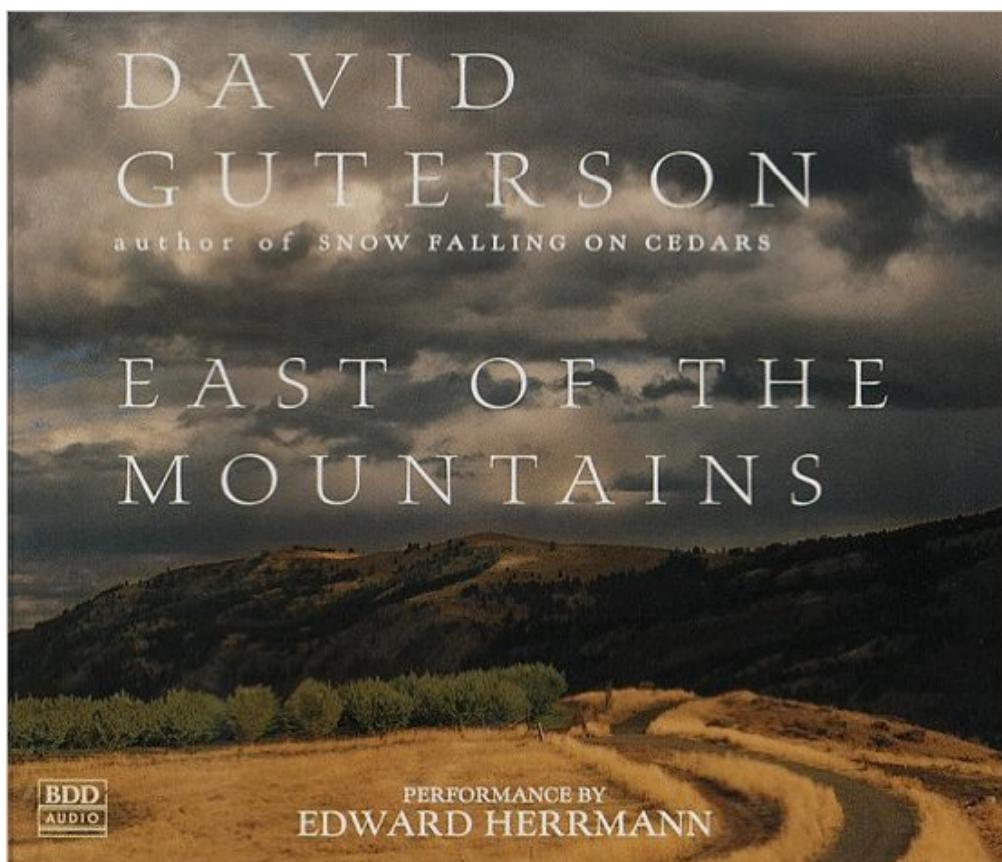


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# East Of The Mountains



## Synopsis

It is mid-October, 1997, harvest time in the Columbia Basin of central Washington state, a rich apple- and pear-growing region. Ben Givens, recently widowed, is a retired heart surgeon, once admired for his steadiness of hand, his precision, his endurance. He has terminal colon cancer. While Ben does not readily accept defeat, he is determined to avoid suffering rather than engage it. And so, accompanied by his two hunting dogs, he sets out through the mythic American West-sage deserts, yawning canyons, dusty ranches, vast orchards-on his last hunt. The main issues for Ben as a doctor had been tactical and so it would be with his death. But he hadn't considered the persuasiveness of memory-the promise he made to his wife Rachel, the love of his life, during World War II. Or life's mystery. On his journey he meets a young couple who are "forever," a drifter offering left-handed advice that might lessen the pain, a veterinarian with a touch only a heart surgeon would recognize, a rancher bent on destruction, a migrant worker who tests Ben's ability to understand. And just when he thinks there is no turning back, nothing to lose that wasn't lost, his power of interventions is called upon and his very identity tested. Full of humanity, passion, and moral honesty, *East of the Mountains* is a bold and beautiful novel of personal discovery.

## Book Information

Audio CD

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Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (251 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #567,459 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in [Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > \( G \) > Guterson, David #1008 in](#) Books > Books on CD > General #1811 in [Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > General](#)

## Customer Reviews

*East of the Mountains* is a simple story. Ben Givens, a Seattle-area doctor in his 70s, learns he has terminal cancer. Knowing the horror of the disease's course, he decides to take his life but to make it look like a hunting accident so his family doesn't have to know about the disease or that he took his life. The book takes place over the next few days as he tries to carry out his plan but is foiled,

first by a car accident that ironically nearly takes his life, and then by a series of quests to rescue his hunting dog and to aid some migrant farm workers. He treats these events as diversions that interrupt but don't deter his goal, and yet there is an odd incongruity in his concern about the daily details of life when one would expect him to be letting go. Like Guterson's earlier book, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, this book is beautifully written and a pleasure to read. The main character, Ben Givens, is very richly described. He comes to life both through a series of flashbacks that flesh out his history as well as through the detailed description of his matter-of-fact reactions to the events occurring in the present. The other characters in the book play only small roles, and yet most of them felt real, each one adding interest to the story. Givens has a gift for portraying characters succinctly through choice details. Consider this introduction of the veterinarian who helps save the dog: "The veterinarian was a solid young woman with the sturdy hands and face of a farmgirl and thick, soda-bottle glasses. She spoke in the direct, firm way of the country, with the vigorous practicality and certainty that had remade the sage desert into fields.

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