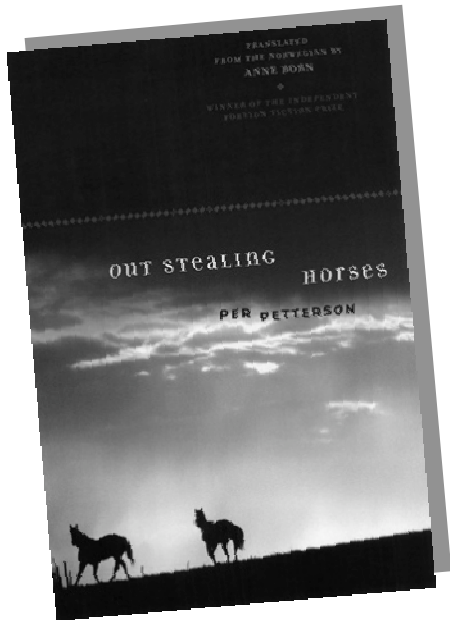




***OUT STEALING HORSES* by Per Petterson**



Trond’s friend Jon often appeared at his doorstep with an adventure in mind for the two of them.

But this morning was different. What began as a joy ride on “borrowed” horses end with Jon falling into a strange trance of grief. Trond soon learns what befell Jon earlier that day—an incident that marks the beginning of a series of vital losses for both boys.

At age sixty-seven, Trond has settled into a rustic cabin in an isolated part of eastern Norway to live the rest of his life with a quiet deliberation. A meeting with his only neighbor, however, forces him to reflect on that fateful summer.

Petterson’s subtle prose and profound vision make *Out Stealing Horses* an unforgettable novel—an achingly good read.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does Trond return to the country as an older man? What do you think he is hoping to find or evade?
2. Why does Trond’s father bring his son, and not his wife and daughter, to spend the summer of 1948 in the country? Consider the men and boys in the story, their expression and concealment of suffering, their bonds and conflicts with each other, and their methods of communication.
3. Trond never identifies his parents or Jon’s parents by name, despite their central and active roles. Still, at the heart of the narrative is Trond’s realization that even familiar grownups can have complex and dangerous secrets. Consider the children’s perspectives on adults in *Out Stealing Horses*. To what degree does Trond understand, admire, or find fault with his father? As an adult, does he resemble his father?
4. What do you think Jon is feeling and thinking the morning he asks Trond to go “out stealing horses” with him?
5. About the town near his country home, Trond offers, “People like it when you tell them things, in suitable portions, in a modest, intimate tone, and they think they know you, but they do not, they know about you. What they do is they fill in with their own feelings and opinions and assumptions.” When do you think Trond developed this attitude, and how does it affect his storytelling? What is the difference between knowing “about” a person, and knowing the person?
6. Consider Trond’s approaches, as narrator, to truth. To what degree should we trust or doubt his memory or his narration?
7. For Lars, Jon, and Trond, the summer of 1948 is marked by a new, pervasive sensation

of guilt. Discuss their varied responses to their own mistakes, and to feelings of guilt, loss, and grief. When do Trond or other characters experience happiness?

8. Discuss what you know about Norway in 1948, and reflect on the roles of Petterson's characters in history. Is Trond's father a "good guy"? By which measures?

9. Ellen, Trond's daughter, remembers her father reading *David Copperfield* aloud, and her childhood fear that it was possible to not be the hero of one's own life, a fear her father shared. Do you think Trond is the hero of his own story?

PRAISE FOR *OUT STEALING HORSES*:

"A gripping account of such originality as to expand the reader's own experience of life."— **Thomas McGuane**, *The New York Times Book Review*

"From the first terse sentences of this mesmerizing Norwegian novel about youth, memory, and, yes, horse stealing, **you know you're in the hands of a master storyteller.**" —*Newsweek*

"Petterson's spare and deliberate prose has astonishing force." — *The New Yorker*

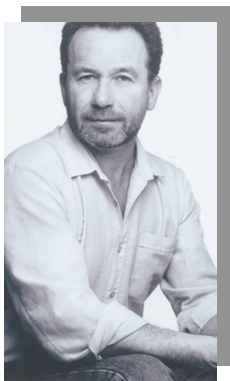
"Petterson tells a Bergman-esque tale of a solitary man coming to grips with his past in the captivating *Horses*." —*Entertainment Weekly*

"I was **completely taken** with *Out Stealing Horses* from the first page. I found it **powerful** yet so quietly done I could hear myself breathe and **I finished with an exhalation of awe.**"—**Amy Tan**

"It has to be said, on the evidence of these few novels, that Per Petterson is a profoundly gifted novelist."—**Richard Ford**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Per Petterson, a former bookseller turned internationally renowned author, was awarded



Britain's prestigious *Independent Foreign Fiction Prize* for *Out Stealing Horses*. He is the author of four previous novels, including *In the Wake* (Picador), which have established his reputation as one of Norway's best fiction writers. *Out Stealing Horses* also won the Norwegian Booksellers' Prize and the Critics' Award for Best Novel. Per Petterson was born in Oslo to a working class family. He has worked as a manual laborer, is a trained librarian, spent 12 years as a bookseller, and was a translator and literary critic before becoming a full-time writer.

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Photo credit: Torunn Nilsen

***TO SIBERIA* by Per Petterson forthcoming from Graywolf Press in Fall 2008!**