

[Forty Acres Deep](#) by Michael Perry

Discussion Group Questions

For many small farmers, stoic stubbornness is a necessity for survival. When does it become a liability? And what is it that drives some of us to double down on that stoic stubbornness rather than reaching out for help?

In an interview about *Forty Acres Deep*, Perry said, “Harold’s a farmer, but he’s standing in for the low-key lonely dread so many of us [non-farmers] feel in this age where digital interconnection drives human disconnection.” In what ways does this align—or not align—with your personal experiences and observations? Or is Perry overreaching? Can a reader without a farm background still relate to Harold?

Harold struggles to cherish reminiscence and sentimentality while not wallowing in the past. Discuss your own feelings and experiences in this regard.

In several interviews, Perry notes that after farmers and partners of farmers, the most correspondence he receives related to *Forty Acres Deep* comes from husbands. How do you feel about Harold’s reflections on his marriage?

Perry has said he wanted to keep the story dense, concise, and almost claustrophobic—thus the novella form. Some readers and reviewers have indicated they would like a longer novel with an expanded backstory and a fuller representation of the other characters. Do you agree? Would this dilute the impact of the story?

Perry performs widely as a humorist, and most of his books reflect this. How do you feel about a writer known for humor writing something so unrelentingly dark? Or vice versa?

In a recent interview, Perry said, “My first love—the thing that drew a farm kid with a nursing degree into writing—was poetry...[in writing *Forty Acres Deep*] I wanted to spend ridiculous amounts of time revising descriptions of breeze-borne hoarfrost, or deer dispersing across a snowy lunar landscape like beads of black mercury...” Does this poetic approach succeed in highlighting Harold’s story? Is it overindulgent? How do you think Perry chose when and where to dive into these flights of imagery?

For more information about Michael Perry and his books, please visit SneezingCow.com

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<https://michaelperry.substack.com/>