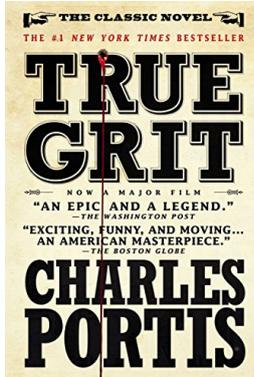


True Grit

By Charles Portis



There is no knowing what lies in a man's heart. On a trip to buy ponies, Frank Ross is killed by one of his own workers. Tom Chaney shoots him down in the street for a horse, \$150 cash, and two Californian gold pieces. Ross's unusually mature and single-minded fourteen-year-old daughter Mattie travels to claim his body, and finds that the authorities are doing nothing to find Chaney. Then she hears of Rooster - a man, she's told, who has grit - and convinces him to join her in a quest into dark, dangerous Indian territory to hunt Chaney down and avenge her father's murder.

Things to think about

Here are some topics and questions to think about while reading the book, with space to write any comments you have. Feel free to come up with your own discussion points and comments if you prefer.

1. How might you describe the way Mattie tells her story, the voice she uses, to someone who has not read the book?
2. Which characters do you think have true grit? and are there any disadvantages to having it?
3. Rooster tells Mattie "All you can do with a rat is kill him or let him be." Does the novel support action which is more or less outside the law?

4. Mattie has a generally low opinion of men - is this borne out by the book?

5. And what opinion does the reader form of her?

6. There are two film versions of True Grit - if you have seen either or both, how do you think it/they compare to a reading of the book?

7. Do you feel at all sorry for Mattie at the end of the story?

8. In an obituary of Charles Portis, the then Governor of Arkansas said "we are proud of the way he showcased our beautiful state." What sense of the State (if any) did you get from the novel?

About the author

Charles Portis, 1933 - 2020, started his career as a journalist before becoming a full-time writer in 1964. In addition to *True Grit*, his novels include *Norwood*, 1966, and *The Dog of the South*, 1979.

You can make any other notes about the book on the back of this page.