



**[{ YOUNG MEN AND FIRE }] by MacLean,
Norman (AUTHOR) Sep-01-1992 [Hardcover]**

Norman MacLean

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On August 5, 1949, a crew of 15 Smokejumpers, the U.S. Forest Service's elite airborne firefighters, stepped into the sky above a remote forest fire in the Montana wilderness. Less than two hours after their jump, all but three of these men were dead or fatally burned. Exactly what happened in Mann Gulch that day has been obscured by years of grief and controversy. Now a master storyteller finally gives the Mann Gulch fire its due as tragedy. Norman Maclean first saw the Mann Gulch fire as it still burned in mid-August 1949, and even then he knew he would one day become a part of its story. Maclean spent the last 14 years of his life studying and reliving the fire. "Young Men & Fire" is the result, a story of Montana, of the ways of wildfires, firefighters, and fire scientists, and especially of a crew, young and proud, who "hadn't learned to count the odds and to sense they might owe the universe a tragedy." This tale is also Maclean's own, the story of a writer obsessed by a strange and human horror, unable to let the truth die with these young men, searching for the last - and lasting - word. Nature's violence collides with human fallibility in "Young Men & Fire." The Smokejumpers in Mann Gulch are trapped by a "blowup," a deadly explosion of flame and wind rarely encountered and little understood at the time. Only seconds ahead of the approaching firestorm, the foreman, R. Wagner Dodge, throws himself into the ashes of an "escape fire" - and survives as his confused men run, their last moments obscured by smoke. The parents of the dead cry murder, charging that the foreman's fire killed their boys. Years later, Maclean returns to the scene with two of the survivors and pursues the mysteries that Mann Gulch has kept hidden since 1949. From the words of witnesses, the evidence of history, and the research of fire scientists, Maclean at last assembles the scattered pieces of the Mann Gulch tragedy.

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