

Virginia Reeves

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Updated: Feb. 8, 2018

Born: Oregon, United States

Nationality: American

Occupation: Novelist

Updated: Feb. 8, 2018

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PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Born in OR; daughter of John and Debbie Reeves; married Luke Muszkiewicz; children: Merek (deceased), Margot, Hannah. **Education:** Carroll College (Helena, MT), B.A., 2000; Willamette University, M.A.; University of Texas, Austin, M.F.A. **Addresses:** Home: Helena, MT. **E-mail:** virginiatreeeves@gmail.com.

CAREER:

Writer and educator. Khabele School (now Headwaters School), Austin, TX, English teacher, head of English department.

AWARDS:

Man Booker Prize longlist, 2016, for *Work Like Any Other*.

WORKS:

WRITINGS:

Work Like Any Other (novel), Scribner (New York, NY), 2016.

Contributor of stories to publications, including the *Common* and the *Baltimore Review*.

Sidelights

Virginia Reeves is a writer and educator. Born in Oregon and raised in Helena, Montana, Reeves holds degrees from Carroll College, Willamette University, and the University of Texas, Austin. She

has worked as an English teacher and has written stories that have appeared in publications, including the *Baltimore Review* and the *Common*.

Reeves's first novel is *Work Like Any Other*. Set in Alabama in the 1920s, the book's protagonist is Roscoe T. Martin. He and his wife, Marie, struggle with the farm her father willed to her. He quits his job as an electrician to devote more time to working the land. Roscoe runs electrical lines to power the machinery on the farm. For a time, the electricity helps the farm thrive. However, when George Haskin is killed by the power lines, Roscoe is sent to prison. Wilson, his black farm manager, is also convicted. While enduring deplorable conditions in prison, Roscoe reflects on his life.

In an interview with Trisha Ping, a contributor to *BookPage Online*, Reeves explained that she developed the idea for *Work Like Any Other* while researching Alabama history for a course she was taking at the University of Texas, Austin. She stated: "The first book I pulled off the shelves was a bound graduate thesis, published in the early 1930s, called *These Came Back*. It explored chances of breaking parole based upon specific characteristics of parolees, and it made for one of the best character sketches I've ever seen. I built Roscoe from those statistics." Reeves told Charles Ealy, a writer on the *My Statesman* website: "In a way, *Work Like Any Other* is a story about two people, Roscoe and Marie, making serious mistakes and taking steps, however bungled, toward redemption. By the end of the novel, I'm not sure they find redemption. Rather, the appeal of the novel, at least to me, is that there are no easy answers."

A *Kirkus Reviews* writer described *Work Like Any Other* as "elegant to a fault. Lacking in heart." Reviewing the volume on the *Stuff* website, a critic asserted: "It is an indictment and a triumph over the racism and prison system of the U.S. It is pacey and sharp." Hans Weyandt, a contributor to the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* website, suggested: "The novel's great strength is that in showing so much in terms of race, our prison system, forgiveness and labor, it never is heavy-handed. Reeves does an admirable job of letting the novel stay true to itself and its handful of characters we come to admire or distrust."

FURTHER READINGS:

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

PERIODICALS

Kirkus Reviews, January 1, 2016, of *Work Like Any Other*.

ONLINE

BookPage Online, <https://bookpage.com/> (September 19, 2016), Trisha Ping, author interview.
Headwaters School website, <http://headwaters.org/> (January 8, 2014), author interview.
Minneapolis Star Tribune Online, <http://www.startribune.com/> (March 28, 2016), Hans Weyandt, review of *Work Like Any Other*.
My Statesman, <http://www.mystatesman.com/> (March 5, 2016), Charles Ealy, author interview.
New Zealand Herald Online, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/> (July 24, 2016), Lori Nims, review of *Work Like Any Other*.
Stuff, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/> (September 7, 2016), review of *Work Like Any Other*.
Virginia Reeves Home Page, <http://www.virginia-reeves.com> (September 7, 2016).*

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