

Farley Mowat

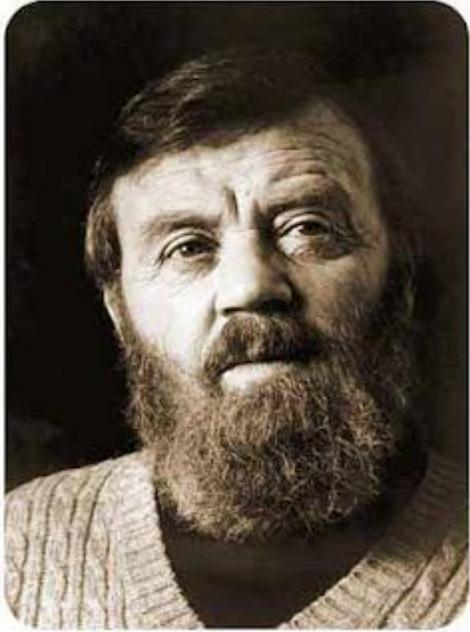


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[Farley Mowat](#), one of Canada's best-loved writers, was born in Ontario in 1921 and grew up in Windsor and Saskatoon. He first travelled to the Far North at fourteen with an uncle.

This early exposure to the Arctic may have inspired his most famous book, *Never Cry Wolf* (Atlantic-Little Brown 1963). This novel-like tale is a paean to a family of Arctic wolves, the charming "Angelina" and her mate, as well as "Uncle George," sometime babysitter to their pups. Hilarious yet tragic, this story inspired a new view of wolves, revealing aspects of them completely antithetical to the "Big Bad Wolf" stereotype. ([Film](#) 1983)

Mowat's openly critical description of governmental mismanagement of wildlife struck a nerve not only in Canada but around the world. His work has been translated into twenty-two languages. Today this environmental classic is used in schools; many online study guides like [this one](#) can be found on the internet.

While living in Newfoundland, Mowat again took issue with human cruelty in *A Whale for the Killing* (Key Porter 1972). This too was made into a movie, appealing for an end to the whale hunt. He has also written and spoken against the seal hunt as well as writing a book about American naturalist [Dian Fossey](#), whose conservation efforts for Rwandan gorillas inspired the film [Gorillas in the Mist](#).

Nineteen when World War II broke out, Mowat left university to serve in the army. In 1979, he published his memoir of his experience in the Italian campaign, sometimes called the Forgotten War because in spite of being such a difficult battle, it earned little

fame or glory. The book was called *And No Birds Sang*.

Never afraid to speak his mind, Mowat has championed his causes fearlessly, speaking out against government treatment of the Inuit, as well as supporting various environmental causes. Due presumably to his outspoken remarks, in 1985, at the age of 63, he was refused entry into the US. In this questionable distinction, he was in good company: another who was once turned back at the US border was former Prime Minister Trudeau.

Unlike Trudeau, however, Mowat got his own back by writing a book about the experience. With a nod to fellow-humourist [Stephen Leacock](#), he called this opus *My Discovery of America* (McClelland and Stewart 1986). In the brouhaha that followed, it turned out that the RCMP had supplied the US with a dossier. Eventually Mowat was allowed to see his file and the ban was lifted.

Farley Mowat wrote many books suitable for children, and I have fond childhood memories of reading early works including *Owls in the Family*, *The Dog who Wouldn't Be*, and *People of the Deer*. From the former two, I got a lot of laughs and from the latter, a dawning awareness of the tragedy of cultural clashes and racist attitudes.

In 1949, Farley Mowat received his BA from the University of Toronto. His numerous honours include the Governor General's Medal, the Leacock Medal for Humour, the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Medal, the Canadian Centennial Medal and the Order of Canada. The flagship of the Sea Shepard Conservation society was renamed the MV Farley Mowat in his honour.

In celebration of his 90th birthday, [The Literary Review of Canada](#) published an article on this author (May 2011).