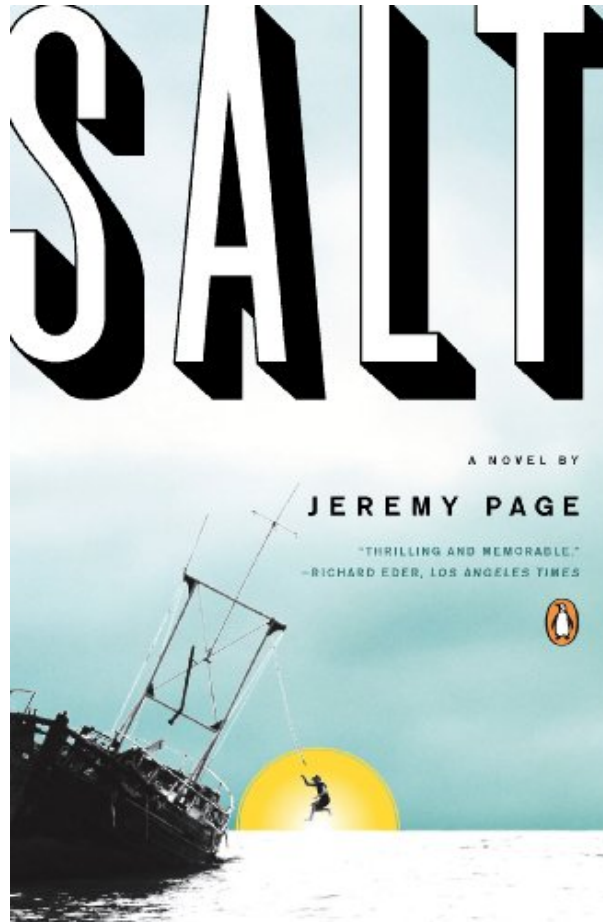
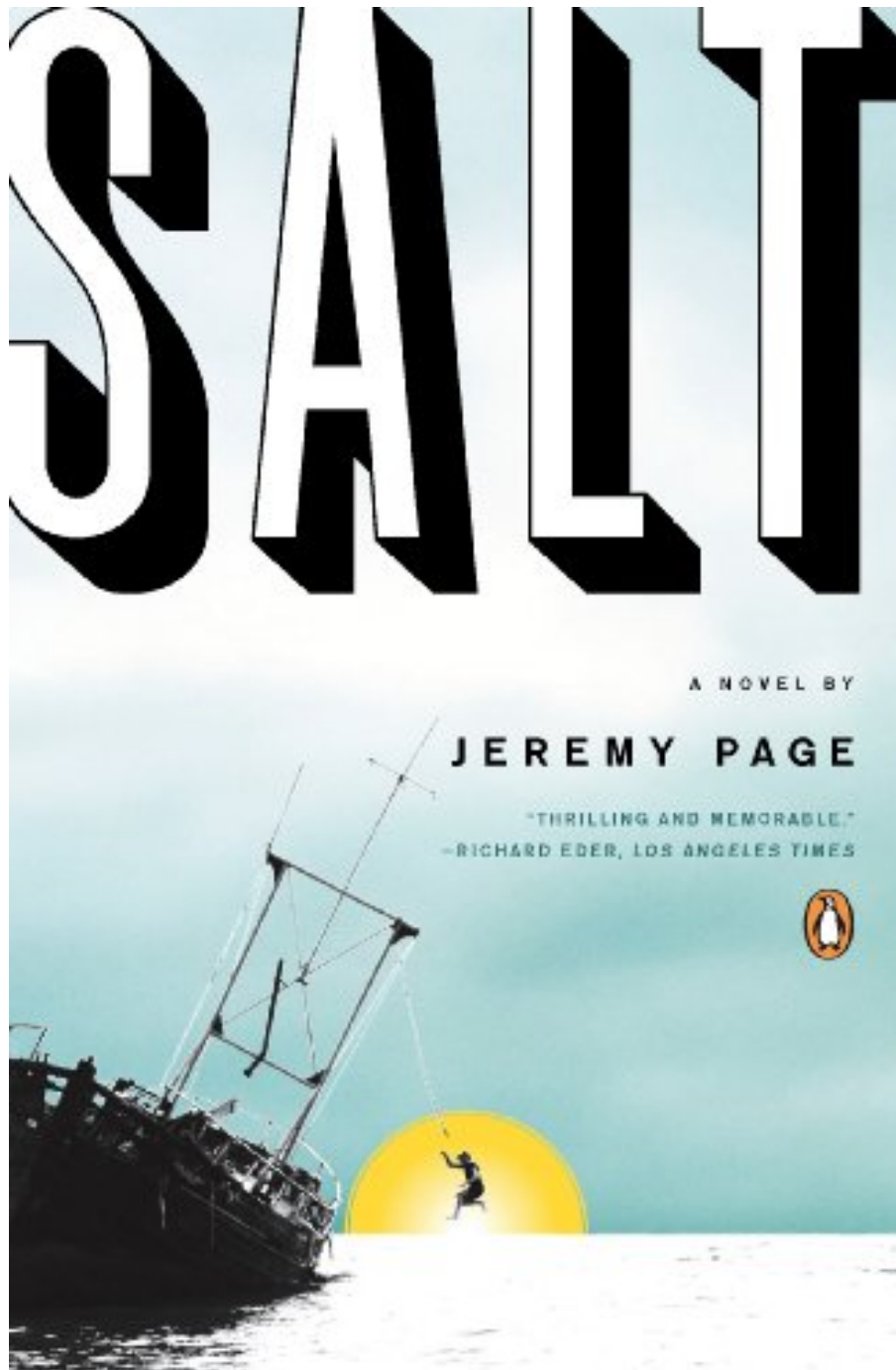


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A family saga that explores the relationship between people and the landscape in which they live, Jeremy Page's atmospheric and lyrical debut novel is revelatory in its use of language and is the work of a significant new writer. *Salt* tells of a German airman who falls from the sky in 1945 and lands in the middle of a salt marsh in England. Goose, a local woman, digs him up and brings him home. After staying for just nine months, he vanishes in a makeshift boat, leaving Goose behind with a newborn daughter, Lil. Taught to read the clouds by her mother, Lil's childhood is curious and strange, but when she becomes the object of two brothers' desire, her life takes a tragic turn. Fifteen years later, it is Lil's son, Pip, who attempts to make sense of his family's intriguing history. Beguiled by the lovely Elsie who lives nearby, Pip grows up in the marsh like generations before him—but will their unfortunate past repeat itself?

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Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

As I Closed The Back Cover, I Closed My Eyes And Said A Silent Thanks For A Tale Well Told

By Hannah Bochart

Once, long ago, there was a time when books could rise through the ranks of their peers to stand as timeless classics that needed only their title and author as an introduction. *GRAPES OF WRATH*, *CATCHER IN THE RYE*, *THE SOUND AND THE FURY*, *MOBY DICK*, *LITTLE WOMEN*, *A TALE OF TWO CITIES*, all of these monoliths will ever need is their reputation to proceed them. Those days are gone, my friends. In bookstores of today the shelves are lined with so-called classics that only need a stamp of approval from Oprah's Book Club (which usually requires a certain amount of sap oozing from the material) to gain attention. Fleeting attention, I should say, since the self-life of fame is short in the written world these days. And in the flood of ready-made popularity, true, timeless gems are swept away into the shoals of obscurity. Such is the case with *SALT*. When I found a copy of it sitting on the shelf of a local bookstore, I was intrigued by the unlikely cover, and so, ignoring the ancient warning, judged it to be a worth while expenditure. And this time, I was right to have done so.

The tale begins not with an introduction to the narrator, as one would expect, but on the windswept flats of Norfolk, England. The year is 1945, the "Good War" was almost over, and being incapacitated on the shores of enemy soil is one place a young German soldier would not wish to find himself. But there he is, sunk neck-deep in a salt marsh, at the mercy of a strange young woman who happens to be passing by. Without a second thought given to wartime etiquette, Goose, as we learn the girl is called, fishes "Hands," as she mistakenly calls him, from the grip of the marsh, takes him home, cleans him up, and cooks him a meal. And so Hands stays, at least until Goose, nine months later, goes into labor with the child they conceived. At this point, Hands vanishes out to sea on a makeshift boat, leaving Goose to deliver the child alone.

We are then privy to the tale of Goose and Hands daughter, Lil' whose strange upbringing causes her to be something of an enticing mystery to a pair of brothers with the unlikely monikers of "Shrimp" and "Kipper." This attention eventually sees her off the marsh in disgrace at age 16, with the younger of the brothers at her side. She and her young, almost-husband, move inland to start a different life together. At last, ninety-two pages in, we meet our strange narrator: Pip. A child born without a cry, much to his parent's dismay, and who, from his first moments out of the womb on, never utters a word. Pip communicates with the outside world by means of a notebook that always hangs about his neck, but we lucky ones are allowed a look inside Pip's head, which is a strange place indeed. He tells his tale in an almost non-linear fashion, alluding to future events as though they have already happened and describing his dreams and fantasies as though they were really happening, only to snap back to reality several pages later. Through his few lucid moments we begin to understand that the pain and suffering that spans generations has compounded to produce young Pip, a walking manifestation of his mother's and grandmother's shadows who is, at the same time, very much his own soul. So, it is through the eyes of a boy who may or may not be mad that we see this tale unfold against the haunting backdrop of the Norfolk salt marshes, a landscape that begins to become a character in and of itself, both sinister and breathtakingly lovely.

SALT is a difficult read, but one that calls upon the reader to rise the challenge, and dive head first into Mr. Page's lace-like prose. Whether or not the world may herald this tome as a classic or not, my copy sits firmly beside Hemingway and Steinbeck, never to budge. Bravo.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Hidden Gem

By W. Eilers

I found this to be an amazing debut written with the confidence as old and weathered as the setting. Page creates a world that is seductive, darkly sweet in landscape and story perpetually damp and dreary.

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Too Deep for its Own Good

By Anne B. Duggan

After reading the jacket cover, I was excited about this interesting historical fiction. I thought it would not be run-of-the-mill story, which it was. However, the author decided to be "deep." And by deep, I mean vague. I think I missed half of the plot because the author was so busy discussing the events in metaphorical terms and saying what happened by not saying it that he never actually tells the reader what happened. It was extremely frustrating, because overall the story idea was good.

Unfortunately, a good plot idea doesn't go far if the author doesn't convey it. This book was so "deep" and "meaningful" that it was just vague and confusing.

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