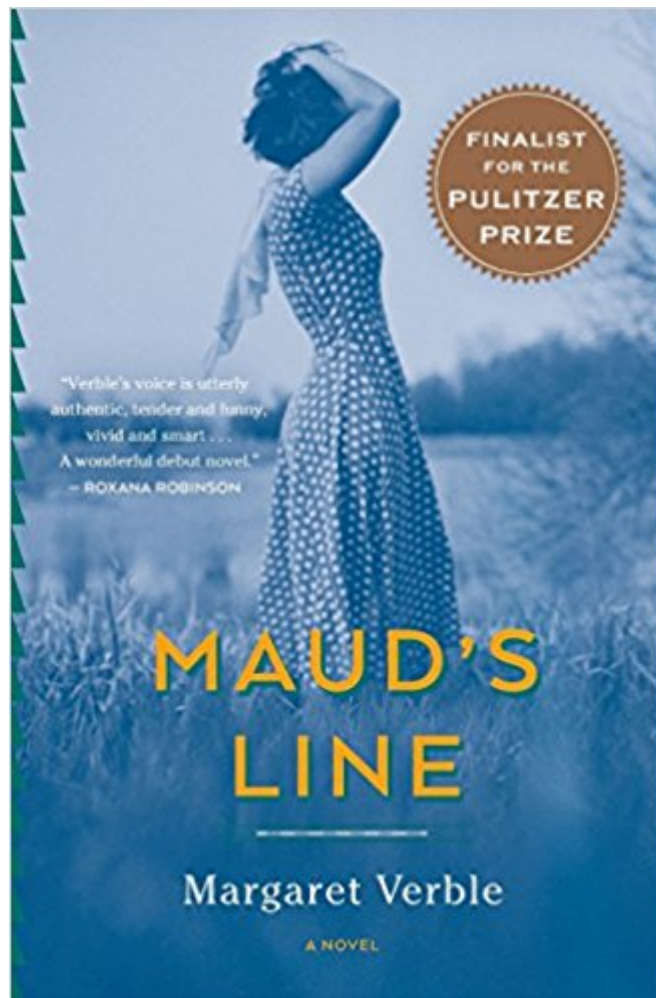


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Maud's Line



Synopsis

FINALIST FOR THE PULITZER PRIZEA debut novel chronicling the life and loves of a headstrong, earthy, and magnetic heroine Eastern Oklahoma, 1928. Eighteen-year-old Maud Nail lives with her rogue father and sensitive brother on one of the allotments parceled out by the U.S. Government to the Cherokees when their land was confiscated for Oklahoma's statehood. Maud's days are filled with hard work and simple pleasures, but often marked by violence and tragedy, a fact that she accepts with determined practicality. Her prospects for a better life are slim, but when a newcomer with good looks and books rides down her section line, she takes notice. Soon she finds herself facing a series of high-stakes decisions that will determine her future and those of her loved ones. Maud's Line is accessible, sensuous, and vivid. It will sit on the bookshelf alongside novels by Jim Harrison, Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, and other beloved chroniclers of the American West and its people.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As the brief bio note on the book informs us, Margaret Verble, author of *Maud's Line*, is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and has set her novel on her family's allotment land. Also, as the author's acknowledgment suggests, there is considerable true family history woven into this fictional account. I believe this is the reason the novel has so much depth, authenticity and vitality. Although I have never visited the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, I am quite familiar (having two Navajo sons-in-law) with the Navajo Nation in Arizona/New Mexico. This makes it easy to relate to the extended-family relationships described throughout Verble's narrative. Her

accounts of various incidents and locations are powerful and evocative. One thing that is of great interest is her discussion of the extreme literacy of Maud and her brother. Although I was aware from my time in Georgia that members of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation are indeed highly educated, I had not realized that in 1928, when the story is set, the Western Cherokees were so far beyond the norm for both Indian and Anglo culture of that era in terms of fascination with the printed word. Maud is a genuinely epic character, and her story is brilliantly told; one is able to relate to her traumas as well as to her joys, and feel completely sympathetic to all her choices, whether they are wise or not. The two men with whom she is involved, Billy and Booker, while totally different in personality, are both depicted as exceptionally worthy individuals; the reader has to trust that the one who DOESN'T get the girl is eventually okay with his loss and able to move on without too much regret or hard feelings.

Maud's line is a novel that takes place in Oklahoma in 1928. Before 1907, the many tribes (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and others) who had been forcibly relocated to the so called "Indian Territory" inhabited land given to them by the U.S. government throughout much of what was to become the State of Oklahoma. A law passed in 1907, the Oklahoma Enabling Act, created the state by combining the Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory. Although this technically ended the existence of Indian Territory, Native Americans living there continued to refer to the area they had settled by this name. Maud Nail, the main character of Maud's Line, lives on one of the small Indian Territory allotments in eastern Oklahoma with her father and brother. Her mother died of snake bite many years before, and Maud and her brother Lovely have been raised by their curmudgeonly father, who is frequently drunk and more than occasionally violent. Life in this setting is generally hard, without electricity, running water, indoor bathrooms, consistent access to medical care, or any amenities such as public libraries. Maud, an avid reader, has to borrow books from a well to do neighbor who has an extensive library. She mainly, however, spends her days looking after her menfolk and the chickens and the few cattle the family owns. Maud is independent and smart, handling horses, guns, knives, and other things we now associate with men in the West with thorough expertise. But she dreams of escaping Indian Territory and moving to a real city, such as Tulsa, where the 20th century with all its new technology and comfort, holds sway.

The rich history, the natural beauty of eastern Oklahoma, and the significance of Native American culture and people to the state should have resulted in an engaging, thought-provoking novel. Margaret Verble's "Maud's Line" did not have the impact that it had the potential to

deliver and did not create any emotion other than antipathy toward the protagonist, Maud Nail. Living on their allotment in eastern Oklahoma, Maud Nail, her brother Lovely, and her father Mustard contend with poverty, violent neighbors, few economic resources, and harsh living conditions. Maud longs for a better life – one of having plenty, of living in the big city and one including cultural and educational opportunities. An itinerant peddler and former teacher, Booker Wakefield encourages Maud's interest in reading and in himself. Succumbing to physical urges, Maud and Booker begin a torrid affair and plan a future together. Possibly exposed to rabies, Lovely receives the vaccine and, although free of the disease, is plagued by depression. Further, Mustard disappears and Maud must shoulder the burden of maintaining the homestead. Following Booker's departure, Maud discovers she is pregnant and begins a relationship with Billy Walkingstick. As the novel concludes, Maud's decisions affect not only her life but also the lives of many others. The development of plot and characters in "Maud's Line" does little to engage the reader. Some descriptive passages in which Maud and either Booker or Billy engage in intimate relations serve to depict Maud as someone who is self-absorbed and has no self-control. These explicit sections add little to the novel, but do create a feeling of disgust toward Maud.

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