

# BookTrib Interviews Award-Winning Bestselling Author Tommy Orange on New Novel “Wandering Stars”

WESTPORT, CT, USA, March 20, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [BookTrib.com](https://BookTrib.com), the leading online book review and news website, has [released its interview](#) with award-winning and New York Times bestselling author Tommy Orange, who discusses the pressures of writing a follow-up book to his highly acclaimed groundbreaking novel *There There*.

A citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Orange’s *There There* was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize and received the 2019 American Book Award. *There There* has been hailed for its examination of the urban Native American struggle with identity, authenticity and the repercussions of history. The novel follows a large cast of characters, each wrestling with their own challenges; eventually, their lives converge at a powwow in Oakland, CA, where the unthinkable unfolds.

After such a successful debut novel as *There There*, Orange concedes there was a lot of pressure to grapple with in writing his new novel, *Wandering Stars*. He says he didn’t want “the second book to either do the same thing that I already did the first time and fail, or try for something bigger than I could handle and fail.”

Instead, he opted for something in between—a novel that shares a world with *There There* but goes deeper into what shapes the destiny of one family: “I’d like the reader to come away having gone through this journey with this whole family line with the hope that the family line itself is

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Tommy Orange

bent toward healing," he says.

## A PREQUEL AND A SEQUEL

Orange calls *Wandering Stars* a "prequel and a sequel combined" for *There There*: "It does work as a standalone book, but ... there's a way you could read it where you read the first part of *Wandering Stars* and then *There There*, and then the second and third part of *Wandering Stars*—it could work sequentially like that."

*Wandering Stars* revisits a beloved family of characters from *There There*, digging deep into their ancestral trauma via the legacies of the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 and the efforts of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School to culturally assimilate Native American children. It also follows them in the aftermath of the tragedy at the climax of *There There*.

The "prequel" parts of the novel are more than just history, Orange reveals: "The Sand Creek Massacre is a family story that I made into a novel version and extended it quite a bit. That's the way that my dad got his Cheyenne name; it's [a story] that he heard from his grandparents about a boy who runs away from the massacre and saves a baby; this is my dad's namesake, so that was something that actually happened."

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*Tommy Orange*

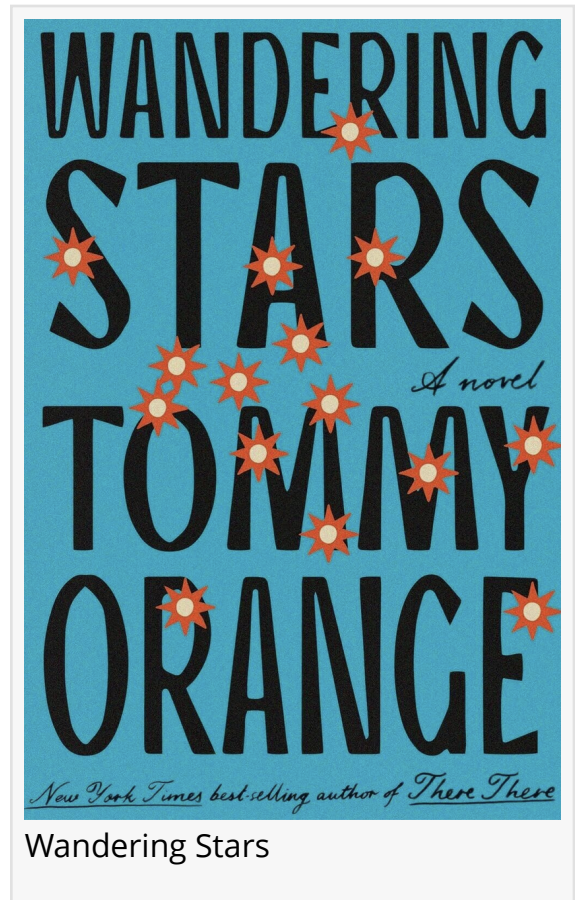
Orange says his work is a blend of personal and imagined experiences, history and fiction. Among the most personal is the way Orange incorporates the complexities of addiction into his storytelling: "It's something that's sort of ravaged my family, and I've had struggles myself, so I'm very much writing from a personal place, but also, I did not

have an opioid addiction, so I had to imagine a lot of it."

"I think you end up being compelled to write about the things that shape you," says Orange.

## THE LITERARY TRIUMPH OF A LATE BLOOMER

Surprisingly, one thing that didn't shape Orange until later in life was books. "I wasn't a reader or a writer until I was 24 or something like that. It was after I graduated from college, actually. I was working at a used book store and had a lot of time on my hands. We didn't get that much business. I ended up moving the entire fiction section from the back of the store to the front of



the store and was just picking up books and following my instincts and figuring out that I love fiction and what novels can do specifically." That discovery led to nine years of writing and reading before Orange eventually applied for an MFA program and got a more formal education in the language arts.

Watch BookTrib's interview in its entirety at <https://www.youtube.com/live/1r-zFTUNDK4?si=SUH0J5Tdc2ayAOzV>.

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