



Greyhound

By Steffan Piper

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Ushered out from his Stockton, California home by his emotionally detached mother and her latest boyfriend, twelve-year-old Sebastien Ranes must fend for himself and travel two thousand miles across the country. He is on his way to live with his grandmother and sister in Pennsylvania. Along the way, he will learn that sometimes caring, guidance and understanding can come from some unlikely people.

Marcus, a fellow bus passenger, is a man who has been neglected more by society than his family. As a young black ex-con, he is not the epitome of the person most would pick as a chaperone for their child's cross country trip. Yet rather than be held apart by their differences, Marcus and Sebastien are drawn together by the things that make us all alike.

Along the way, he acts as both guide and protector, as Virgil was to Dante and Jim to Huck Finn. Imparting his own style of wisdom, he shows Sebastien that, despite the darker parts of the human condition, people can and do care for one another. This is a modern day journey not just from one house to another. This is a journey taken by a young boy into manhood, and by the reader into his world. Like every trip, there are many stops along the way. But this journey differs in the way young Sebastien arrives at his destination. Greyhound is the story of this journey.

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Greyhound By Steffan Piper Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Exclusive: A Q&A with Steffan Piper

Question: What is *Greyhound* about?



Steffan Piper: *Greyhound* is the story of an 11-year-old boy named Sebastien Ranes who is abandoned by his mother. As the book opens, we find her dropping him off in the Stockton, California Greyhound bus station to travel across the country, unaccompanied, to live with his grandmother in Altoona, Pennsylvania--over 2,500 miles away.

Most of the experiences that are in the book are events that actually have taken place in my life. I've been working on *Greyhound*, both in my head and on paper, for about 25 years. I have boxes of journals in my garage detailing many of the stories that are in the book, thoughts I had back then when I was travelling back and forth by bus, and other small details.

Writing about my experiences within the confines of 300 pages wasn't so easy, but I felt compelled to write about those days. Those years were a very difficult time for me, and pulling a lot of those feelings forward again brought out a lot of emotions that I had buried.

Question: Is the Marcus Franklin character based on a real person?

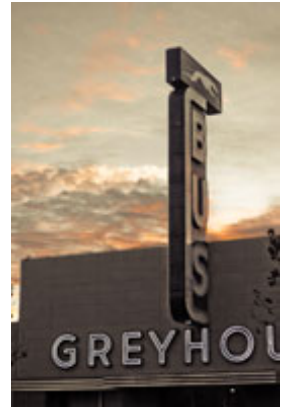
Steffan Piper: Marcus was a real person that I met on the bus. I've thought quite a bit about my encounter with him and the conversations that we had into the middle of the night. When you're young, it's the simplest and kindest of gestures that have the most effect and create the most lasting memories. A bag of pretzels can be the equivalent of much more over the passage of time. Not having good role models growing up, I often found myself reaching outward for a guide. Those are often the most dangerous because they have a limit as to what they can give back to you. Those limits are not always visible, especially when you're young.



Question: Why did you set the book in 1981?

Steffan Piper: I set the book in 1981 because it was a period where life was very different than it is today, and is different in more ways than can be imagined in books or through culture. Some people may not

remember it that well, or may not have lived through it, but many have. The most important facet of that time was that it was the beginning of the modern world as we now know it.



The eighties was an era of "analog communication" versus what we have today, which is digital. From telephones to records, everything was analog. People were forced to make more direct links with each other; to reach out, touch and feel the world around them. There was a need to verify the space in front of them. Today's world seems to ask us repeatedly to do the opposite and not verify our world at all.

Question: Some of the material in the book is pretty heady for an 11-year-old boy turning 12. Got anything to say about that?

Steffan Piper: I grew up in England and I'm the product of the British educational system, so that will always have an influence on everything that I write.

When I was ten, Sherlock Holmes was my all-time hero. Maybe it was the ease in how he held himself that I found appealing. I think it was the same for Dickens's *Twist* as well. These were themes I very quickly recognized and latched onto at that age. Shortly after that, when I was 12, reading Carlos Castaneda's books definitely changed my life. The idea of releasing and letting go of your self-image, during a period of my life where I was supposed to be finding that out, was alluring. I gripped onto Castaneda for dear life for about four or five years. I read those books so many times, I probably scared a few counselors at school.

I think when we start thinking as adults that we need to limit material to what we believe young people are capable of, or is normal to them, we immediately have done them a disservice, because most of them would probably shame us in regards to what we know, or think we know.

From Publishers Weekly

This extraordinary and heartbreaking novel tells the story of a child put on a bus by his neglectful mother to go live with his grandparents on the other side of the country. The boy is named Sebastien Ranes, and his 1981 cross-country ride is enlivened by a hijacking, a passenger's death, and an engine fire. On his voyage he encounters two potential pedophiles, as well as a number of kind strangers who help him along his way. Sebastien befriends an ex-con named Marcus who helps protect him and introduces him to the poetry of Langston Hughes. Through their friendship, Sebastien begins to cut through his own naiveté and to learn how the world works. The author creates people who seem recognizable and lifelike without resorting to stereotypes and clichés, and the story unfolds at a brisk pace. Unlike the typical cross-country bus ride, this remarkable trip is one readers will not want to see end. --*This text refers to the manuscript reviewed as a part of the 2009 Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award contest.*

From [Booklist](#)

In the early hours of May 11, 1981, 11-year-old Sebastien's mother dumps him at a Greyhound station before

running off to marry her latest loser. With only \$35 and a ticket to his grandparents' Pennsylvania town, Sebastien begins his cross-country journey, an epic four days that he narrates in a voice tuned to both a young person's innocence and an older man's retrospective wisdom. Piper delivers such a palpable sense of the physical discomforts, anxiety, and boredom of bus travel that readers may feel vicarious motion sickness. Just as vividly detailed is Sebastien's naïveté as he encounters kind waitresses, a kidnapping pedophile, and Marcus, an African American adult, just released from prison, who becomes Sebastien's protector and first friend as he shares life lessons and Langston Hughes poems and listens to Sebastien's harrowing childhood stories: "Animals in the wild take better care of their kids," he says about Sebastien's mother. The coming-of-age road trip is certainly well-traveled territory, but with memorable characters, acute sensory description, and an achingly vulnerable protagonist, Piper ably elevates his heart-tugging novel above formula. --Gillian Engberg

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Harry Branham:

Typically the book Greyhound has a lot associated with on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of gain. The book was published by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research previous to write this book. This specific book very easy to read you may get the point easily after perusing this book.

Ramon Lopez:

Are you kind of busy person, only have 10 or even 15 minute in your morning to upgrading your mind ability or thinking skill also analytical thinking? Then you are having problem with the book than can satisfy your small amount of time to read it because all of this time you only find reserve that need more time to be study. Greyhound can be your answer as it can be read by an individual who have those short time problems.

Edward Cooley:

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Harold Fleming:

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book? Or just looking for the Greyhound when you desired it?

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