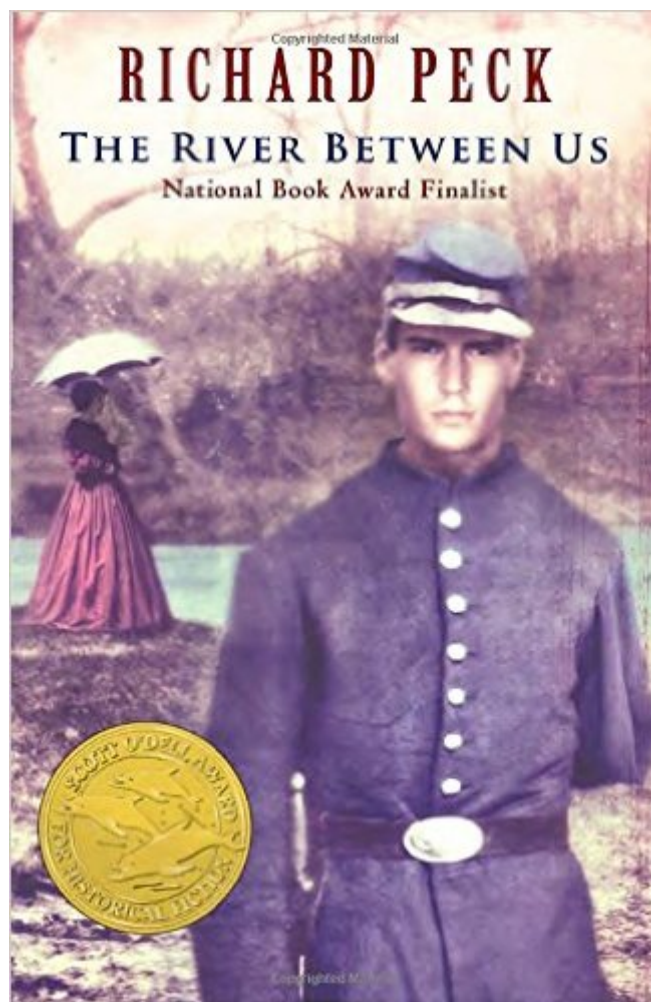


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# The River Between Us



## Synopsis

The year is 1861. Civil war is imminent and Tilly Pruitt's brother, Noah, is eager to go and fight on the side of the North. With her father long gone, Tilly, her sister, and their mother struggle to make ends meet and hold the dwindling Pruitt family together. Then one night a mysterious girl arrives on a steamboat bound for St. Louis. Delphine is unlike anyone the small river town has even seen. Mrs. Pruitt agrees to take Delphine and her dark, silent traveling companion in as boarders. No one in town knows what to make of the two strangers, and so the rumors fly. Is Delphine's companion a slave? Could they be spies for the South? Are the Pruitts traitors? A masterful tale of mystery and war, and a breathtaking portrait of the lifelong impact one person can have on another.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 740 (What's this?)

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Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.5 x 8.2 inches

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (55 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #109,938 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #111 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Military & Wars](#) #162 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1800s](#) #318 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Multigenerational](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

In *The River between Us*, Richard Peck has created a novel-long flashback, sandwiched between chapters spoken to us through the eyes of a young man travelling with his father to the town where his dad grew up. The flashback is the story of the young man's grandmother, Tilly Pruitt, who lived in the small Mississippi River town of Grand Tower along with her brother Noah, her frail little sister Cass, and their mother. One day, their very normal, hardworking town is turned on end when two

mysterious young ladies step off the riverboat. Tilly's mom, in need of money and sheepishly curious about the girls, invites them to stay at their home, unknowingly inviting them into their lives forever. As the war comes closer to the river, the townspeople begin whispering about the girls? Delphine, a lovely, well-dressed, refined and precocious young lady from New Orleans and Calinda, Delphine's mysterious black servant. It is Noah's decision to join the army and Delphine's stubbornness that causes Tilly to learn more about her relationship with her mother and her own ability to "put some starch in her spine." There is a great secret at work in this novel, and the reader knows it from the moment Delphine and Calinda enter the lives of the Pruitt family. What emerges is a story about family, friendship, disparity, courage, enchantment, mystery, and war. Peck's writing is brilliant in that he is constantly teasing the reader with hints, practically inviting him/her to just go ahead and guess what's going to happen. This book will remind readers that accidental moments can change the history of entire generations of people. With this novel, Richard Peck has sealed his place as one of THE best writer's of young adult fiction!

The book opens with a fifteen year old boy, his father and his two five year old brothers traveling to Grand Tower, Illinois. It's 1916 and the description of traveling by car is impressive; four flat tires in one day, cranking the Ford to get it started. In Grand Tower, the boy meets his relatives, old Tilly, her husband Dr. Hutchings, Tilly's twin brother Noah, and his wife Delphine. The story then jumps back in time to 1861. Tilly and Noah live with their mother and young sister Cass in this small town off of the Mississippi River. One evening, a boat stops and drops off a girl with violet eyes and grand skirts and a quiet, dark-skinned girl. The two girls from New Orleans, named Delphine and Calinda, move in with the Pruitt family and immediately change their lives. Tilly learns of the torture of wearing corsets, how Calinda makes pralines, and just how bad tensions between the Yankees and the Secessioners have become in the South. Still, little is known about the two girls. Is Calinda a slave? A servant? Has she been freed? Are they escaping from something? All questions are put on hold as Noah volunteers to fight for the Union Army. Then Tilly and Delphine become even closer as they travel to Cairo to find Noah and hopefully bring him home in one piece. They learn much about themselves and about each other, and that the bonds of friendship transcend the ideals of war. Richard Peck has written an extraordinary portrait of life for a Northern and Southern girl during the American Civil War. I never guessed exactly what Delphine's story was and was surprised by the many twists in the story. I would highly recommend this book to teens interested in historical fiction, especially those interested in learning about war and racial tension in America. This is a tremendous little book.

Tilly and her family are awaiting the start of the Civil War, fearing its approach to their small town and observing increasing divisions between north and south in their own world. The arrival in town of a glamorous young lady and her dark servant changes Tilly's world as the war's issues come to roost in her very house. *The River Between Us* is a masterful, realistic, fictional story of Civil War issues and times.

For all those who "dislike" historical fiction novels, ignore that label for this latest of Peck's writing sojourns. This story -told in a most convincing, compelling first person-narrative Peck's choice words, plots and characters leave the reader awash in the tumultuous times prior and during the Civil War. Fabulously detailed backdrop + seamless integration of themes sweep the reader along in this haunting and memorable story that will not be forgotten.

Peck has followed Mildred Taylor's "The Land" with another expose' of the exploitation of women of color by gentrified white men of the South up to the Civil War. It was a norm and secret that deserves unmasking for American children. But the book is so much more. Peck takes the reader on an road trip with a father and his sons by touring car in 1916 for a family reunion with elders. It is the elders' story told as teens experiencing Succession and the beginning of the Civil War in a region around the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. With this, Peck also brings in the cultural history of New Orleans. The artifacts and other markers for the time period are totally engrossing. Mystery and surprising revelations abound. It's a fascinating read by a master writer.

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