

# Novelist Molly Gloss

Kicking off 2005's Reading in the Rain

**THE JUMP-OFF CREEK**, a novel by Molly Gloss. Copyright 1989. First Mariner Books edition, 1998. Paperback, \$12.

In prose almost as austere as the diary entries homesteader Lydia Sanderson writes "over the printed vertical columns of the accounting ledger she had taken over for a journal," Molly Gloss's acclaimed novel depicts the life of a 19th century Oregonian. Lydia's unsentimental commitment to her own piece of land and the hardships she bears speak to a dedication few readers today can imagine.

Gloss is an exceptional storyteller, running out parallel stories of Lydia's good neighbors, Tim Whiteaker and Blue Odell, who owned another hardscrabble ranch nearby as well as the rough wolf trappers Harley, Jack and Danny, who shot calves sometimes or set out poisoned bait that killed them. Lydia's married woman friend, Evelyn Walker, lived a full day's ride away and had children to take care of, so they seldom visited. Evelyn's husband, Mike, rode over to buy

goat milk from Lydia for the family. The goats, mule, horses and cows people kept were not pets but food, transportation and livelihood. Likewise, of necessity they killed rabbits, porcupines, deer and other wildlife to eat.

Lydia seems to me a superwoman. She lived by herself in the wilds of Oregon in 1895, and she hunted, farmed, ranched, built

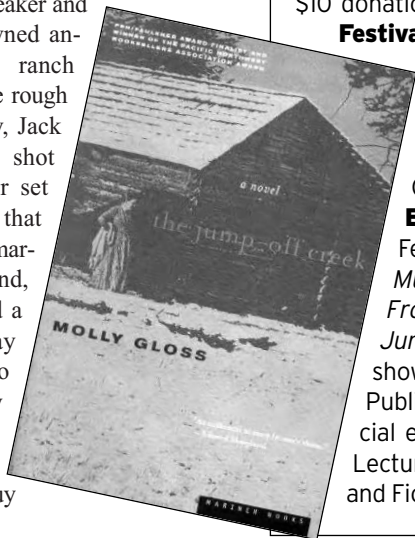
fences, roofed and patched her log cabin. She also logged, as in this passage:

"She had not much experience at cutting down trees, and not a man's arm strength, so it was slow and effortful work. With the axe she made a bird's-mouth on the down side of a tree and then sawed through slowly from the high side, stopping often to let her arms hang down tiredly, or to put an edge on the saw, or to drive in a wedge when the weight of the tree pinched the saw and hung it up."

Gloss renders the story of the unforgettable characters living along the Jump-Off Creek in her lucid, lean style, setting down

their stories with loving respect. Gloss's tenderness toward the good people in her novel touches me, and know I will long remember them. An accessible, dramatic story perfect for reading aloud to each other or to read alone and discuss with others, this book will charm readers of all ages.

Molly Gloss will read, take questions and receive an honor from the UO Library Special Collections division at 7 pm on Feb. 18 in First United Methodist Church. More Readin' in the Rain activities and events follow in Book Notes, or you can go to [www.read-rain.org](http://www.read-rain.org). **EW**



**Book Notes** (Jan. 27 – March 3): **Henry Allen**, UO Professor of Literature in the Clark Honors College, reads from a new short story at 8 pm on Jan. 27 in the Knight Library Browsing Room. ...Linfield College teacher, poet **Sandra Jensen** kicks off Readin' in the Rain at 7 pm on Feb. 1 in the UO Bookstore. Come by to pick up a free official reader's guide. ...Journalist, teacher, essayist and memoirist **Debra Gwartney** speaks "In Defense of the Memoir" at 7 pm on Feb. 3 at Baker Downtown Center. \$5-\$10 donation suggested for non-members of Willamette Writers. ...Corvallis' third annual **Tcha Tee Man Wi Storytelling Festival** welcomes all ages to multicultural events Feb. 3 - Feb. 6 ([amarchant@speak.org](mailto:amarchant@speak.org) for details.) One adults-only event, "Bawdy Tales," is a fundraiser requiring tickets, available through Corvallis Parks and Recreation. ...**Jeffrey Ostler** (*The Plains Sioux and US Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*) speaks at 7 pm on Feb. 8 in Knight Library Browsing Room. ... Poet **Robert Hill Long** (*Poetry*) reads at 8 pm on Feb. 10 in Knight Library Browsing Room. ...**Tracy Chevalier** (*Girl with a Pearl Earring*) reads at 7:30 pm on Feb. 10 in Portland's Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. Tickets, call Literary Arts (503) 227-2583. ... Storytelling performances by **Shannon Applegate** and **Esther Stutzman** illustrate the cultural history of local encounters between pioneers and native people at 2 pm on Feb. 12 in Eugene Public Library. ...Catch **Marc Acito** (*How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship and Musical Theater*) at 7 pm on Feb. 15 in UO Bookstore. ...Poet and memoirist **Judith Barrington** (*Writing the Memoir: From Truth to Art*) and poet **Timothy Whitsel** read at 7 pm on Feb. 15 in Eugene Public Library. ...**Molly Gloss** (*The Jump-Off Creek*) reads at 7 pm on Feb. 18 in First United Methodist Church. ...**Susan Buttrille** reads from journals to show the influence of historical perceptions on contemporary concepts of freedom at 7 pm on Feb. 22 at Springfield Public Library. ...**Nancy Hoskins** (*The Coptic Tapestry Albums*) speaks and shows slides at 6:30 pm on Feb. 23 in the special events hall of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum. ...**Patricia Limerick** (*The Legacy of Conquest*) delivers the Clark Lecture in the Humanities at 8 pm on Feb. 24 in 182 Lillis Hall. ...**Helen Southworth** speaks on "The Intersecting Realities and Fictions of Virginia Woolf and Colette" at 4:30 pm on Feb. 25 in 301 Chapman Hall.

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