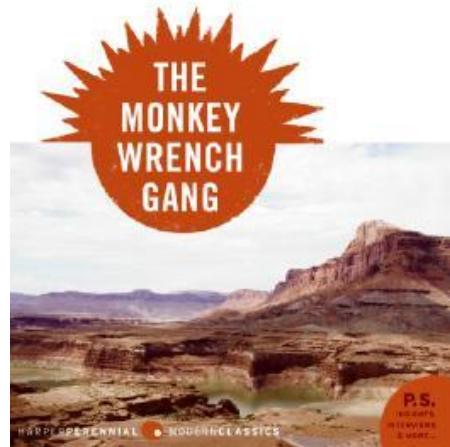


EDWARD ABBEY

INTRODUCTION BY DOUGLAS BRINKLEY



The Monkey Wrench Gang

Edward Abbey

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The Monkey Wrench Gang Edward Abbey

Ed Abbey called The Monkey Wrench Gang, his 1975 novel, a "comic extravaganza." Some readers have remarked that the book is more a comic book than a real novel, and it's true that reading this incendiary call to protect the American wilderness requires more than a little of the old willing suspension of disbelief. The story centers on Vietnam veteran George Washington Hayduke III, who returns to the desert to find his beloved canyons and rivers threatened by industrial development. On a rafting trip down the Colorado River, Hayduke joins forces with feminist saboteur Bonnie Abbzug, wilderness guide Seldom Seen Smith, and billboard torcher Doc Sarvis, M.D., and together they wander off to wage war on the big yellow machines, on dam builders and road builders and strip miners. As they do, his characters voice Abbey's concerns about wilderness preservation ("Hell of a place to lose a cow," Smith thinks to himself while roaming through the canyonlands of southern Utah. "Hell of a place to lose your heart. Hell of a place... to lose. Period"). Moving from one improbable situation to the next, packing more adventure into the space of a few weeks than most real people do in a lifetime, the motley gang puts fear into the hearts of their enemies, laughing all the while. It's comic, yes, and required reading for anyone who has come to love the desert.

The Monkey Wrench Gang Details

Date : Published December 12th 2006 by Harper Perennial (first published 1975)

ISBN : 9780061129766

Author : Edward Abbey

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From Reader Review The Monkey Wrench Gang for online ebook

Checkman says

A modern day classic and still capable of stirring up people on both sides of the issue.

Provocative,descriptive,sarcastic, humorous, engrossing and angry are just a few of the words that come to mind when describing Edward Abbey's most well known book. I do not consider myself a radical or hardcore environmentalist. I'm too much a product of the modern era for that. I ,and those I love, have benefited from the modern world and "evil" technology (modern medicine, computers and so on). However I also believe that we don't need to grow and develop for it's own sake and I do think attitudes have changed (somewhat) since Abbey wrote this novel. Be that as it may the message of the book is just as important today as it was in 1975, but there are a few weak points in the self-righteous armor that covers this issue.

I find it interesting that Abbey resided in a town and owned both vehicles and firearms. So while he wanted nature preserved he wasn't going to go back to animal skins and stone knives (neither am I). One could also point out that Abbey owed his living to the modern world. Books (dead trees anyone?), electricity (printing pressed aren't operated by hand anymore) trucks to deliver his books to bookstores (many in shopping malls surrounded by concrete) and on and on. Tying into this I remember getting great amusement when I watched "An Inconvenient Truth". There was footage of Al Gore being driven to his lecture in a gas guzzling vehicle. Then there is Al speaking to a large audience (all wearing clothing produced in factories) in a modern auditorium which was happily burning fossil fuels while Al terrified us.....with the assistance of hi-tech communication devices made of plastic and using electricity. Doesn't anybody find the humor in this? Whatever side of the environmental issue you are on you have to admit the irony is amusing.

Okay enough snarkiness. "The Money Wrench Gang" is actually a very enjoyable read. It has a cheerful anarchistic tone that I liked. There is anger, but it never grows out of control and I never felt like Abbey was bludgeoning me with a scree. Authority figures don't come off very well, but sometimes those in positions of authority are pompous and heavy-handed. Abbey is critical of our consumer economy even though his characters have no trouble using it's products. However Mr. Abbey keeps the book moving along at a rapid-fire pace so that his readers don't really have time to think about such things. I believe it's only with the benefit of hindsight (forty years now since it was published!) that such inconsistency is more apparent. The book really takes off when describing the beauty and details of the Southwestern desert. Abbey loved nature and it comes through in the book. At times he goes on a little too long ,a la Henry David Thoreau, when describing nature and the universe, but not to the detriment of the story.

"The Monkey Wrench Gang" is a good novel. Both fun and provocative,it has aged very well. Credited with being one of the touchstones of the modern radical environmental movement I recommend it. It might make you angry, but I don't think you'll be bored.

Still says

Second time around.

First time I've read this since 1978 or 1979.

The good news? It holds up! Let's farp up some bulldozers next weekend!

Even better news: the brave cowboy, Jack Burns -last seen in -has a cameo with a slight return at the end.

But this is the story of George Hayduke and his pals Seldom Seen Smith, Bonnie Abbzugg, and Doc Sarvis and their attempt to reclaim the deserts of Utah and Arizona from the land reclamation ass-wipes Koch Bros., et al, Peabody Coal, Pacific, Gas, And Electric and the rest of all the heathen dogs succeeding under Don John Trump's EPA lately under F. Scott Pruitt and the U. S. Department of the Interior under Ryan Zinke.

Except when this book was originally published it was the Nixon/Ford administrations.

Sure, it's as dated as the barnacles attached to Don Johnny's massive flanks but it's fun and it's action-packed to boot.

Lots of narrow escapes abound.

The heart threatens to burst Alien-like from the chest.

Along with all the suspense and action, you get Edward Abbey's poetic rhapsodizing over desert flora and fauna and scary-big skies.

I love this novel.

No idea to whom I'd recommend this masterpiece.

Could be that like me its time has expired.

Nadine says

Edward Abbey was my dad's favorite author. We once stayed at a place near Moab, Utah called Pack Creek Ranch. Our cabin butted up against Abbey's former shack, where he did his writing. Somehow it has taken me 10 years to pick up one of his books, and I'm so glad I did. The Monkey Wrench Gang makes even the most law abiding citizen (such as myself, haha) want to pour sand into the gas tank of a bulldozer. The book revolves around a plot to blow up Glen Canyon Dam, the travesty that drowned the canyon and subdued the mighty Colorado River. Ironically, the resulting reservoir is rapidly drying up due to drought and lack of water conservation, achieving without explosives what the Monkey Wrench Gang so desired.

Elaine says

We are reading this in my book club. So far I want to punch myself in the face. Hard. As hard as I possible can. Cartoon-like storyboard, self-important hippies that drive cars that use gas and miss the irony of that act, sexist men, hippies that talk about saving the environment as a "I care about stuff more than you, look at me I am such 'rebel' and everyone who disagrees is the Man" masturbation technique, annoying tense shifts, hippies, 7th grade creative writing descriptions of scenery, and oh....did I mention the annoying hippies? The only thing I have to look forward to in finishing this terrible book and ball sucking bio of the author at the beginning is getting to drink wine at book club while talking about how much I hate this book. That, and now I can say I read it. Big fing check off that list of things that I should do to make me punch my face. I would recommend this book to hippies that don't shower and say that they are trying to conserve water. But really they are too lazy to do so or they are trying to be "awesomely different" or "Soooo against the grain." But I don't know any of those people. And if I did, I wouldn't bother recommending a book to them. I would tell them to take a shower and get an fing job and contribute to society in a more meaningful way than by being a rebel for the sake of being a rebel.

Stacy says

When I was about 12 years old, my dad took my sister and me camping in Southeast Utah. We took my dad's Ford truck with four wheel drive to Canyonlands National Park and went on various roads, back roads, dirt roads, and roads that were barely roads at all. We bumped around the slick rock of Ernies Country, and went up a narrow and twisty dirt road with a sheer cliff on one side. It terrified my sister and I so that we buckled into the middle seat together and sang hymns the whole way down. We camped underneath one of the needles, and slept in sleeping bags under the stars. Before night fell, my dad took us to the edge of the canyon and peered over the edge into The Maze. As we looked at it, he told me the story of the climax in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. I knew I would have to read this book. Standing there on the light side of dusk, and in fact that whole trip, hymns and all, is one of my favorite childhood memories.

And so it was with a fond recollection of my times in Northern Arizona Southeast Utah I read *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, a book about the beauty of this unforgiving dessert and the environmental anarchists that love it.

The plot is simple - in the mid 70s, 4 characters unlikely to hang out together under normal circumstances - a young new age hippy woman, a liberal doctor/processor, a Vietnam vet turned wildman, and a Mormon polygamous white water river tour operator - have a chance meeting and hatch a plot to disrupt the building of dams and bridges, logging, and other industrial pursuits. Along the way they have various adventures while trying to evade the authorities.

The book is very comedic, and I found myself chuckling at various points throughout. At first I thought I wouldn't be able to sympathize with these characters who didn't seem much like me and were involved in destructive illegal activity. And yet I did find myself rooting for them all along the way.

The book kept me guessing til the end. Would they get caught or not? Would they evade the police? How would they do it? I wondered if the author would let them get caught to pay for their crimes or not. I found the ending to be very satisfying and it left me with a smile on my face.

I'd recommend this book to any person familiar with Southeast Utah. It really brought back some wonderful memories. This book is also for anyone who loves nature or hiking. Even if you would never dream of blowing up a dam, the characters' passion for unspoiled wilderness is contagious.

Katrina V. says

The summer after I graduated from college I spent a lot of time out west, roaming the country between Salt Lake City, Utah and the beautiful park land nearby; Zion, Arches, Canyonlands, and a personal childhood favorite of mine, Goblin Valley, where the shadows cast by the rocks in the twilight evoke ghoulish figures creeping up on you from all sides. I love these landscapes, so different from the Connecticut hills I grew up in – the colors, smells, and emotions of the American West are something all their own.

In the endless hours of driving between parks and camping along rivers lined with desert shrubs, I read *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and later *Desert Solitaire*. The latter wasn't quite my style (it's largely about desert biology) but *The Monkey Wrench Gang* was exactly what I needed at that time of my life.

The story revolves around a group of four misfits who find each other and bond over their equal fervor for protecting the American Southwest. Although the group practices minor attacks with the usual sand in the engines of bulldozers and syrup in their gas tanks, the main target in their scheme of eco-terrorism is the Glen Canyon Dam, which gives orderly control to the beautiful, forceful, and wild Colorado River. At times funny, at times poignant, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* shows why its author was called a “desert anarchist” and the “Thoreau of the American West.”

Go pick up this book, it’ll make you want to burn a billboard (not that I’m advocating that.)

Jonathan Ashleigh says

I had a tough time getting through this book. Every character had basically the same personality and the story just rambles and rambles. People seem to love Edward Abbey for his out-there ideas, but they don’t do much for me at this time.

Kate says

In recent times, Al Gore has credited Rachel Carson (*The Silent Spring*) for introducing environmental concerns into his nascent consciousness, but it is a work of fiction not fact, Edward Abbey's "Monkey Wrench Gang", published first in 1975, which is regarded as having inspired a new generation of angry young environmental activists to the practice of extreme sabotage, sometimes called terrorism, for the sake of protecting the earth. For this reason, I recently reread this novel. I was interested to see if it had dated or whether if it still held relevance in these modern times, on this continent.

In the author's own words, "Monkey Wrench Gang" is a "comic extravaganza", a wild improbable story of symbolic aggression and constructive vandalism. A group of 4 passionate environmental warriors comprising a Vietnam vet, an eco-feminist, a wealthy medical doctor and a wilderness guide join forces to commit mayhem and liberate parts of Utah and Arizona from evil developers. They do this by waging war on billboards, construction machinery, roads and dams. While there is plenty of rollicking outrageous fun, nailbiting chase after chase and drama enough, the characters provide a vehicle for Abbey to voice his concerns and express philosophical observations on the subject of environmental preservation and the essential relationship between a healthy planet and healthy human beings. "The wilderness once offered men a plausible way of life," the doctor said. "Now it functions as a psychiatric refuge. Soon there will be no wilderness.....then the madness becomes universal...And the universe goes mad". Is it just a ringing in my ears, or do I hear echoes of Thoreau's "In wilderness is the preservation of man" here.

Having been thoroughly entertained by this page turner's quirky characters and hilarious, daring escapades - the reader is left with heightened awareness of the serious moral questions concerning the nature of our relationship with wilderness and our personal responsibility and culpability. These moral and ethical questions are as contemporary today as they were in the seventies. This book is funny, wise and as dangerously disquieting as the day it was first published.

Abby says

Yes, it's an iconic work of anarchy and environmentalism, but that doesn't mean it isn't worth the read. This book is hilarious. Like most other American nature writers, Abbey was a bit of a self-important pig (I can't stand Farley Mowat, though maybe he's Canadian); unlike most other American nature writers, he has a sense of humor about it.

The characters are grizzled and absurd, their actions are grandiose and delusional, and I felt a strong sense of solidarity and sympathy the whole way that I probably shouldn't reveal in a public forum. Their last desperate measures to halt uncontrolled development and destruction of the West resonate in a way that a factual description of the follies of massive energy projects would not.

There is a wider array of characters than normally stereotyped as environmentalists -- in fact, there are no tree-hugging hippies in this book -- and that's what makes it so rich. There's a polygamous Mormon tour-guide whose home lies under a dam-made reservoir, a manic inarticulate and a-social young veteran, and a rich suburban doctor who's banging a younger, depressed transplanted New Yorker. A common critique of Abbey is that he's sexist, and this may be, but I actually like Bonnie's character, objectified though she was as the sole female character and self-aware slut.

No, I am not going to go drive a Caterpillar off a cliff now, but this book does make you wonder . . .

Ned says

Here's where my reading practice paid off: By avoiding the hype of what others say and have said about the author, I enjoyed his art in what I can only hope is how he originally had hoped it would hit his readers. Having read *Desert Solitaire* and a couple of brief interviews with the man, I was still shocked by the skillful quality of literature this book represents. It is not conventional in any way, in fact the four "protagonists" are all deeply flawed in many moral dimensions, including criminality. But they are oh so real, with charm and redeeming qualities as well. In fact, these four characters each represent an ideal of the dreams and desires of all human beings as they execute an eco-terrorist agenda. This has huge themes too, the destruction of nature and the blind exercise of commercialism, with its attendant loss of human community and basic resources. I'm in a hurry, and had flagged about 20 particularly piquant sections, but let me share just one (p 387/388) at the end, where one of the remaining two being pursued, reflects upon the next phase of escape amongst the canyon walls: "Hayduke schemes and dreams and cannot sleep. Too tired to sleep, too hungry, angry, excited and fearful to sleep. It appears to him that only one obstacle remains between himself and a wilderness autumn and winter down in the Maze, down there where he can lose himself at last, forget himself for good, become pure predator dedicated to nothing but survival, nothing but the clean hard bright pursuit of game. That ultimate world, he thinks, or rather dreams, the final world of meat, blood, fire, water, rock, wood, sun, wind, sky, night, cold, dawn, warmth, life. Those short, blunt and irreducible words which stand for almost everything he thinks he has lost. Or never really had. And loneliness, loneliness? Is that all he has to fear?".

Then about to abandon his sleeping partner: "Old Seldom Seen lies on his side, fast asleep, despite the thunder (for him a familiar and maybe soothing sound), head cradled on his arm, a smile on the homely face. The sonofabitch is smiling. Good dream for a change. He looks so vulnerable for the moment, so hopeless and helpless and almost human."

Can't help but love this stuff, muscular, bold, wild as can be... like the author himself as I imagine he wanted to be (and often was). RIP.

Pat Loughery says

There are two ways to review this book.

One, as a novel. Edwards Abbey writes a blazing, funny, madcap zany story of a group of four anarchist friends, hell-bent to stop the development of the southwest wilderness by crushing dams, bridges, power plants and anything else they can. On the run from the local Mormon do-gooder Search&Rescue crew, the FBI, the National Park Service and anybody else they run into, the quartet is likeable, entertaining and extremely enjoyable.

The dialogue is massive. Dialogue drives the book, and it never clunks and is often wildly witty. There are more turns of phrase that make you gasp and laugh than anything else I've read.

The one female character is written perhaps a bit more sexist than you would find today, though she is certainly her own woman. The three men are all unique and grand personalities.

Monkey Wrench Gang compares well to Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas - less trippy, but just as grand and impactful. Less weird, more witty.

Second, as a call-to-arms for environmental anarchism: I suspect that to some, this novel is dangerous. The characters should be darker, less idealistic. The impact of their approach should be interpreted more brutally.

But.

I think the novel provides a challenging commentary on American consumerism and our unwillingness to stop and consider the cost of our lifestyle. That it's packaged in a fun adventure story with amazing dialogue makes it all the more subversive.

LeeAnn Heringer says

I put this on my reading list because it's ground zero of the Earth First! environmentalist movement, the vandalism as civil disobedience. And I am not an Earth Firster, tree spiker, SUV dealership destructor, rescuer of bunnies from cosmetic labs, kind of girl. But how who doesn't not love virgin stands of redwoods and the wide, wide, endless sky of the American west and the watersheds of the Colorado? There was no doubt that this author loved the American west, knew the plateaus and cliffs, the wildlife. The descriptions in this book remind you to fall in love with this country all over again, the American Southwest is beautifully, lovingly portrayed in this story. Where's my pack and my sleeping bag because I need to go and rest on the slick rock under the milky way far from the ways for men.

I read this novel to give them 400 pages of my time to explain to me why they do what they do. But progress delayed is not progress defeated. A bulldozer destroyed is not victory. That without our exploding population we wouldn't need to capture the rivers for power, strip the forests for timber and ravage the earth for

resources. At one point in the novel, a character actually proposes gathering stones and building houses from them so that we wouldn't need lumber, which would work if the population of the US was a million rather than 100s of millions. The engineers are the bad guys who want to put a chip up the hero's butt and make him calculate exponential factorials, pave the earth, dam the rivers, cloud the sky.

There is a tendency of people who live on the margins to make the assumption that anyone could live on the margins, that anyone could just say no and unplug from the grid. But for the rest of us, it's a lot more complicated than that.

Mykle says

This novel has all the same elements that make Edward Abbey's non-fiction so compelling: the depth of his knowledge and emotions about the desert landscapes of Utah and Colorado, his poetic descriptions of same, and his eloquent condemnation of the loss of this wilderness for the sake of city-dwelling, industrial man.

This book has all of that on display in droves, but also it highlights some of his weaknesses: smart-assery movie dialogue, rampant sexism and a love of bad puns. His four protagonists all start out resembling Edward Abbey a bit too directly, although by the end of the book, when they start running out of Abbeyesque witty bravado and face real problems, they become a bit more three-dimensional.

But the characters are really just there for Abbey to indulge in the extended revenge fantasy for which this book is a blueprint. Abbey's descriptions of industrial sabotage are so lovingly detailed, he's practically begging you to try them. Some consider this the book that launched Earth First! It definitely gave me a hankering to blow things up. (And it made me nostalgic for an era when you could purchase cordite at the farm store without an ID.)

Nate says

Amazon.com

Ed Abbey called *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, his 1975 novel, a "comic extravaganza." Some readers have remarked that the book is more a comic book than a real novel, and it's true that reading this incendiary call to protect the American wilderness requires more than a little of the old willing suspension of disbelief. The story centers on Vietnam veteran George Washington Hayduke III, who returns to the desert to find his beloved canyons and rivers threatened by industrial development. On a rafting trip down the Colorado River, Hayduke joins forces with feminist saboteur Bonnie Abbzug, wilderness guide Seldom Seen Smith, and billboard torcher Doc Sarvis, M.D., and together they wander off to wage war on the big yellow machines, on dam builders and road builders and strip miners. As they do, his characters voice Abbey's concerns about wilderness preservation ("Hell of a place to lose a cow," Smith thinks to himself while roaming through the canyonlands of southern Utah. "Hell of a place to lose your heart. Hell of a place... to lose. Period"). Moving from one improbable situation to the next, packing more adventure into the space of a few weeks than most real people do in a lifetime, the motley gang puts fear into the hearts of their enemies, laughing all the while. It's comic, yes, and required reading for anyone who has come to love the desert. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Jessica says

Genteel Doc Sarvis, solid and faithful (though patently unfaithful in marriage) Seldom Seen Smith, wild George Hayduke and breathtakingly pretty if directionless Bonnie Abbzug make an unlikely band of eco-activists/bandits with questionable motives in this book perhaps loosely based on an actual group of bandits running around blowing up things they thought ecologically unsound in the 1970s.

Despite lots of action-packed sequences, this book really took me forever to get through. I started it in June some time, and even took it with me on a trip to New England in July (lots of plane, train and bus time) when I thought I'd come home in triumph, having finished the darn thing. But no, I didn't wrap it up until late August. I swear I put in good reading time on it, at least getting through about ten pages during my traditional before-bed reading time most nights (Ok, sometimes it was probably more like three or five pages...but still). I was not motivated to put in additional reading time to get through it more quickly, which is not to say I didn't like the novel. I did like it, I just don't think it was the most compelling thing ever. I certainly won't give it away, but a surprise twist at the end of the book made the slow reading time worth it.

Another point in this book's favor is the development of the characters. They are each eccentric, loveable and exasperating in their own ways. You grow quite attached to them. George Hayduke is battling some demons he brought home with him from Vietnam, Bonnie Abbzug is a compelling female character, by turns totally wimpy and willfully strong. She's compulsive and follows her heart's whims--she's smart, but perhaps not in a way that's very useful. Doc Sarvis is kind and well-mannered, and the most ethically sound one of the bunch, if a bit doddering and not as physically strong as he might be. The glowing eye of his constant cigar is somehow reassuring and morally grounding. Seldom Seen Smith has several wives (he's Mormon in the old way), but he is entirely faithful to the little band of misfits he joins. He also makes you think everything might just be ok--he understands nature, and respects it. He's a solid guide and a lover of nature--he perhaps has the most clear and direct motive for wanting to protect the natural environment.

Also, this book does make you think about our current environmental state, and what we should (and shouldn't) do in response to it. I also enjoyed the question of why these four could and couldn't justify their actions, and how thin the line can be between activism and terrorism, between righteousness and injuriousness.

I noted above that I recommend this book to people who read nonfiction. Although this is a fictional work, it has some of the flavor of a nonfiction documentation of events and people.

meredith says

I blame reading this book at an inappropriately young age (9 or 10?) for the violent gag reflex that occurs whenever I smell patchouli, as well as the involuntary "NOOOOOOO" that I surprise myself with every time a ratty college do-gooder accosts me with a clipboard and a jaunty, "do you have a minute for the environment?"

Also, the surfeit of clunky, unshaven, back-of-the-VW-with-a-dog-looking-on-from-the-front-seat sex that occurs every second or third chapter couldn't have been good for my overall development. (That, however, is between me and my therapist.)

Jason says

OK I'll try not to say what other reviewers have said. First of all, I loved the drama, the ideas, the characters, but I didn't buy the ending at all so I deducted a star. The other star was deducted because of the at times clunky writing and I think the character's histories merited further discussion.

First what I liked: The plot is riveting, to the point of agonizing. You just want them to call it quits and save themselves! It can get a little bogged down in technical descriptions. Stylistically, it was reminiscent of a lot of old Western stories. In this work, the West is now the last essentially intact wilderness in the U.S. At one point they even say something like, "The East is lost".

For me, the ideas in this book (environmentalism, anarchism, freedom, gender, sense of place, survival, sin, hypocrisy, etc) make this one of the most exciting, relevant, and rewarding reads I have had in a while.

I did see the sexism in the work, but considering the time frame (1970's), it wasn't all that out of place. Bonnie herself was just as strong and interesting as any of the characters.

However, I deducted one star because I felt the characters needed more of a history. The book basically starts off with Doc burning signs and right there, I felt that a disconnect existed. Why was he doing it? I know doctors that care about the environment. They don't burn down billboards for fun.

(SPOILER ALERT)

Secondly, I deducted a star because the ending really betrayed the ideas in this story. I don't believe Hayduke would have returned, nor would they have seen themselves as "victorious", nor would they probably have kept at it.

The characters to me, were essentially tragic ones. Yet when Hayduke returns, like the Lone Ranger, it's just cliché and not what was being built up. His whole character was built up to have this death-wish syndrome and it was very realistically done. I just felt that I had been tricked into agonizing over this character, who it turns out, wasn't really in too much trouble.

The other characters were tragic as well. I mean there is just no discussion about how Bonnie's family felt or how their reputations were affected. In American society, getting sentenced by a court of law, as the characters did, is a tragedy.

Lastly, the result of all their actions was the the prosecutor got elected to office and goes on to make development a huge priority! So that's a tragedy for their cause as well. That is environment that you can't just "regrow."

So unreal was the ending, that I actually read it almost as if it was a dream, almost expecting Doc to be hallucinating.

(UPDATE: I just took a look at the reviews for the sequel to this book, titled "Hayduke Lives!" and was not surprised to find they consistently mention how the book fails to live up to the first, in that they didn't like the further development of Hayduke.)

Virginia Arthur says

This book is a great American Classic. It is impossible to fully describe its influence.

I love reading the comments about Abbey. He just pissed off everybody. This was when the so-called "environmental" movement in this country had balls and snark. Now, it's pot-lucks and social events, getting anything done as an afterthought. It's "being professional"=lobotomy.

Ed walked the land and knew the land. He knew the critters like they were his friends. He read the sky. He was about our AMERICAN LAND and he knew it, intimately. Somehow, the art of knowing the land has been subsumed by using public lands for exercise...and it doesn't matter a damn if you don't know the first thing about that tree seedling you just ran over with your mountain bike. The narcissists have found the out of doors but they look neat and trim...fit. This is what matters.

God Bless His Cantankerous Sexist Ass. We miss ya' Ed.

Melki says

This tale of four "goldamn envirn-meddlers" is one of the least compelling stories I've ever read. I put off picking up the book until just before bedtime, and that one or two paragraphs I managed to read sure did wonders for lulling me into unconsciousness. The parts I did stay awake for only served to piss me off. The hypocrisy of these eco-terrorists is laughable. They motor up and down the very highways they rage against, burning massive amounts of fossil fuels in the commission of their protests, all the while, blithely tossing trash out the windows. Then there's the fact that the men are allowed to be old, fat, and hirsute. The one woman is, of course, young and attractive, with "shaven calves." (Interesting that she packs a razor for all their wilderness exploits. Probably a disposable which is then tossed from a car window.)

I don't know . . . maybe this was a case of "wrong book, wrong time." This is one of those books I kept saving to savor at a later date, and perhaps, I held out too long, until the "best ~~buy~~ read" date expired. The reason this gets three, rather than two stars, is that I have a feeling I might have liked it had I read it in high school or college.

Nowadays, I root for Billy Mack instead of Billy Joe and Bobbie Sue. (After all, Billy Joe *did* shoot a man while robbing his castle.) I probably should have read this one when I was reading Another Roadside Attraction. Abbey's book reminds me of Tom Robbins, only not funny.

Ryan says

Giving this book 5 stars would probably put me on some sort of a list, but let's be honest: I'm already on that list. If you're at all concerned about the environment, this is a pretty good book to read. It was the inspiration for Earth First! (The exclamation point is part of the name of the organization, the real end of the sentence

follows this parenthetical). But the great part about this book is that it isn't a boring didactic screed. Instead, it's a hilarious comedy/adventure novel. To give my favorite example: One character starts using the alias Rudolph the Red during what would now probably be called a "direct action" campaign against various mining and logging interests. The only reason for that name is so that, in a conversation about the weather, he can say to a girl "Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear." Brilliant.
