



Drifting: Two Weeks on the Hudson (Excelsior Editions)

Mike Freeman

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A two-week canoe trip down the Hudson offers an opportunity to reflect on America's past, present, and uncertain future.

This candid account of the author's two-week canoe trip down the Hudson River offers an introspective and humorous look at both the river and Recession-Era America. New to fatherhood and fresh from ten years in an Alaskan village, Mike Freeman sets out to relearn his country, and realizes it's in a far greater midlife crisis than he could ever be. With an eye on the Hudson's past, he addresses America's present anxieties—from race, gender, and marriage to energy, labor, and warfare—with empathy and honesty, acknowledging the difficulties surrounding each issue without succumbing to pessimism or ideology.

From the river's headwaters in the Adirondacks, Freeman follows the Hudson south through America's first industrial ghost towns, where ruin begs for rebirth. Next is the Hudson Valley and the river's 153-mile estuary, with its once-teeming fisheries. Here, agriculture is redefining itself, while at West Point, officer candidates train for America's murky modern wars. The Hudson Highlands, too, are prominent, the place where Americans first wed God to nature, and where the mountains remain a potent place to mull that bond. From there it's on to Manhattan, with its skyline that symbolizes the world's financial might as well as its startling fragility.

As controversial as it is comforting, Freeman's narrative makes us think in hard ways about America as the country itself drifts toward an uncertain future. But throughout, of course, is the magnificent Hudson, whose resilient beauty speaks well both to nature's toughness and America's greatest strength—the ability to redirect and change course when necessary.

Mike Freeman is a freelance writer and editor. From 1998 to 2008 he was a fisheries assistant at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and has canoed thousands of miles in southeast Alaska. His essays have appeared in the *Massachusetts Review*; *South Dakota Review*; the *LBJ: Avian Life, Literary Arts*; *Connecticut Review*; and *Gray's Sporting Journal*. He lives in Newport, Rhode Island.

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