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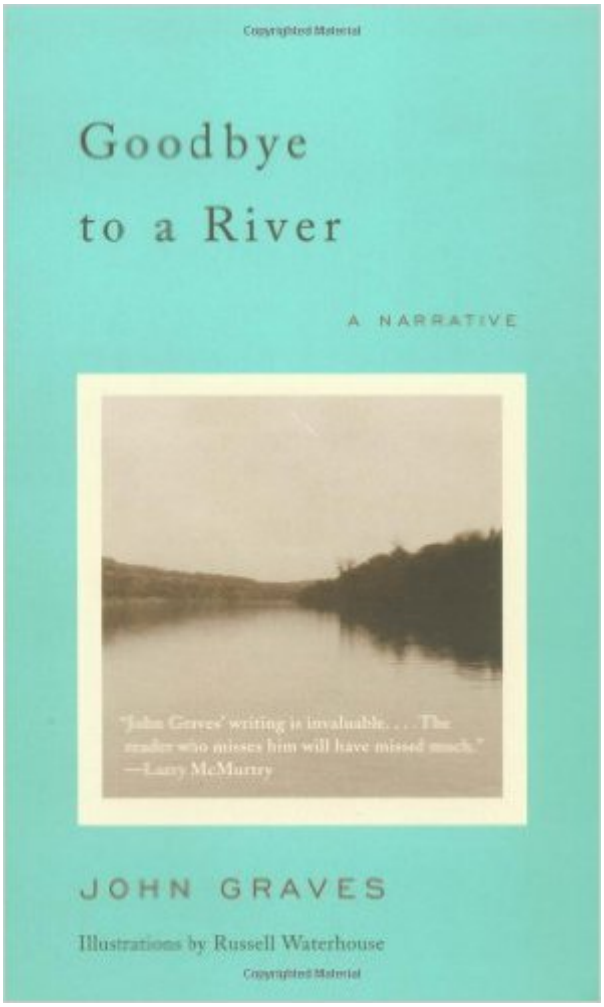
# Goodbye To A River: A Narrative

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## Synopsis

In the 1950s, a series of dams was proposed along the Brazos River in north-central Texas. For John Graves, this project meant that if the streamâ ™s regimen was thus changed, the beautiful and sometimes brutal surrounding countryside would also change, as would the lives of the people whose rugged ancestors had eked out an existence there. Graves therefore decided to visit that stretch of the river, which he had known intimately as a youth.Goodbye to a River is his account of that farewell canoe voyage. As he braves rapids and fatigue and the fickle autumn weather, he muses upon old blood feuds of the region and violent skirmishes with native tribes, and retells wild stories of courage and cowardice and deceit that shaped both the riverâ ™s people and the land during frontier times and later. Nearly half a century after its initial publication, Goodbye to a River is a true American classic, a vivid narrative about an exciting journey and a powerful tribute to a vanishing way of life and its ever-changing natural environment.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An astonishing book, by an extraordinary writer, and more importantly, an extraordinary human being. The book assumes the form of a narrative of the author’s three week solo canoe trip down the Brazos, a river about one hour by speeding car west of Ft. Worth, Texas; the journey was taken "way down in the fall," in late November, 1959, when the northerners begin to howl, and bring snow. By most estimations, it is not much of a river, and even the author says: "...on a salty river unloved, unlovable except by a few loners and ranchers and cedar-hill misanthropes." Graves gives only glimpses into his background, and if you blink, you might miss them. But consider, here is a man

who has read Joyce's "Ulysses," and recalls that Leopold Bloom's father had slept with his dog, Athos, in order to cure the father's aches and pains, just as Graves was carrying a six-month-old dachshund he routinely refers to as "the passenger," for his own comfort. But Graves is equally well-grounded in the natural world, knows all the various types of trees, how they burn, and the appearance of the wood's grain, and that: "the white oaks are prime...one of the finest of aromatic fuels is a twisted, wave-grained branch of live oak..." Graves was a Marine Captain during World War II, wounded on Saipan, but again the reader only gets the slightest glimpse of that in one passage in which that perspective is used to reflect on the casualties of this countryside during the frontier days: "I once saw 4,000 Japanese stacked like cordwood, the harvest of two days' fighting, on one single islet on one single atoll awaiting bulldozer burial, more dead that the Brazos could show for its whole two or three decades of travail...

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