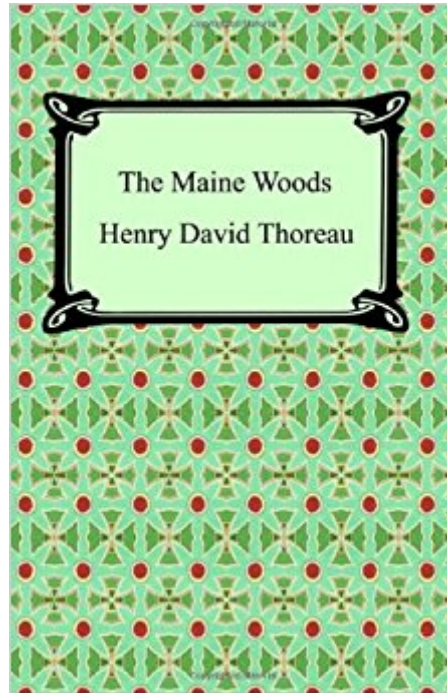


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The Maine Woods



Synopsis

Based on Thoreau's experiences in the forests of Maine on three separate occasions in 1846, 1853 and 1857, *The Maine Woods* is a captivating portrait of the region in the mid-1800s. Rich with the naturalistic detail that is common with Thoreau's writing, readers will delight in the exquisiteness with which Thoreau relates his experiences in nature. *The Maine Woods* is a classic work that will enchant lovers of nature for years to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I travelled to Maine this past summer and was keen to find out more about its history and the people who lived there. Its inhabitants are proud of their woodcutting and naval past, of this Thoreau talks about, the Kaadn mountain, Millinocket, Penobscott river on which we were on a fun white river rafting adventure as tourists but it was the only way he could travel. The language is rather slow and it is a book to ponder on and enjoy slowly.

Fun and informative tales of Thoreau's three adventures in the Maine North Woods. Follow along as you read on Google Earth to see his routes and enjoy!

Great read

The way the book was printed -- very long, small lines of text per page -- made it difficult to read.

Required reading for all New Englanders who love history and the great outdoors! Not widely known, but read it along with a map to see where "we" were.

Book was in great condition!

Started reading it and am pleasantly surprised to read Thoreau's party passed. Through our part of the woods in Mattawamkeag.

In 1848, 1853, and 1857, Henry David Thoreau travelled to the wilderness -- forests, lakes, rivers, and mountains in the northwest part of Maine. He wrote three lengthy essays describing each of his journeys, and they were gathered together, as Thoreau had wished, and published after his death, together with an appendix, as "The Maine Woods." It is a moving book, a classic work of American literature, and the founder of a genre of descriptive travel writing. Readers coming to "The Maine Woods" after "Walden" or "A Walk on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" may be in for a surprise. These earlier books do include extensive descriptions of nature and of plants and animals, but their focus is much more internalized and philosophical. Both books are full of discussions of themes that have little direct connection with nature. They show Thoreau as a Transcendentalist, an American philosopher akin to Emerson and others. "The Maine Woods", in contrast, shows Thoreau as much more of a naturalist interested in describing the wilderness in great detail for its own sake. I think the book articulates a philosophical temperament akin to Thoreau's earlier books, but it is for the most part implicit rather than stated at length. The three essays describe Thoreau's journeys at widely separated times to Mount Ktaadn, the Chesuncook River, and the Allegash and East Branch Rivers, journeys that overlapped to some degree. Thoreau travelled with a companion and with Indian guides. He gives the reader pictures of what was still largely a pristine wilderness even though it was, at that early time, already being subject to logging, the growth of towns, and despoliation. We see Thoreau and his companions travelling in canoes or batteaus on the interconnected rivers and lakes of northwest Maine, carrying and portaging their vessels around falls, camping in the woods, observing the vegetation and animals, getting lost, finding shelter from the rain, visiting lumber camps and the hardy residents of the woods, gathering berries, hunting, and much else. The narrative is filled with detail of Thoreau's experiences and thoughts. I found the most moving part of the book was Thoreau's description of his climb up Mount Ktaadn in the first essay. We see this journey in detail, described with ancient Greek and American Indian symbolism. It concludes with a long peroration of the value of wilderness -- of land not controlled or under the disposition of people.

Thoreau observes that "the country is virtually unmapped and unexplored, and there still waves the virgin forest of the New World." The "Chesuncook" essay includes a vivid description of the stalking and killing of a moose and Thoreau's resultant sense of discomfort. It closes with a call for the creation of national preserves for wilderness. The final essay describes a broad spectrum of adventures and places on a day-to-day basis. There are many passages that describe Thoreau's Indian guide, Joe Polis. Although Thoreau was deeply fascinated with the Indian heritage of Maine, some of his treatment of Polis will sound stereotyped to modern readers. Thoreau's book was the first in a long line of American works devoted to nature. But I was reminded most of the Beat writers in some of their moments, of Jack Kerouac, (a native of Lowell, Massachusetts) in "The Dharma Bums" describing rucksacking and the climbing of a mountain and of the poetry of Gary Snyder. This book is about the need to leave the beaten path and follow one's star. There are some fine websites in which the interested reader can get more information about the places Thoreau visited. Robin Friedman

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