

# A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

U.S., 1992, d. Robert Redford



Norman and Paul are the two sons of a Montana Presbyterian minister. The period is that before World War I. They live in a devout household. Their father introduces them to the art and skills of flyfishing in the mountain rivers. As they grow up, Norman is the studious son while Paul is the wilder boy, though he excels at the art of fishing.

Norman goes east to study while Paul becomes a local journalist. Norman returns home after many years. He is waiting for an appointment as a university lecturer in literature. The brothers' bonds are still strong even though Paul is a gambler and in debt to local thugs.

Norman is attracted to Jessie Burns. He falls foul of her family when her brother is severely sunburnt while lovemaking. He claimed he was fishing with the brothers. Father and sons go on an expedition together and Paul catches the fish of his life. Later, he is found dead in the streets, murdered because of his debts.

Years later, Norman, his wife and children attend a service at his father's church where he preaches on life and his sons.

A River Runs Through It is the third movie directed by Robert Redford (who provides the uncredited voice for Norman's commentary throughout the movie). Redford's movies include his Oscar-winning Ordinary People, The Milagro Beanfield War, Quiz Show, The Horse Whisperer and The Legend of Bagger Vance. This movie demonstrates the sensitivity he showed in his other movies. It takes up environmental themes and the beauty of nature.

The screenplay is based on Norman MacLean's memoir of his growing up in Montana. (Two other movie memoirs of author's childhoods are This Boy's Life and King of the Hill, released in 1992 and 1993.)

The spirituality of the Presbyterian minister and his household are portrayed beautifully by Tom Skerrit, especially in his sermons and his speeches to his sons. His love for flyfishing makes it a symbol for talent, skill, art and the means of showing God's grace.

Craig Sheffer is serious as Norman while the energy of the movie is in Brad Pitt's performance as the younger Paul. The movie hearkens back to a past that was not perfect but had the potential for a humane American dream.

