the consequences and acceptance of how this terrible incident affected everyone involved. Ultimately the awakening in Tom of the importance of his children to him and how it's never too late to accept responsibility and get involved.

Annette Woolfson

This is an amazing debut novel, convincing characters, a story line that fair romps along, beautifully described scenery and detail (I'm thinking the kelp beds here) and all told, my favourite book of the year – so far! I seriously hope Sarah is currently working on her next book, I will be buying it as soon as it is published.