



Icefields

Thomas Wharton

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Winner of:

The Banff Grand National Prize for Literature

The Writers Guild of Alberta Best First Book Award

The Commonwealth Best First Novel Prize (Caribbean and Canada Region)

At a quarter past three in the afternoon, on August 17, 1898, Doctor Edward Byrne slipped on the ice of Acturus glacier in the Canadian Rockies and slid into a crevasse . . .

Nearly sixty feet below the surface, Byrne is wedged upside down between the narrowing walls of a chasm, fighting his desire to sleep. The ice in front of him is lit with a pale blue-green radiance. There, embedded in the pure, antediluvian glacier, Byrne sees something that will inextricably link him to the vast bed of ice, and the people who inhabit this strange corner of the world. In this moment, his life becomes a quest to uncover the mystery of the icefield that almost became his tomb.

Within the deceptively simple framework of a tourist guidebook, *Icefields* takes a breathtaking, imaginative look at the human spirit, loss, myth, and elusive truths. Here is an impressive literary landscape, and an expedition unlike any you have ever experienced.

Icefields Details

Date : Published October 1st 1996 by Washington Square Press (first published 1995)

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Author : Thomas Wharton

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From Reader Review **Icefields** for online ebook

Christina says

This is an inspiring journey through glacial landscapes, the development of glaciology and through life. Despite the sub-theme of human destruction of this icy wilderness it is a heartwarming story.

Megs says

I don't read outdoorsy books. I'm much more of a fantasy/historical fiction kind of girl. That said, I loved *Icefields*! Loved it! Wharton did an amazing job. It was historical, geological and unsettling.

Sara says

I read this book in grade 10 English Honors (yeah that's right).

I remember the author came to our classroom and we asked him about some of the 'metaphors' our teacher told us about. He told us that they weren't intended to be metaphors. That's when I realized that writers write and readers find the meaning. Especially if you're teaching an Honors class.

Debra says

I can see why this book's format isn't for everyone, but Michael Wharton is such a lyrical writer. And I don't care for cold any more than I enjoy heat. Nonetheless, he made me want to visit glaciers.

Kayleigh says

Read this book for a university English course and must say, it was magic. I absolutely loved and so has everyone I recommended it to.

Peter B says

Canada Reads selection for February 2008. This is the story of Dr. Edward Byrne who falls in a crevice while climbing in the Rockies and who returns years later to find the mythical figure he discovered while hanging upside down and waiting to be rescued. He eventually does find remnants of a seed container which has come through the glacier many years later. This is the subplot of the development of Jasper and one man's attempts to prevent a development which he sees as being detrimental to the environment and his obsession with glaciation. A good story but not a huge piece of literature. My partner liked it much more

than I did, and after talking about it I can see that there may be more than I first saw.

A.M.G. says

Rating: 3.3 / 5

In the end, there isn't really much substance here. The premise is boring, and all in all this isn't ordinarily a book that I would even look twice at, but, for Canadian Lit, which I'm taking as a mandatory course, I've had to read it.

To its credit, the writing style is tolerable, even though it's written in the post-modernist style, which involves a lot of fragmentation in both the sentences and the narrative; but, honestly, I don't know how the writer could have made a whole book out of this. Word count-wise, it probably isn't worth the 270+ pages it fills up, and, if shortened on the repetitive and "I don't give a shit" details about the icefields themselves, it would make a better short story. Some things like romance and WWI and character development is thrown in, but most of it feels like an aside, or like a last-minute thought, rather than the whole point of the story. Because of its connection to Native American narratives--which I liked--I can understand why we're studying it for this class, but that doesn't mean I like it overall. Literally, just the Native American parts are what I liked, but those are over within the first third or so of the book, with the rest focusing on the white-man-adventurer protagonist and how obsessed he is with ice.

I don't know, maybe some people are into it and like this sort of thing, but for me, I don't even plan on picking it, or anything like it, up ever again--unless, of course...*sighs* I have to for school or something.

Sarah says

I can't say that I loved this book or that it was a bad book. It was just ok. I was pulled in from the beginning. It started out strong and very interesting but eventually it became confusing and almost boring. It was difficult for me to keep up with how often the story was jumping and I had to almost force myself to read it. I do want to say though that I felt the ending was perfect. I don't think I would recommend this book to anyone, but I am certainly glad I read it.

Kelly says

Thomas Wharton was the writer in residence my second year of university and he was such a cool and inspirational guy. I loved Icefields - vivid Canadiana wrapped up in a fantastic story.

Jenn says

Alberta at the end of the 19th century. Descriptions of glaciers. Zero plot. Not a terribly engaging read.

Ryan says

A pleasant surprise. A quiet, thoughtful book that is driven by its mystery. I wish it were longer.

Nancy says

I loved having this to read as we journeyed through the Canadian Rockies and the Columbia Icefield. The idea for this book and the plot that resulted are fascinating. Unfortunately, the writing is below par and the changes in characters and time periods is confusing.

I really like to read about an area that I'm visiting, preferably something fictional, as I feel I get the passion of the setting more clearly. I did love that actual historical figures are woven into this story, and it was pretty thrilling to be visiting locales that play such an important part in this novel.

Jason Lesher says

I read *Icefields* a couple of years ago and can't honestly remember more than a few basic details about the characters and plot. But Wharton's writing perfectly matched the sparse, beautiful setting in the Canadian Rockies to take me to another place. Reading the book was a meditative, spiritual experience.

Sima says

I couldn't put the book down. I would have been in high school when this came out, but maybe because I was in a small mountain town in southern Alberta it wasn't on our curriculum. Snow and ice have been in the media a lot lately with *Chasing Ice* and Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* series, so in many ways this book was ahead of its time in 1995, but perfectly placed for discussion in 2008 as a Canada Reads selection.

I loved the story lines of all the different characters, full of dreams as well as heartache and how they wove together in Jasper. Dr. Bryne's attraction to the Icefields and his observations that even back then they were receding touched my heart.

Laura Buechler says

Started strong but then got super boring. Did not finish.
