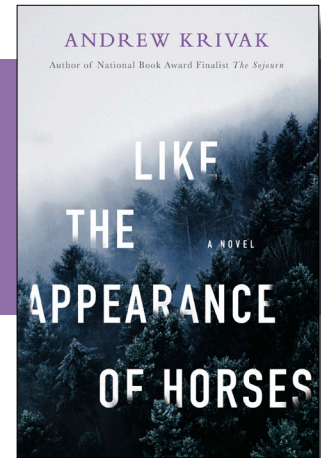




Like the Appearance of Horses

A Novel by Andrew Krivak

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“[A] resplendent multigenerational family saga.” —*Booklist* (starred review)

“Subtle and nuanced.” —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“Intensely readable.” —*Library Journal* (starred review)

“Krivak charts a razor-fine line between war and peace, damnation and redemption, estrangement and love, and along the way gives us a gorgeously detailed portrait of an American family. Whether he’s writing about battle, the natural world, or the most private, searing matters of the heart, Krivak brings a rare mastery to the page, a synthesis of language and deep perception that delivers revelation after revelation. *Like the Appearance of Horses* is a major achievement.”
—**Ben Fountain**, author of *Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk* and *Devil Makes Three*

INTRODUCTION

Rooted in the small, mountain town of Dardan, Pennsylvania, where patriarch Jozef Vinich settled after surviving World War I, *Like the Appearance of Horses* immerses us in the intimate lives of a family whose fierce bonds have been shaped by the great conflicts of the past century. It is a story about borders drawn within families as well as around nations, and redrawn by ethnicity, prejudice, and war. It is also a tender story of love and how it is tested by duty, loyalty, and honor.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Like the Appearance of Horses is the third book in my Dardan Trilogy, which includes *The Sojourn* and *The Signal Flame* and tells the story of the Vinich/Konar family within the sweep of the past century. The title is taken from the prophet Joel, when he compares a plague of locusts that has come to devour the land to war horses and says, “their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses, so they run.” Disappearance and appearance in this novel are sibling themes to war and homecoming. So too the question: *What is noble and what is cowardly?* The question is not an either/or, but rather a both/and. The details that emerge from stories such as these must be told as they are always told: with a bold, painful, and intimate truth that emerges precisely when the listener is ready to hear them.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. *Like the Appearance of Horses* is largely a story told in peacetime about the reverberating effects of war within a family. It takes place over decades but is related nonchronologically. How do the family’s stories crisscross over time to tell larger truths about war and homecoming, love and human connection?



2. The novel is as much about the women who stay at home as the men who go to war. How are the men's experiences in war similar or different? What about their homecomings? What personal battles must the men and women fight during their separation, and—after the men return—how is the gulf of understanding between them bridged?
3. Duty and honor are constant themes threaded throughout the novel. Using the character genealogy from the back of the book as a reference, how do each of the men and women perceive their duties to family and country? Do any of them fail in their duty? Which of their actions would you describe as honorable or dishonorable?
4. The novel opens from Hannah's perspective, and it ends with hers as well. Why is this important? What impact does she have on everyone's lives? How does she learn to cope with tragedy? And, as the other characters grapple with illness, addiction, and grief, how do they each find fortitude?
5. Many of the characters have a deep connection with the Pennsylvania mountains and the land around it. How does the connection with nature heal the wounds of war? How does it set the scene for or reopen conflict?
6. Did you understand why Samuel, who had been held prisoner in Vietnam, left Dardan? What did he find as he traveled across the American Southwest? What other journeys are integral to the story?
7. The title of the novel is taken from the Biblical quote "their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like warhorses, so they run." How does this connect to the themes of the novel? How does war challenge the characters' relationship with their faith?
8. How do the generations within this family pass down lessons about the responsibilities and costs of war? Are the children fated to make the same choices as their parents? Does the novel impart the message that there is hope for peace and healing?
9. Krivak has described a childhood memory that inspired part of the novel: "I was a ten-year-old boy when the airmen POWs returned from Hoa Lo prison in 1973. . . . All of a sudden, there they were. Alive. Beaten, but alive." What iconic moments from our country's many wars over the years are touched on in the novel? Does Krivak explore any aspects of these wars that you weren't familiar with? For example, did you know about the roles of the Romani people or mountaineer soldiers in WWII?
10. Although this is a freestanding novel that contains its own complete narrative, it is also the culminating book in a trilogy. If you've read the preceding novels, how did *Like the Appearance of Horses* further the themes of *The Sojourn* and *The Signal Flame*? How does it recall ancient epic poems of wars and odysseys? What does Krivak's saga add to the modern canon of war literature? And do you believe the story of this family has now been fully told?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Krivak is the author of four novels: *The Bear*, a Banff Mountain Book Competition winner, Massachusetts Book Award winner, LibraryReads selection, and NEA Big Read selection, as well as the freestanding novels of the Dardan Trilogy, which include *The Sojourn*, a National Book Award finalist and winner of both the Chautauqua Prize and Dayton Literary Peace Prize; *The Signal Flame*, a Chautauqua Prize finalist; and *Like the Appearance of Horses*. He lives with his wife and three children in Somerville, Massachusetts, and Jaffrey, New Hampshire. Visit his website at www.andrewkrivak.com.

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