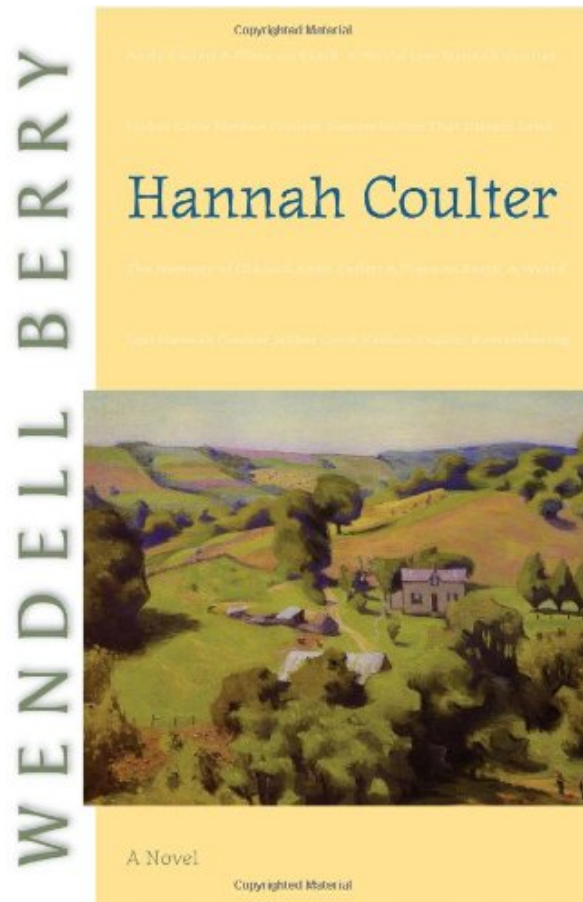


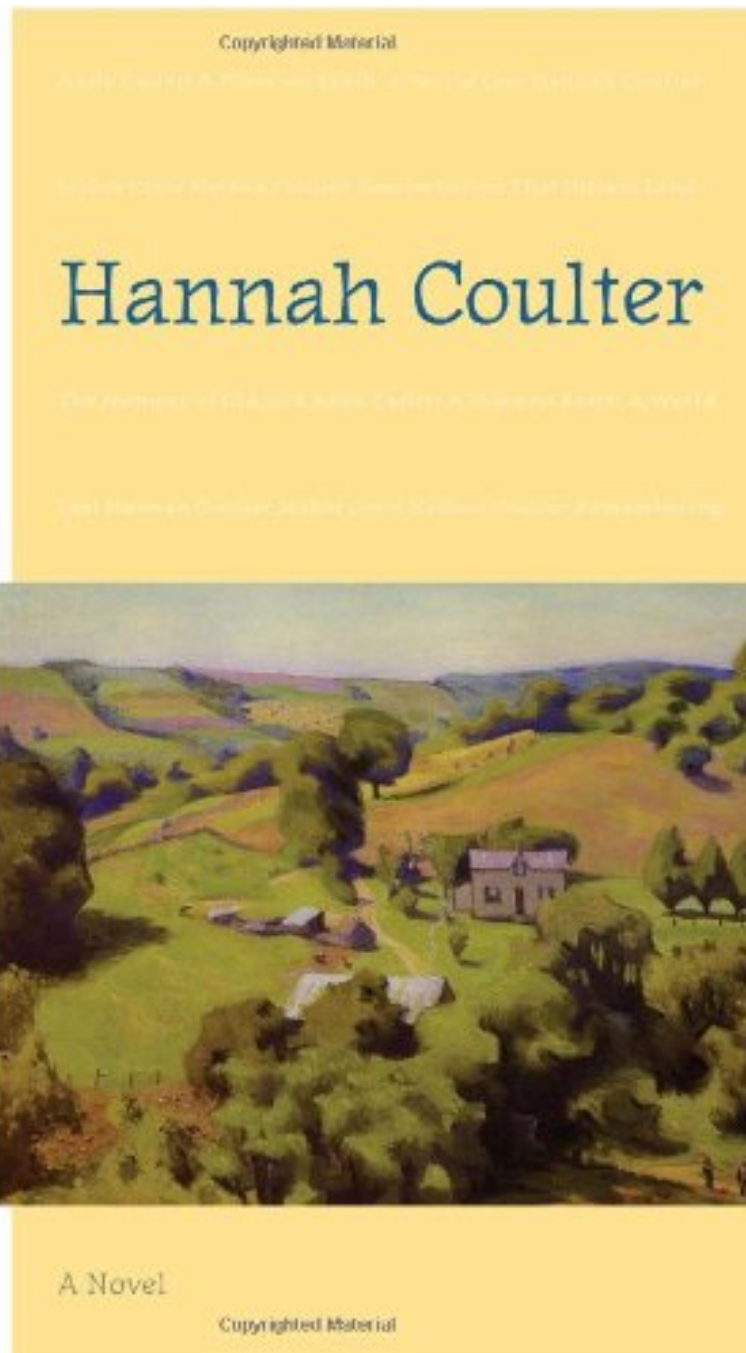
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From Publishers Weekly

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"Ignorant boys, killing each other," is just about all Nathan Coulter would tell his wife, friends, and family about the Battle of Okinawa in the spring of 1945. Life carried on for the community of Port William, Kentucky, as some boys returned from the war and the lives of others were mourned. In her seventies, Nathan's wife, Hannah, has time now to tell of the years since the war. In Wendell Berry's unforgettable prose, we learn of the Coulter's children, of the Feltners and Branches, and how survivors "live right on."

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A Story of a Farming Community - Becomes More Dramatic in the Last Quarter

By Donna Hill

I was three quarters of the way through this book before it started to become really meaningful to me. I cried towards the end. I can never give a book less than four stars if it makes me laugh or cry. But most of the book was a bit too dry for me and not detailed enough. I thought that I'd become immersed in the farm life, that I would learn about what a day in the life of Hannah Coulter was like. But other than a paragraph that listed the various chores Hannah performed, her life on the farm didn't really come to life. I felt emotionally distant from all the characters for much of the book, and then in the last quarter I felt myself become attached to the characters. Before that last quarter there was so little conflict in the story. World War II seemed to be the worst thing that happened, and then it was as though Port William was sort of a Utopian existence. There was a sense of community. I can't remember any conflicts until the last quarter and then the grown children and grandchildren stir things up a bit. Also, we get to hear more about Hannah's and Nathan's marriage which was so typical of so many marriages, mine included. The fights that blow over. The fact that husband and wife recognize that they're angry but can hardly remember what they're fighting about. If I were a reader who was prone to underlining and highlighting I would have done this in the last quarter of the book. Berry really seems to understand the complexities of marriage as well as the difficulties of having grown children and grandchildren who become distant from you both geographically and emotionally. If there would have been a bit more depth shown in their community life--if we could have become aware of challenges they had in the group dynamic, then I think this would have been a more complete story. For three quarters of the book I wasn't feeling an emotional connection. I was just saying to myself--these are nice people--they seem to get along well. But where's the drama here? Is there anything that is going to touch me deeply? And I'm thankful that eventually the story did resonate with me. Took a while, though.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Fictional memoir

By M. F. Crowl

I enjoyed great chunks of this book though occasionally felt it went around in circles a little. The writing is deceptively simple, and profound. The sense of people and place is strong. It's barely a novel, much more a fictional memoir. Nevertheless it moves the reader considerably, and is able to present a great breadth of time within its relatively few pages.

At times you crave a bit more dialogue (because when the dialogue does come it's superb) and sometimes a little more action of some sort (any sort) wouldn't have gone amiss. But the warmth of relationships, the detail of character and the wonderful feeling for what humanity is are all worth patiently reading through.

I could have done without the details of Nathan's probable experience of the war; it comes very late in the book (even though we've been forewarned of it from the beginning), and seems to jar against the book's poise. It doesn't contribute greatly to the story, except I suppose to show that this man had such integrity he was able to hold all this inside him and not poison others with it.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

An elegy for the simple, natural life we once led

By Style Hawk

Hannah Coulter, a high-school graduate coming from a rural mid-western background, has a remarkable gift for complex philosophical thinking and analysis of unwelcome modern trends. Like all Wendell Berry's writing, this book, too, beautifully displays his melodic, evocative prose. His characters are fully rounded and developed. I wish I knew my friends and neighbors as well. "Hannah Coulter" provides an elegy for the simpler life we once led in the mid-twentieth century, for the respect for nature and true love for the land. Berry illustrates the harshness and damage done by our increasingly corporate life, its nefarious effects upon farming in this country, upon small villages and upon the individuals who live there. Hannah's children, though raised on the farm, all leave and become almost unintelligible to her. The boy who truly loved the simple farming life ends up in agribusiness. The book ends on a happier note: the grandson who had wandered off into drug culture and the "wild life" returns home at last to run the farm in the old-fashioned way.

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