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A Fortunate Life (Puffin Story Books)



Synopsis

The remarkable story of an 'ordinary' man. Bert Facey's childhood ended when he was eight years old. That was when his grandmother had to send him away to work for his keep. Bert grew up tough in the vast, wild outback of Western Australia. He lived to eighty-seven, and wrote down his extraordinary story for his grandchildren. In spite of its difficulties and sufferings, he always believed he had had 'a fortunate life'. A classic in Australian writing, *A Fortunate Life* has been specially adapted for young readers.

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Customer Reviews

Just over a year ago my girlfriend Catherine, and I were in Australia. Luckily a few friends gave us a present of this book. We were heading off on our tour of the country and thought it would be a pleasant time filler. It was so much more. Mr Facey's description of his childhood was a vivid portrayal of humanity and cruelty. The love his grandmother showed him was balanced by the physical abuse of the farmer to whom he was hired. His mother's abandonment of him and his siblings deeply affected him, and his search for her was a theme throughout his life. The country we were reading about in the book was just outside our bus window which made it seem all the more

real. We were in awe of how he survived after getting separated from his co-workers on the cattle run. As we alked around Uluru we wondered how a young boy could manage. I felt I was a spectator in Man's most hideous hour as Mr Facey took us into the trenches of WW1. It was not hard to realise how the whole event had scarred his soul. Even when we learned of the deaths of his close friends and family his humility and optimism lifted the gloom. Back to the reality then of life after the war and how his fight continued for better rights for workers on the Sydney transport system. He rose to eminent heights in the bus company but just when things would threaten to go well some tragedy would knock him and his family. Again and again throughout his life he faced adversity with honour and courage and to share in this remarkable life through these pages was a privilege neither of us will ever forget.

The author of this book was approached in old age to talk about his life. From memory it was because of some form of literary grant or a history project. However what was said was of such quality it was transcribed into a book and became a huge seller in Australia. The author grew up in Australia around the time of Federation. He was abandoned by his mother and from an early age did tough farming work in Western Australia at the time pasture land was being cut out of the forests. His work involved ringbarking trees and then clearing them. He worked for a brutal man and his early life is enough to make anyone cry. He served at Gallipoli and was injured by a trench collapse. This restricted his ability to do farm work and after the first world war he worked as a tram driver and later owned a poultry farm. One of the most touching things about the book is the quality of its author. Despite the worst hardships imaginable not one bitter word comes from his mouth. His view of his life was that it was fortunate despite being the victim of countless acts of cruelty and abandonment. The book is a classif of life in early Australia and if there was justice in the world it should never go out of print.

When this book was first released, I saw that it had won a State Award (NSW Premier's Award). So I picked it up and started reading. I couldn't put it down. I bought it, read it and couldn't stop praising it. I was SO impressed that I bought 25 copies to give to friends for Christmas. Bert Facey, the man that this book is about, speaks to you from the book as your grandparents would tell you a story whilst you sat at their knee. It is beatifully told. Such courage in adversity, stoic in enduring pains, the love he shows to his family. I wish I could tell you more; but I belive that reviews that tell you about a book ruin the story. It has my highest recommendation! A must have book, to read again and again.

To summarise this book: Touching, sad, eye opener, humbling. A Fortunate Life is basically a biography of A. Facey. He recounts his whole life, right from when he was a child working in the Australian outback in astonishing detail. Much of it is set in rural Australia in the late 80's to early 90's. I had to read this book as part of an English assignment at school. The purpose was to gain as much insight as possible to what the average Aussie had to endure at the time. This book couldn't be more suitable -- Mr Facey, like many others struggling to survive, had to cope with the harsh, somewhat barren outback with obstacles like floods and droughts, wolves and snakes. The book should certainly appeal to you if you have an interest in the Australian outback or the way of life of Aussies back a century ago.

This is one of the best autobiographies written by a non-writer that I have ever read. Despite its simplicity and straightforward style (or perhaps because of it), this book held me spellbound every moment that I was reading it. I recommend this book highly to anyone who has an interest in the human condition, the pioneer spirit, Australiana, politics, or just life in general! A B Facey is an Australian treasure, and his book should be required reading for all Australian schoolchildren

This is a good book to read to start a conversation about expectations in life, and how different generations have such different hopes. I found it difficult to relate to his ability to forgive the terrible exploitation he suffered. Maybe that is the difference, our generation gets angry; we have our basic needs met, so we can afford the luxury of indignation. The story is simply written, and sounds as if it has been taken down verbatim. This makes it feel very real, even if I remain bewildered by Facey's acceptance of his lot.

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