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The Reivers, a Reminiscence

William Faulkner

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One of Faulkner's comic masterpieces, The Reivers is a picaresque that tells of three unlikely car thieves from rural Mississippi. Eleven-year-old Lucius Priest is persuaded by Boon Hogganbeck, one of his family's retainers, to steal his grandfather's car and make a trip to Memphis. The black coachman, Ned McCaslin, stows away, and the three of them are off on a heroic odyssey, for which they are all ill-equipped, that ends at Miss Reba's bordello in Memphis. From there a series of wild misadventures ensues--involving horse smuggling, trainmen, deputies, and jail. Published in 1962, the last novel by the great writer, this bestselling novel was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1963. Faulkner previously won this award for his book A Fable, making him one of only three authors to be awarded it more than once. Unlike many of his earlier works, it is a straightforward narration and eschews the complicated literary techniques of his more well known works. As a picaresque novel, it might seem uncharacteristically lighthearted given its subject matter. For these reasons, The Reivers is often ignored by Faulkner scholars or dismissed as a lesser work. He previously had referred to writing a "Golden Book of Yoknapatawpha County" with which he would finish his literary career. It is likely that The Reivers was meant to be this "Golden Book". The Reivers was adapted into a 1969 film directed by Mark Rydell and starring Steve McQueen as Boon Hogganbeck.

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