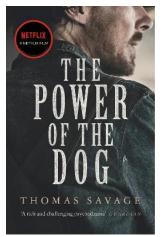


The Power of the Dog

By Thomas Savage



The Power of the Dog is a 1967 novel, made into a film in 2021 starring Benedict Cumberbatch. It's set in the Western state of Montana on a cattle ranch owned by two brothers: Phil who seems to be a classic cowboy – a tough, swaggering man's man, and George, mild-mannered and slower and seemingly lacking Phil's magnetic masculinity. But things begin to unravel when George brings home a wife and her teenaged son Peter.

A Guardian review of the film summed it up like this: 'The Power of the Dog is a Western gothic psychodrama: mysterious, malicious, with a lethal ending that creeps up behind you like a thief'.

Discussion Questions

1. What effect did the opening of the book have on you?

2. How would you describe the relationship between Phil and George? What do you think of the fact that they have shared a bedroom with narrow twin beds all their lives until George brings home Rose?

3.	Why is Phil so devoted to the memory of Bronco Henry?
4.	Rose's son Peter is an awkward, spidery teenager who at first is seen by Phil as weak and unmasculine. What do you think of Peter and what he does in the novel?
5.	At the beginning of the book there is a quotation from the Book of Psalms in the Bible: Deliver my soul from the sword/ My darling from the power of the dog. What do you think the title means?
6.	Anything else that interested you about the book?