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Restoring the Burnt Child

A Primer

By William Kloefkorn

Updated with discussion questions

Publication Date: March 1, 2008

\$14.95 | paper

192 pages | 5 ¾ x 8 ¼

978-0-8032-1872-7

\$16.50 Canadian/£9.99 UK

One Book, One Nebraska Selection for 2008
Winner of a 2004 Nebraska Book Award

Book Synopsis:

Memoir of a small-town boy's life in 1940s Kansas that continues the story began in *This Death by Drowning*.

Included in this Press Kit:

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University of Nebraska Press

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Book Description

Restoring the Burnt Child is the second volume in William Kloefkorn's four-part memoir, which will cover the four elements: water, fire, earth, and air. Negotiating the no man's land between ages nine and thirteen, this memoir of a small-town boy's life in 1940s Kansas continues the story Kloefkorn began in his much-loved volume *This Death by Drowning*. With characteristic humor and in prose as lyrical as his poetry, he describes the unsentimental education he received at the hands of the denizens of Urie's Barber Shop and the Rexall Drugstore and at the knees of the true characters who made up his family. From the "firefly" stunt that nearly burns down his home to the distant firestorms of World War II, fire presents an endless range of subtle and surprising lessons for the boy, whose impressions Kloefkorn conveys with the immediacy, naiveté, and poignancy of youth—and reconsiders with the wisdom and distance of age.

Restoring the Burnt Child powerfully brings to life the lost, unforgettable world of a boy, and of a poet, coming of age in midcentury middle America. Chosen as a 2008 One Book, One Nebraska selection, this Bison Books edition is updated with a set of discussion questions.

Praise for *Restoring the Burnt Child*:

"As history both personal and communal, and as performance both written and oral, this book gives us [Kloefkorn] at his best."—David Pichaske, *Great Plains Quarterly*

"Imagine the renegade, 14-year-old spirit of Huck Finn in the massive body of Merlin Olsen, gentlest of the giants who were the L.A. Rams' legendary 'Fearsome Foursome,' and you've got Bill Kloefkorn. Or as close as you can get."—Harold E. Hall, *Lincoln Journal Star*

"A marvelous book, full of the intensity and grittiness of language drawn from rocky Kansas fields and from great literature. Kloefkorn's voice provides a perspective unlike any other I've read, one that has had me reading out loud, saying, 'Listen to this.'"—Peggy Shumaker, author of *Just Breathe Normally*

Please visit this book's [Web page](#):

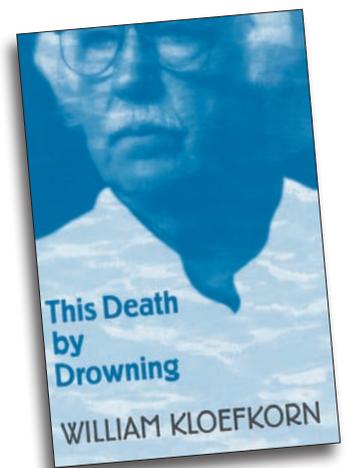
(<http://nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Restoring-the-Burnt-Child,671198.aspx>)
for the most current post-publication praise.

Praise for Previous Works

Praise for *This Death by Drowning*:

"Kloefkorn writes prose with pensive grace, one thought flowing into another as water flows into rivers, lakes, and oceans that become his metaphors for the world's connectedness. This is a quirky, funny, moving memoir full of unforgettable characters; readers will not have seen its like before and shouldn't expect to again."
—*Library Journal*

"An elegant, moving little book . . . that reflects the author's fascination and intense personal involvement with waters big and small, from farm ponds to the South Pacific. The author writes of his youthful wonder at the family's cistern; of watching his grandmother at a washtub in the backyard, 'washing her long white hair in



rainwater'; of his and a paraplegic friend's baptism in Shannon's Creek, performed by a preacher whose sermons were like 'Kansas waterways, neither deep nor wide.' Water drenches these pages, written about in a style that both immerses and quenches."—*Kirkus*

"Is there any human corner left to illuminate? To surprise? Absolutely, as these wondrous recollections by poet Kloefkorn prove. This slim volume is filled with provocative perceptions garnered from daily life. . . . After the last line, readers will turn back to page one and start again, slowly."—*Publisher's Weekly*

"Sad, humorous, whimsical, sentimental, and of course poetic, these memoirs celebrate the profundity of life and death."—*Booklist*

Praise for *At Home on This Moveable Earth*:

"Kloefkorn has a marvelous prose style that manages to be both plainspoken and fluid, with frequent dollops of humor."—*Bloomsbury Review*

"Kloefkorn . . . reveals his life one vignette at a time in this richly evocative third installment of his proposed four-part memoir. With deftly wrought imagery so powerful and yet so poetic, this son of the plains and prairie gentles the reader back to days that nostalgia dictates must be remembered as sweetly unadorned. And yet, as Kloefkorn so cogently illustrates, no time is truly simple, and the transition from innocence to knowledge can be both magical and frightening. It takes a rare and gifted writer to seamlessly transport the reader through the devastating fury of rumbling tornadoes and the delectable freshness of romantic awakenings. Kloefkorn is just such a writer, and the journey is a lyrical experience."—*Booklist*

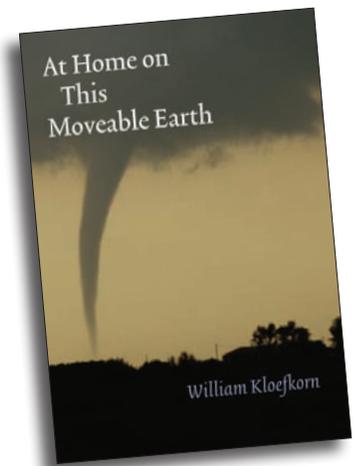
"Ultimately this book, like Kloefkorn's previous memoirs *This Death by Drowning* (1995) and *Restoring the Burnt Child* (2003), is a textbook for writers. Its eleven exemplary monologues jumpcut delightfully through time while remaining grounded in place and theme: one good story after another. . . . Kloefkorn belongs in the company of Twain and Frost because he gets the authentic American tone of voice in his work. The joy of his poetry and of this memoir is his exploration of the familiar territory of our language and our personal and collective history."—David R. Pichaske, *Great Plains Quarterly*

"[Kloefkorn] has a knack for gracefully interrupting one story to tell another, interrupting that story to tell yet another, then gradually working his way back, tying up loose ends."—*Nebraska Life*

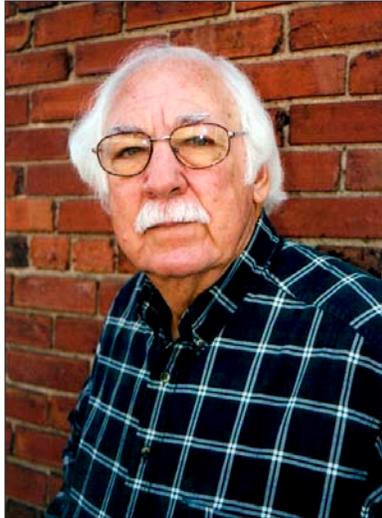
"Kloefkorn's sonorous prose and poetic sensibilities heighten the reader's perception of life . . . the book's structure is carefully wrought; he uses counterpoint, flashbacks, shifting points of view and variations on themes to shape his memoir. Kloefkorn is a consummate storyteller with a keen eye and a gift for language that is beautiful in its simplicity."—*Publishers Weekly Annex*

"Completely delightful and yet deeply thought-provoking. The voice of these essays is so personable, so easy, so intelligent, and at the same time so humble, that I felt at times as if I was listening to these essays rather than reading them."—Kent Meyers, the author of *The Work of Wolves*

"What a joy to swoop with Bill Kloefkorn through circles of memory. He leads us down into the soil of the cellar so that we might soar into the sublime tower of the tornado of his recollection."—Linda Hasselstrom, author of *Between Grass and Sky*



Author Biography



JIM REESE

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William Kloefkorn is Nebraska's state poet and emeritus professor of English at Nebraska Wesleyan University. He is the author of many volumes of poetry and two other memoirs, *This Death by Drowning* and *At Home on This Moveable Earth*, both published by the University of Nebraska Press.

Additional Information

Events

For an up-to-date listing of author appearances, visit the Author Events and Book Signings page on the UNP Web site at: <http://nebraskapress.unl.edu/Catalog/ProductEvents.aspx?SearchOnLoad=true>

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If you would like to receive a [review copy](#), schedule an author interview, or obtain more information regarding publishing an excerpt, contact Alicia Christensen, achristensen6@unl.edu.

Examination Copies

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NEW from the University of Nebraska Press

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