

Completed
10/20/2021

The River - A Spiritually Transforming Journey

Submitted to Writer's Digest Competitions - Self-Published Book Awards 2021 on 04/02/2021

Writer's Digest Competitions shared feedback with you.

12/06/2021

Structure, Organization, Pacing: Please choose the statement that best applies to this book.

Reviewer 1

This book is exemplary in its structure, organization, and pacing. The structure of the chapters/parts aid in a compelling organization of the story or information. The pacing is even throughout and matches the tone/genre of the book.

Optional: Additional reader commentary related to Structure, Organization, Pacing:

Reviewer 1

Very good, natural pace. Author uses good instinct for unrolling the steps of the structure while at the same time creating a sense of connection with the author. Transitions between chapters are especially good, creating smooth flow from one section to another without the need for leading questions or attempts at intrigue that feel forced. Author puts her attention instead to engaging the reader, crafting a connection, which is what moves the story along consistently. Well done.

Production Quality and Cover Design: Please choose the statement that best applies to this book.

Reviewer 1

This book is exemplary in production quality and cover design. The physical materials, printing, and binding are of professional quality and traditional industry standards. The typesetting and page layout (including illustrations, images, or figures) are easy to follow, thoughtfully designed, and error free. The cover appears to be professionally designed and is compellingly related to the content/genre of the book.

Optional: Additional reader commentary related to Production Quality and Cover Design:

Reviewer 1

The cover calls to the vastness of water and how small we are in relation to bodies of water on the earth. Throughout the book, the river serves as a symbol of life and the energy of faith. Author put successful effort into descriptions of the river, from its coolness and clarity, especially to its movement, to how sections of it join together to create a stronger

flow. We're immersed in the visuals of this force of nature, happy to admire it when it's calm, happy to follow its direction or fight against it. This is an image of faith's potential power, a fine foundation to set for the reader entering the book. It defines a path to transformation. Well done.

Plot, Story, or Topic Appeal: Please choose the statement that best applies to this book.

Reviewer 1

This book is exemplary in its choice of topic or theme of the story. It is unique but still has strong appeal for most readers in its intended genre. If the book is fiction or narrative nonfiction, the book is well plotted. If the book is poetry or prescriptive nonfiction, there is a cohesive theme or delivery of information.

Optional: Additional reader commentary related to Plot, Story, or Topic Appeal:

Reviewer 1

A fresh rendering of the spiritual transformation journey, creating an immersive presence of Jesus that underscores the need to trust, let go and follow. Within Melissa's odyssey, God inspires her to face her fears, worries and disconnection from God's power in her life. In these lessons, as the boat's flow takes us gently along in a rhythm that calms the soul and opens us to feeling more receptive, she learns how to cooperate with God's work in her life. The plot unfolds naturally, and author has crafted successful points of connection, relatability, and especially great variation in the weight of the issues being considered. The plot brings us her multifaceted life so that we observe the work on each of the layers. Dialogue serves as an excellent tool of the story, as author presents Melissa's questions/emotions with the narrative power of presence in the scene, setting, differentiated voices, and the natural patterns of speech including pauses in answering, simpler sentences, and especially inner dialogue. Author paints great settings as well, such as the directive to turn by the boulder in the near distance. Movement is written extremely well throughout, as by water, by walking and in cadence of plotlines.

Character Appeal and Development: Please choose the statement that best applies to this book.

Reviewer 1

This book is exemplary in character appeal (or interest) and development. All main characters (including antagonists) are unique and fully fleshed out with compelling, layered motivations and traits. Secondary characters are unique and have a meaningful purpose.

Optional: Additional reader commentary related to Character Appeal and Development (for fiction and narrative nonfiction only):

Reviewer 1

There seems to be a growth of ease in the story as it progresses. In the beginning, Melissa states her feelings, such as feeling lost and restless. As the book progresses, we find Melissa better able to express her emotions through sensory details and dialogue, connection to others, in the energy of voice. Melissa's spirit and character then become deeper and more experiential, which makes her a stronger messenger and example for us. Well done. Author

seems to have gotten in the flow of her own writing, seeming to follow her own directives to let go, trust and allow. We feel an evolution in how we're experiencing her, smartly crafted on several levels. Nice work, author. The lessons of this book are far more resonant when coming through the channel of a realistic, relatable character.

Voice and Writing Style: Please choose the statement that best applies to this book.

Reviewer 1

This book is exemplary in its voice and writing style. It has a unique voice, and the writing style is consistent throughout. The style and tone are also consistent with or will appeal to readers of the intended genre.

Optional: Additional reader commentary related to Voice and Writing Style:

Reviewer 1

Great clarity in the author's writing voice, with richness in the demonstrations of her 'before' status where she's run by her emotions. Author crafts these emotions well throughout, again with the evolution of them as more realistic and more experiential as the book progresses. It's in this softening and evolution that the author's voice resonates. We're shown in the storyline, rather than told, and the author gives Mellissa a rich voice with growing comfort in letting go and developing more faith.

In a few explanatory sentences, please share with the entrant 1-3 things that you enjoyed or that readers will find compelling about this book and why.

Reviewer 1

The duality of the safe twin and the adventurous twin creates a terrific symbol for the reader's inner turmoil. Author crafts an embodiment of a power struggle that has gripped Melissa for so long, and the reader can relate to the analogy. It's a strength of the book, and the author wisely reminds us of its presence throughout the story. The focus shifts more from the safe twin to the adventurous one. Excellent choices of scripture throughout, such as 'stepped down from the boat and walked on the waters' on page 37, in great placement for its strength of imagery and a reminder of the reader's existing connections to faith. That's a highlight of this book, that the author allows and encourages the reader to build upon their own current faith conditions. Where applicable, we find that we already have some experience with positive insights! Very nice. There is some gorgeous phrasing throughout the book, such as 'took away the icy hands from my heart' on page 134. Reader often feels the sensory detail of the author's phrasing and imagery and thus grows more connected to the story along the way.

In a few explanatory sentences, please share with the entrant 1-3 of the most important aspects that need to be improved for this book to be more appealing/useful to readers and why.

Reviewer 1

We just need a little bit more setting and scene for the most fascinating of plotlines, such as the interactions about Melissa being told she is now free and being called 'one of the sealed

ones' on page 226. The reader's attention perks up. This feels very important, and we want to get as present as we can for this information to be given to us. I would have loved for the author to dial up the sensory detail so that we can be fully present in that moment. As this brilliant scene plays out, with mention of the angels looking over their balconies to observe us and mention of the trade areas, it feels like we're missing so much experience here! The situations being shared here haven't been illustrated and given depth, setting, sensory details...all the elements of enlivened existence. The dialogue is terrific, an exceptional delivery of keys. But it just needs life breathed into it to really soar.