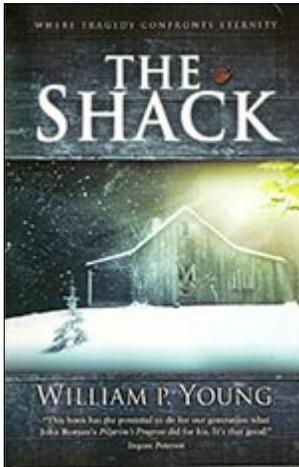


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- March 2008



Don't you love it when a friend calls or e-mails you and says, "I have just finished the best book. I couldn't put it down and I know you would love it."

My smile kicks up a little and I always say, "So, what's the title?" The second question: "What is it about?" Only this time, besides that friend, I've had a different reading group than Bookies recommend it, and several people from an online group say the same thing. Someone else said, "this might be the best book I've ever read."

My interest kicked into overdrive, and I called Gena at my local bookstore, Books & Crannies. She had copies on order.

The title is simply: *The Shack*, and the author, William P. Young, is fast becoming internationally known as interest in his novel sweeps the country, mostly by word of mouth. The story behind the story was enough to get me to read it, but more about that later.

I joined the ranks of *couldn't put it down*. Good thing I am a fast reader. Flipping hamburgers for dinner with a book in one hand is not exactly easy—nor safe.

Mack Phillips takes his three children for a weekend camping trip to Lake Wallowa in eastern Oregon and while he is rescuing one child from possible disaster, the youngest daughter disappears. While a massive search is organized, they find no trace. His wife comes for the children and he remains to help search. They finally find his daughter's dress and blood in an old shack. Grief eats away at him, referred to as *The Great Sadness*, until one day he receives a note in the mailbox. "I'll be at the shack next weekend if you want to get together," signed Pappa, his wife's name for God.

Mack tries to ignore the invitation but finally gives in, ships his wife and two remaining children off to grandma's house, borrows his neighbor's truck and heads back to Wallowa Lake. He finds the shack again, succumbs to grief and falls asleep where the evidence had been found, sure this is all a joke. But when he wakes up....

One of the reviewers said he felt this book would have the same impact on our generations as *Pilgrim's Progress* had those many years ago. It well could.

My advice to readers: be prepared to laugh and cry, to be excited and to need time to think on the story and what it could mean to you. I'm still mulling on it.

So what can we pull from this for writing?

The story behind the story. The author wrote this story for his children to try to answer their deep questions. He gave it to a friend to read, who asked for another copy to give to a friend. Williams printed a few more, and more were demanded. Since there seemed

to be a growing audience, he shopped it around to publishers and agents, who all turned him down. In the meantime, he kept printing more.

As the sales hit major numbers, publishers started coming to him, asking for the privilege of publishing *The Shack*.

Agents now want to represent him, someone is talking movie rights, but now he says "No, thank you." And just keeps on printing, shipping, speaking and printing more-- in the thousands at a time-- in this publishing phenomenon.

The Shack can be purchased now in most major bookstores and many not so major, along with Amazon.com. Readers can also order directly from the author, if they would like a bulk discount. His web site, www.theshack.com, offers chat groups, discussion questions, Q & A, his speaking schedule and reader's comments.

The Shack is a well-written, fast-paced story that I, who rarely read a book more than once, plan on reading again. I find myself quoting from the pages as I discuss the book with others who have read it, and with those whom I think might like to read it, and those who I insist read it.

Give *The Shack* a try. You too might find it an exhilarating experience. Then let me know what you think through my Contact page!

Until then,

Happy Readin' and Writin' from Lauraine