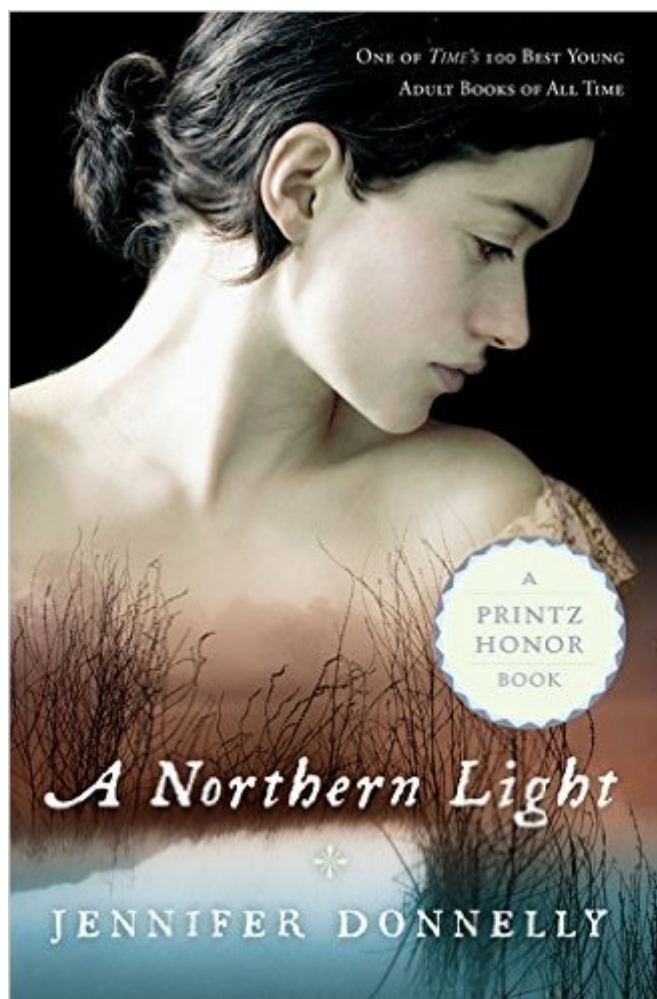


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# A Northern Light



## Synopsis

Carnegie Medal Winner, United Kingdom Los Angeles Times Book Prize Winner Borders 2004 Original Voices Award Winner Named a Best Book of 2003 by Publishers Weekly, Booklist, School Library Journal, The Irish Times, The Times (London), The Financial Times and The Albany Times-Union. Sixteen-year-old Mattie Gokey has big dreams but little hope of seeing them come true. Desperate for money, she takes a job at the Glenmore, where hotel guest Grace Brown entrusts her with the task of burning a secret bundle of letters. But when Grace's drowned body is fished from the lake, Mattie discovers that the letters could reveal the grim truth behind a murder. Set in 1906 against the backdrop of the murder that inspired Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, Jennifer Donnelly's astonishing debut novel effortlessly weaves romance, history, and a murder mystery into something moving, and real, and wholly original. Includes a reader's guide and an interview with the author.

## Book Information

Paperback: 408 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; 1 edition (September 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0152053107

ISBN-13: 978-0152053109

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (303 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #80,420 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > 20th Century](#) #50 in [Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Historical](#) #120 in [Books > Teens > Romance > Historical](#)

## Customer Reviews

Sometimes when authors place fictional characters in the company of real historical figures the result is laughable or strained. Too often a child figure will suddenly find his or herself in the presence of (oh say) Abraham Lincoln and will teach the great man about following his childlike instincts or some other such goo. This is not to say that historical figures and situations are at odds with children's literature. I just want to make it clear that it's rare to find a really clever and believable situation in which the real and the unreal mix. "A Northern Light" is one such rarity. In this book, heroine Mattie Gorkey lives two different narratives. In one story, she's working at a fancy hotel in

the Northern Woods in 1906. A young woman vacationing at the hotel was recently discovered drowned in a nearby lake. Weighing on Mattie's conscience is the fact that just the day before the girl had entrusted her letters to our heroine with strict instructions that they be burned. Mattie has not burned them yet. The second narrative takes place several months before the exciting events at the hotel. Here we learn far more about Mattie's background and her love of literature and writing. With a mother recently dead and a family of five to care for, Mattie's great dream is to attend Barnard College in New York. Unfortunately, her pa is anything but receptive to the idea and there's a cute boy hanging around who seems to be giving Mattie quite a bit of attention. Focusing on her own dilemmas with the caring but somewhat close minded society in which she lives, Mat must figure out who she is and what is most important to her in the end.

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