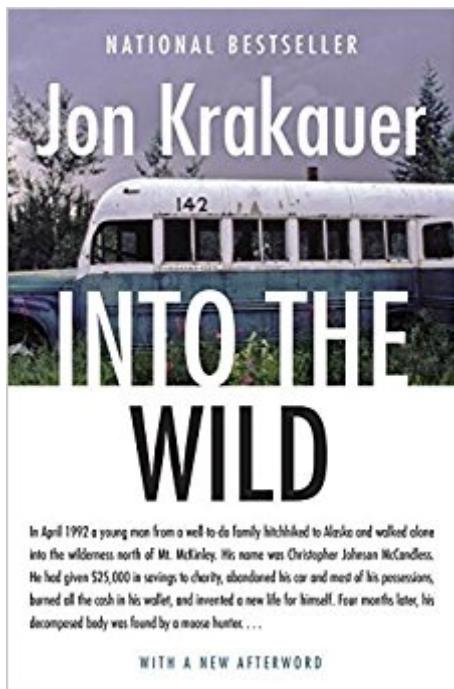


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Into The Wild



Synopsis

In April 1992 a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. His name was Christopher Johnson McCandless. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. How McCandless came to die is the unforgettable story of *Into the Wild*. Immediately after graduating from college in 1991, McCandless had roamed through the West and Southwest on a vision quest like those made by his heroes Jack London and John Muir. In the Mojave Desert he abandoned his car, stripped it of its license plates, and burned all of his cash. He would give himself a new name, Alexander Supertramp, and, unencumbered by money and belongings, he would be free to wallow in the raw, unfiltered experiences that nature presented. Craving a blank spot on the map, McCandless simply threw the maps away. Leaving behind his desperate parents and sister, he vanished into the wild. Jon Krakauer constructs a clarifying prism through which he reassembles the disquieting facts of McCandless's short life. Admitting an interest that borders on obsession, he searches for the clues to the drives and desires that propelled McCandless. Digging deeply, he takes an inherently compelling mystery and unravels the larger riddles it holds: the profound pull of the American wilderness on our imagination; the allure of high-risk activities to young men of a certain cast of mind; the complex, charged bond between fathers and sons. When McCandless's innocent mistakes turn out to be irreversible and fatal, he becomes the stuff of tabloid headlines and is dismissed for his naivete, pretensions, and hubris. He is said to have had a death wish but wanting to die is a very different thing from being compelled to look over the edge. Krakauer brings McCandless's uncompromising pilgrimage out of the shadows, and the peril, adversity, and renunciation sought by this enigmatic young man are illuminated with a rare understanding--and not an ounce of sentimentality. Mesmerizing, heartbreakingly moving, *Into the Wild* is a tour de force. The power and luminosity of Jon Krakauer's storytelling blaze through every page.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Anchor Books; 1 edition (February 1, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385486804

ISBN-13: 978-0385486804

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 2,953 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #210 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > Travel > United States > West > Pacific #1 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Nature Travel > Adventure #1 in Books > History > World > Expeditions & Discoveries

Customer Reviews

"God, he was a smart kid..." So why did Christopher McCandless trade a bright future--a college education, material comfort, uncommon ability and charm--for death by starvation in an abandoned bus in the woods of Alaska? This is the question that Jon Krakauer's book tries to answer. While it doesn't—cannot—answer the question with certainty, *Into the Wild* does shed considerable light along the way. Not only about McCandless's "Alaskan odyssey," but also the forces that drive people to drop out of society and test themselves in other ways. Krakauer quotes Wallace Stegner's writing on a young man who similarly disappeared in the Utah desert in the 1930s: "At 18, in a dream, he saw himself ... wandering through the romantic waste places of the world. No man with any of the juices of boyhood in him has forgotten those dreams." *Into the Wild* shows that McCandless, while extreme, was hardly unique; the author makes the hermit into one of us, something McCandless himself could never pull off. By book's end, McCandless isn't merely a newspaper clipping, but a sympathetic, oddly magnetic personality. Whether he was "a courageous idealist, or a reckless idiot," you won't soon forget Christopher McCandless.

After graduating from Emory University in Atlanta in 1992, top student and athlete Christopher McCandless abandoned his possessions, gave his entire \$24,000 savings account to charity and hitchhiked to Alaska, where he went to live in the wilderness. Four months later, he turned up dead. His diary, letters and two notes found at a remote campsite tell of his desperate effort to survive, apparently stranded by an injury and slowly starving. They also reflect the posturing of a confused young man, raised in affluent Annandale, Va., who self-consciously adopted a Tolstoyan renunciation of wealth and return to nature. Krakauer, a contributing editor to *Outside* and *Men's Journal*, retraces McCandless's ill-fated antagonism toward his father, Walt, an eminent aerospace engineer. Krakauer also draws parallels to his own reckless youthful exploit in 1977 when he climbed Devil's Thumb, a mountain on the Alaska-British Columbia border, partly as a symbolic act of rebellion against his autocratic father. In a moving narrative, Krakauer probes the mystery of

McCandless's death, which he attributes to logistical blunders and to accidental poisoning from eating toxic seed pods. Maps. 35,000 first printing; author tour. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I had seen this movie and it made me very interested in the story of this young man. This book was a great insight into others paths that took them away from their lives and into the wild also. Although the book centers around this man, there are a lot of references to others who took a similar path. This was a nice to read but I really wanted to know more about this certain man. If you are looking for a book about him and others, you will love this book. If you are looking for an extension of the movie like I was, you will be disappointed.

This is a beautifully written story told with empathy and compassion. Its a true story though it is difficult to accept its tragic outcome. A recent college graduate, Chris McCandless, began an odyssey. Like Henry David Thoreau, he eschewed his worldly possessions, leaving behind his parents and sister. He literally destroyed and abandoned all of his possessions in order to start his life afresh based on the principles of self sufficiency. He journeyed to Alaska, the final frontier of the United States. His endeavor ended in his tragic death in the Alaska wilderness alone, having starved to death. Chris's story resonated deeply with the author of this book. The book originated as an article written for a journal for who are devoted explorers of the wilderness. However, the author, dissatisfied with the article, expanded it into a book with great scope as well as depth. The result is a superb illumination of a man's values and subsequent choices to live life on his own terms.

Whatever you think about the subject of the book, Krakauer's telling of the story, weaving in his own and parallel narratives of young men gripped by a desire to test themselves by walking into the wild, is so masterful that it would be hard not to be mesmerized. When addressing the question of whether McCandless was suicidal, the author draws on his own adventure climbing Devil's Thumb: "At that stage of my youth, death remained as abstract a concept as non-Euclidean geometry or marriage. I didn't yet appreciate its terrible finality or the havoc it could wreak on those who had entrusted the deceased with their hearts. I was stirred by the dark mystery of mortality. I couldn't resist stealing up to the edge of doom and peering over the brink. The hint of what was concealed in those shadows terrified me, but I caught sight of something in the glimpse, some forbidden and elemental riddle that was no less compelling

than the sweet, hidden petals of a woman's sex. In my case that was a very different thing from wanting to die."The quotations from Thoreau to Tolstoy to Jack London (usually sections found highlighted by Chris McCandless) place what could have been a pathetic, self-absorbed adventure gone terribly wrong into a much larger context, making it all start to make sense by the end of the book."...suddenly you were on your own, you had to learn to walk by yourself. There was no one around, neither family nor people whose judgment you respected. At such a time you felt the need of committing yourself to something absolute—life or truth or beauty—of being ruled by it in place of the man-made rules that had been discarded. You needed to surrender to some such ultimate purpose more fully, more unreservedly than you had ever done in the old familiar, peaceful days, in the old life that was now abolished and gone for good."BORIS PASTERNAK, DOCTOR ZHIVAGO PASSAGE HIGHLIGHTED IN ONE OF THE BOOKS FOUND WITH CHRIS MCCANDLESS'S REMAINS."I do not share McCandless's obsession with "the wild" but like most of us with a Y chromosome, I can relate at some primitive level. Our species evolved because of our extraordinary curiosity and desire to roam. Our ancestors all walked out of Africa only a few hundred thousand years ago and we have been walking ever since. The idea that there is nothing untamed left to explore or experience offends us somehow. McCandless took this idea to a ridiculous, tragic extreme, but it's hard not to respect the spirit driving him even if we can shake our heads at his naïveté. There are more questions than answers about this young man and his demise - did he realize he wasn't really in the wild after all but a few miles from a major highway? was he the one who vandalized and trashed the nearby well-stocked cabins? what exactly did he eat that may have so suddenly incapacitated him after he had survived so long on his own wits (and firearms)? had he survived, would he have returned home and reconciled with his family, having answered whatever burning question he had to answer on his own?I feel that Krakauer is inviting us into a crime scene. We have a body, some clues, but so many more questions. What Krakauer excels at developing is motive, taking us into the mind of this young man (who the author annoyingly refers to as a "boy" although he was approaching his mid-twenties) and walking us through his final days. It's a fascinating, gripping read. If I could give it 6 stars, I would.

This book I approached with trepidation, wondering what could have possessed the young man to do what he had done that led to his horrible demise. The author used his passionate drive to understand and answer that question. In reconstructing the timeline of Chris' lost years we find that

the years were anything but lost. The determination shown by the author to answer the questions about the boy's death, finally lays to rest the criticisms people have heaped on him posthumously. This book was well written, thoughtful, insightful, and enthralling. I literally could not put it down. True literature takes a small point or incident and illuminates it so that we all can see its significance in the cosmic scheme, so that we understand for whom the bells toll.

Jon Krakauer's "Into the Wild" spins a beautiful tale that literally spans a continent and is as grand in scope as any American Dream envisioned by an uncompromisingly idealistic genius who ever decided to take The Road Less Traveled. Despite being concretely reportorial in his style, Krakauer still manages to bring to life the various backcountry (and backwater) locales that make this book impressively American. It's profound in its implications and will resonate deeply with anyone who has ever felt the call of the road, the inexpressible wanderlust of youth. If you read this and don't have a turmoil of clashing emotions for Chris McCandless / Alexander Supertramp, then you missed Krakauer's point entirely. This book is as enigmatic, disturbing, beautifully touching, and frustratingly incomprehensible as the country that engendered McCandless. This book will haunt you with a caldera of ambivalent emotions and theories about how and why a mystery of this magnitude occurred in the first place. Ultimately, Krakauer raises more questions than he answers, but, after all, isn't that precisely what a great piece of writing is supposed to do?

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