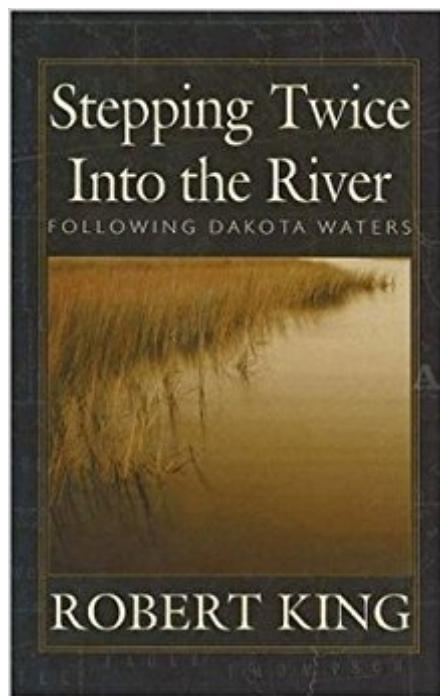


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# Stepping Twice Into The River: Following Dakota Waters



## Synopsis

What happens when an English professor takes a year off to explore a tiny prairie creek? Between mishaps with the canoe, long walks to the sites of Cheyenne villages and cavalry trenches, and gallons of coffee with isolated farmers, what happens is insight. In *Stepping Twice Into the River*, Robert King recounts his exploration of the "almost unnoticeable" along North Dakota's Sheyenne River, from its headwaters to river's end. With each experience along the way;tracing a military campaign, canoeing the river, visiting a ghost town and even trying to sleep in an ancient Cheyenne village;King examines a different aspect of the plains: Native American culture, pioneer society, religion, war, agriculture, and nature. Blending travel narrative and poetic reflection, *Stepping Twice Into the River* takes readers on a journey through time, revealing both stability and change and offering prairie wisdom. An affectionate and shrewd observer, King illuminates the ordinary from the perspectives of history, science, and literature. In the hands of this gifted thinker and writer, local facts yield universal metaphor.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

King undertakes a classic river journey, not in a land exotic to him but in North Dakota, his longtime home. And instead of traveling a fabled river, he follows the meandering Sheyenne, an "intermittent," even "ephemeral," waterway that threads across glacier-carved terrain that feels, as King notes in his low-key yet resonant way, remote even "when you're in the midst of it." His journey across the sparsely populated prairie inspires musings on why North Dakota's population is decreasing, and forays into little-known corners of the region's somber history. As he ponders the

struggles of homesteaders and the cruel war waged against Native Americans, he captures the aura of a profoundly elemental place afflicted by both drought and flood. Although he's thwarted in his plan to canoe on the Sheyenne when he finds after a few days that more portage than paddling is involved, King absorbs "the silence of the open land and mute river," and acquires fresh understanding of the North Dakotan character, the life of a modest river, and the nature of change. Donna SeamanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

"Every place has a story, even when the place in question seems to be in the middle of nowhere; But from the beginning of Robert King's memoir cum natural history tale, we are told that this place is indeed the middle of somewhere, the whole continent, in fact, and even if it weren't, it would still have a story worth sharing; The stories of people who call Dakota home, even the downright strange ones, are shared with the compassion and heart of an observer who also cares deeply about his subject." -- Bookpitch.com"King introduces a year-long exploration of nowhere; that is, North Dakota; and deftly leads us from reflections on the past of the entire Great Plains to reflections on the future of the area. Nowhere is also Everywhere; this writer's thoughts subtly encompass the history of decline and growth in the plains, and their relevance to the future; and this is the main topic of discussion everywhere in the West at this time." -- Linda Hasselstrom, author of *Between Grass and Sky*"King undertakes a classic river journey, not in a land exotic to him but in North Dakota, his longtime home. And instead of traveling a fabled river, he follows the meandering Sheyenne, an "intermittent," even "ephemeral," waterway that threads across glacier-carved terrain that feels, as King notes in his low-key yet resonant way, remote even "when you're in the midst of it." His journey across the sparsely populated prairie inspires musings on why North Dakota's population is decreasing, and forays into little-known corners of the region's somber history. As he ponders the struggles of homesteaders and the cruel war waged against Native Americans, he captures the aura of a profoundly elemental place afflicted by both drought and flood. Although he's thwarted in his plan to canoe on the Sheyenne when he finds after a few days that more portage than paddling is involved, King absorbs "the silence of the open land and mute river," and acquires fresh understanding of the North Dakotan character, the life of a modest river, and the nature of change." -- Donna Seaman, Booklist"Reading Robert King's *Stepping Twice Into the River: Following Dakota Waters* is stepping bravely into the past and seeing the true face of the North Dakota prairie; His journey starts in the center of the state, where many towns reached their zenith in the early 1900's.

Today, some are ghost towns. In these small, surviving communities, King pulls up a stool in small family cafes or friendly local bars and listens to the stories; His adventure is beyond a hike in a reclusive land, it is understanding the mind and heart of the Prairie and seeing it come to life. It is well worth reading." -- Grand Forks Herald "With books like these, we might hope that all of our small worlds can expand into broad-mindedness." -- Bloomsbury Review

Robert King's book on following a river in South Dakota throughout its length is a fascinating reflection on the geography and history of a little-known area of the west (little-known outside tourist haunts such as Mt. Rushmore). The book meanders like the river, and this is part of its charm. King is a poet, and his lyric talents enrich the descriptions of nature in the book, a work best appreciated by the reader who takes the time to dip into it, set it aside, and then dip into it again. The natural world of the west is more than mountains and forests.

John King, as a retired English Professor, wrote here a classic gem of a travel book. It blends his deep reading and understanding of the geology and history of a seemingly drab and neglected region while slowly traveling the length of the Sheyenne River in North Dakota. He provides accurate observations and interesting encounters with natives not always at their best. With his heartfelt fondness for the region and sadness over the inexorable depopulation hitting this area as with the entire North American center he philosophizes on the greater things touching all mortals struggling to live fully awake on earth. He ends his reflections often on ironic tones of ambiguity which as a reader you will find yourself looking forward to and smiling inwardly. As a conscientious teacher of English and poet he exhibits outstanding literary craftsmanship, invoking spot-on local odd little speech inflections and word choices. Since I'm from the area I know I'll be returning often to this book to review his geological and historical understandings - outshining much larger and boring volumes. People not from this area can learn about a real trip down a small North Dakota river; but even more, all can learn how a classic travel book should be crafted. You will never believe the surprise ending!

A wonderful read and stories from a little known corner of the country. North Dakota is terra incognito for most people, but King does a great job of tying it into the fabric of America.

I gave this book as a gift to my husband who is from the area. As he was reading it he constantly came and told me about places the author was talking about, and how we need to go and explore

some areas.

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