

## Further Reading

**Peace Like a River**  
**Leif Enger (2001)**  
**ENGER**

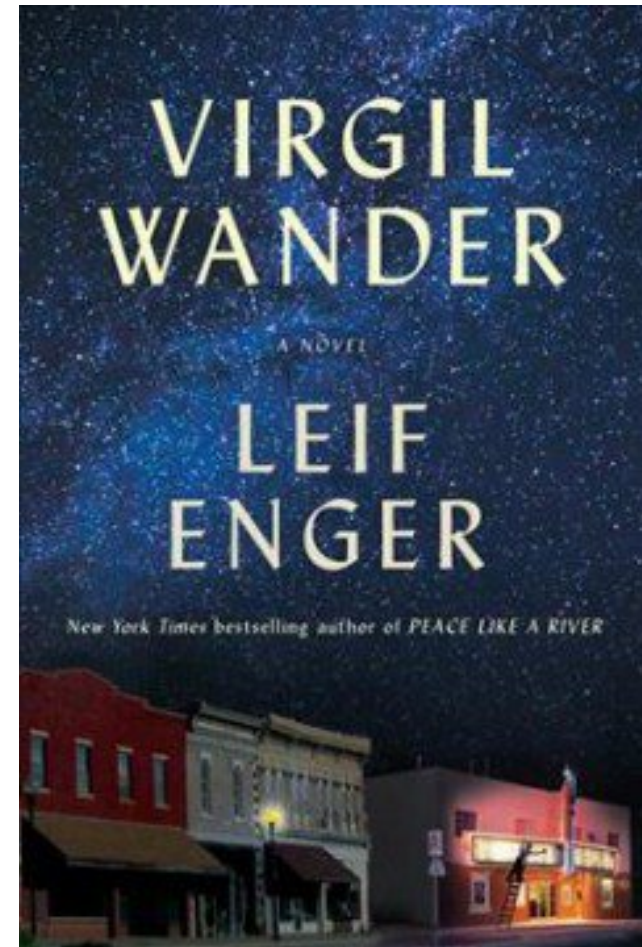
The quiet 1960s mid-western life of the Land family--father Jeremiah, and children, Reuben, Davy and Swede--is upended when Davy kills two teenage boys who had come to harm the family. On the morning of his sentencing, Davy escapes from his cell and the Lands set out in search of him. Their search is at once a heroic quest, a tragedy, a love story, and a haunting meditation on the possibility of magic in the everyday world.

**So Brave, Young, and Handsome**  
**Leif Enger (2008)**  
**ENGER**

Novelist Monte Becket isn't a terribly distinguished figure; his first and only published work hit five years before the story's start and he is about to reclaim his job at a small-town Minnesota post office when he meets Glendon Hale, a former outlaw who is traveling to Mexico to find his estranged wife. He persuades Becket to join him, and the two set off on a long journey peopled with sharply carved characters (among them a Pinkerton thug tracking down Glendon) and splendid surprises.

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## Book Discussion Guide



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## About the Book

Midwestern movie house owner Virgil Wander is "cruising along at medium altitude" when his car flies off the road into icy Lake Superior. Virgil survives but his language and memory are altered and he emerges into a world no longer familiar to him.

Awakening in this new life, Virgil begins to piece together his personal history and the lore of his broken town, with the help of a cast of affable and curious locals. Into this community returns a shimmering prodigal son who may hold the key to reviving their town. With intelligent humor and captivating whimsy, Leif Enger conjures a remarkable portrait of a region and its residents, who, for reasons of choice or circumstance, never made it out of their defunct industrial district.

## Discussion Questions

1. Virgil's spectacular sail off the road into Lake Superior is the inciting force of this novel. How does the catastrophe structure the novel, for Virgil and the townspeople?
2. Virgil muses often about the kindness or cruelty of women. Who are the women he contemplates or fantasizes about, and how do they respond to him—as friends, mother figures, lovers?
3. What are the odds stacked against the people of Greenstone? Some would say this is a complicated, even disenchanting time in America. How does the book affirm or dispute this view of the country?
4. Greenstone feels like any American town that has been passed over or forgotten. Why are so many novelists and playwrights fascinated by small-town America? What ideas do they allow us to explore? What other novels, plays, or films explore similar themes?
5. Enger has a flair for eccentric characters. What makes them memorable? How are they quintessentially human, for good or for ill?
6. What is the symbolism of the kites and their effect on the fliers? Why is kite-flying so addictive to some characters?
7. How does the loss of Rune's son reverberate through the novel? How is he represented and mythologized throughout the novel?
8. Discuss the cache of old films and the way gatherings and friendships grow around them. What do they mean to Virgil? How culpable was he in keeping them? Why does he finally return the contraband and what ensues?
9. What does Adam Leer represent in the novel and how is this demonstrated to the reader? Is Leer an archetypal character of motiveless malignity like Iago from Othello, or something more complex?
10. How do Virgil and Rune change as they recover from their respective injuries? How do other characters help in their recoveries, and how do their chosen activities help them regain their footing?

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