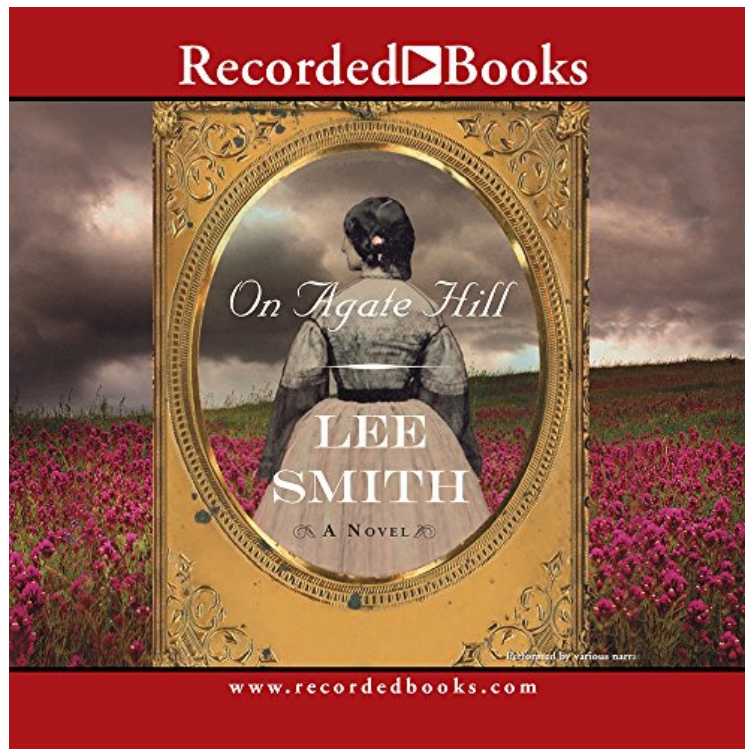



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On Agate Hill

Lee Smith

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Lee Smith : On Agate Hill before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Agate Hill:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Lee Smith is a treasure. By Michael F. Lee Smith hits home runs and On Agate Hill is one of her best. Family and place are central to her brilliant works and here she begins her story with the end of the Confederate War in a run down North Carolina manor. A complex protagonist and a multitude of engaging characters. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Loved it! By Alexandra Grabbe On Agate Hill is a delicious book, one you can lose yourself in. Lee Smith's indomitable heroine Molly Petree is a Civil War orphan. We follow her adventures through diary entries and letters over a period of 55 years. The reader first encounters 13 year-old Molly at Agate Hill, the run-down plantation where she seeks refuge in a cubbyhole from a strange menagerie of folks who inhabit the mansion after the death of her aunt, its former owner. Simon Black, Molly's mysterious benefactor, sees to her education at an academy for girls, then follows her career as a schoolteacher in the back hills, near the border of Tennessee, and subsequent marriage to a charming backwoods banjo player. Lee Smith has woven a captivating story with her inimitable style and scintillating voice. On Agate Hill will delight anyone who loved Fair and Tender Ladies. It is a mystery to me why this author has not received more acclaim for her body of work. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Post Cival War South By DiF The burdens endured by those living in post civil war Carolina Appalachia are carefully illustrated by the author in this treatise on the life of one girl from

childhood until death. Written in form of letters and diary, it provides an insightful exposition of the war-based traumas that linger even after the killing has stopped. It also shows the prejudices and mores directing the lives of individuals from the time. It is an interesting story, revealing a piece of Americana oft overlooked: the after-effects of the Civil War from the Southern perspective.

A dusty box discovered in the wreckage of a once prosperous plantation on Agate Hill in North Carolina contains the remnants of an extraordinary life: diaries, letters, poems, songs, newspaper clippings, court records, marbles, rocks, dolls, and bones. It's through these treasured mementos that we meet Molly Petree. Raised in those ruins and orphaned by the Civil War, Molly is a refugee who has no interest in self-pity. When a mysterious benefactor appears out her father's past to rescue her, she never looks back. Spanning half a century, *On Agate Hill* follows Molly's passionate, picaresque journey through love, betrayal, motherhood, a murder trial-and back home to Agate Hill under circumstances she never could have imagined.

From Publishers Weekly Following her 2001 Southern Book Critics Circle award-winning novel, *The Last Girls*, Smith's 10th novel chronicles the post-Civil War life of a precocious Southern orphan using a slapdash patchwork of journal entries, letters, poems, recipes, songs, catechism and court records. Molly Petree, the daughter of a slain Confederate soldier, begins a diary on her 13th birthday in May 1872, near Hillsborough, N.C., at Agate Hill, the plantation of her legal guardian, Uncle Junius Hall. Seeing herself as "a ghost girl wafting through this ghost house," Molly falls under the spiteful devices of Selena, the scheming housekeeper, who marries a terminally ill Junius to inherit the plantation. Under Selena's watch, Molly is neglected, mistreated and raped before Simon Black, who fought alongside Molly's father, rescues her and enrolls her in the Gatewood Academy, where she becomes "an educated, fancy woman." After graduating, Molly marries sweet-talking Jacky, but tragedy dogs her: Jacky dies a particularly miserable death, their baby dies and when Molly returns to Agate Hill, she finds it in ruins. Molly's story is moving, but Smith's structure the narrative's pieces are the contents of "a box of old stuff" found during Agate Hill's renovation is needlessly contrived. (Sept. 19) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist This ever-popular novelist, author of, most recently, *The Last Girls* (2002), now turns to an increasingly popular genre, historical fiction, and does so with a bang. The time period that Lee knowledgeably sets this involving novel within encompasses the years between the end of the Civil War and the dawn of the twentieth century; her setting is North Carolina. The novel's conceit is not particularly original--it is purportedly composed of real documents, such as diary entries, letters, and court documents--but Lee nevertheless fashions, in gradual steps through time and from the telling perspectives of different individuals, the riveting character Molly Petree. She is an orphan at war's end, dependent on being taken in by family, but she isn't the type to stay at the mercy of anyone. Her pluck, fortitude, resilience, and wisdom prompt her not only to take things as they come during this disorderly time in the South but also to dictate her own fortune and make a life in which she can find some peace. This novel of treachery and resolution provides an intimate picture of the Reconstruction era, observed through the lens not of politicians and generals but of the common folk upon whose shoulders the actual reconstruction of a ravaged land rested. Brad Hooper Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "Big, sweeping, epic." - MSNBC.COM (MSNBC.COM) "The willful Molly is no hot-house flower, and her determination to live her own life for better or worse is the driving force of this powerful novel." USA Today (USA Today) "Smith is such a beautiful writer, tough and full of grace, that soon you are lost in the half-light of Molly's haunted landscape, listening to the voices of the ghosts, wishing they'd let you stay longer." The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (Atlanta Journal-Constitution) "Lyric intensity. . . . Inventive storytelling. . . . Lee Smith imagines the life of an orphan girl growing up in the post-Civil War South." The New York Times Book (New York Times Book) "On Agate Hill, as lyrical and haunting as an Appalachian ballad, casts a powerful charm." The Boston Globe (Boston Globe)