

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain

Wallace Stegner and the Enchantment of Big Rock Candy Mountain

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain—these words evoke a rich tapestry of American literature, landscape, and cultural memory. If you're a fan of Western writing or the exploration of human relationships with the vast, rugged American West, chances are you've come across the name Wallace Stegner. One of his notable works, *Big Rock Candy Mountain*, stands as a testament to his storytelling prowess and deep connection to the landscapes he so vividly paints. But what makes this novel and Stegner's approach so captivating? Let's dive into the world of Wallace Stegner's *Big Rock Candy Mountain* and explore its themes, significance, and enduring appeal.

The Essence of Wallace Stegner's Big Rock Candy Mountain

Wallace Stegner, often called "The Dean of Western Writers," created *Big Rock Candy Mountain* as more than just a novel about the American West. Published in 1943, the book captures the spirit of a frontier family's struggles, hopes, and dreams during the early 20th century. The title itself is inspired by a famous folk song about a mythical paradise, symbolizing a land of plenty and escape, which adds layers of meaning to the narrative.

A Tale Rooted in American Frontier Life

Big Rock Candy Mountain tells the story of a family that moves westward, seeking opportunity and a better life. Stegner's portrayal of the frontier is both realistic and poetic, highlighting the harsh realities of pioneer life alongside moments of beauty and hope. The novel explores themes such as survival, family dynamics, ambition, and the tension between man and nature.

Stegner's intimate knowledge of the West—gained from years of living and teaching in the region—allows readers to experience the terrain not just as a backdrop but as a living character. The landscapes in *Big Rock Candy Mountain* are rugged, sometimes unforgiving, but always awe-inspiring, reflecting the challenges and rewards of western expansion.

Why Big Rock Candy Mountain Resonates Today

One reason *Big Rock Candy Mountain* remains relevant is its exploration of universal themes: the pursuit of dreams, the complexity of family relationships, and the human desire for belonging. In a modern context, readers can find parallels in their own lives—whether it's the search for a place to call home or the struggle to balance personal ambition with familial responsibilities.

Additionally, Stegner's nuanced depiction of the West challenges romanticized versions of pioneer life. Instead of glorifying conquest and manifest

destiny, he presents a more balanced view that includes hardship, loss, and moral ambiguity, making the novel a thoughtful reflection on American identity.

Wallace Stegner's Impact on Western Literature

Wallace Stegner's legacy extends far beyond Big Rock Candy Mountain. His work helped redefine the genre of Western literature, moving it away from simplistic adventure tales toward more complex character studies and explorations of environment and culture.

A Voice of Environmental Consciousness

Stegner's writing often underscores a profound respect for the natural world. Long before environmentalism became mainstream, he advocated for conservation and sustainable land use. This perspective is evident in Big Rock Candy Mountain, where the landscape is portrayed not just as a setting but as an integral part of the characters' lives.

His appreciation for nature's power and fragility invites readers to consider humanity's role in shaping—and sometimes harming—the environment. This environmental consciousness has made Stegner's work influential among both literary circles and conservationists.

Stegner's Literary Style and Storytelling

What sets Stegner apart is his masterful use of language and narrative structure. His prose is both accessible and lyrical, weaving vivid descriptions with deep emotional insight. Big Rock Candy Mountain showcases his ability to develop multi-dimensional characters whose inner conflicts mirror the external challenges they face.

Stegner's storytelling is immersive, drawing readers into the rhythms of frontier life, the changing seasons, and the evolving relationships within the family. His attention to detail and historical accuracy enrich the narrative, making it not only an engaging story but also a valuable cultural document.

Exploring Big Rock Candy Mountain: Themes and Symbolism

Understanding the themes and symbols in Big Rock Candy Mountain enhances appreciation for Stegner's work and its place in American literature.

The Symbolism of Big Rock Candy Mountain

The title refers to a legendary place in American folklore—a hobo's paradise

where work is unnecessary, and happiness abounds. Stegner uses this symbol ironically and poignantly. While the characters in the novel strive for a better life, their journey reveals the complexities and costs of chasing such idyllic dreams.

Rather than a literal paradise, Big Rock Candy Mountain becomes a metaphor for hope, disillusionment, and the tension between aspiration and reality. This symbolism invites readers to reflect on their own “big rock candy mountains” – those elusive dreams that shape human experience.

Family, Identity, and the American Dream

At its core, the novel is a family saga. Stegner delves into the intricacies of relationships between parents and children, highlighting generational conflicts and shifting values. The tensions between tradition and change, individual desires and collective responsibilities, are central to the narrative.

Moreover, Big Rock Candy Mountain critiques and expands the idea of the American Dream. It questions the notion of success as material gain alone and suggests that fulfillment is more deeply tied to connection, place, and integrity.

Tips for Readers New to Wallace Stegner's Work

If you're intrigued by Wallace Stegner's Big Rock Candy Mountain but unsure where to start, here are a few tips to enrich your reading experience:

- **Consider the Historical Context:** Familiarize yourself with the period of westward expansion and pioneer life in early 20th-century America. This background will deepen your understanding of the characters' challenges.
- **Pay Attention to the Landscape:** Notice how Stegner describes the natural environment and how it influences the story. The setting is almost a character itself.
- **Reflect on the Family Dynamics:** Observe how relationships evolve and how individual ambitions conflict or align with family needs.
- **Explore Related Works:** Reading other Stegner novels or essays can provide greater insight into his themes and style.

Wallace Stegner's Big Rock Candy Mountain in the Broader Literary Landscape

Big Rock Candy Mountain occupies a unique place in American literature, bridging the gap between traditional Western narratives and more modern, introspective storytelling. It paved the way for writers who sought to depict the West with greater nuance and emotional depth.

Stegner's influence is evident in contemporary literature that grapples with place, identity, and history. His work continues to inspire readers and writers who seek to understand the complex interplay between humans and the landscapes they inhabit.

Exploring Wallace Stegner's *Big Rock Candy Mountain* offers more than just a journey into the past; it invites us to reconsider our own connections to place, family, and the dreams that drive us forward. Whether you're a lover of Western fiction, a student of American history, or simply someone who appreciates beautifully crafted stories, this novel is a rewarding and thought-provoking read.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' by Wallace Stegner about?

'Big Rock Candy Mountain' is a novel by Wallace Stegner that explores the lives of the Suttree family across generations, focusing on themes of family, change, and the American West.

When was 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' published?

'Big Rock Candy Mountain' was published in 1943.

How does 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' reflect Wallace Stegner's views on the American West?

'Big Rock Candy Mountain' reflects Stegner's nuanced perspective on the American West, portraying both its beauty and the complexities of progress and change affecting families and communities.

Is 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' considered one of Wallace Stegner's major works?

Yes, 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' is considered one of Wallace Stegner's significant early works and helped establish his reputation as an important American novelist.

What are some central themes in 'Big Rock Candy Mountain'?

Central themes in 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' include family dynamics, the passage of time, the impact of modernization, and the myth versus reality of the American West.

Has 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' by Wallace Stegner been adapted into other media?

As of now, there are no widely known adaptations of 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' into film or television, though the novel remains influential in literary circles.

Additional Resources

****Exploring Wallace Stegner's *Big Rock Candy Mountain*: A Literary Journey into the American West****

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain is a phrase that invites literary enthusiasts and scholars alike to delve into one of the seminal works by Wallace Stegner, a prominent figure in American literature known for his deep engagement with the American West. **Big Rock Candy Mountain**, Stegner's 1943 novel, stands out as a rich narrative tapestry that explores themes of family, the pursuit of dreams, and the complexities of life in the early 20th-century American frontier. This article investigates the layers embedded within the novel, its significance in Stegner's oeuvre, and its contribution to the broader canon of Western literature.

An Overview of Wallace Stegner's **Big Rock Candy Mountain**

Set against the rugged backdrop of the American West, **Big Rock Candy Mountain** chronicles the life of Bo Mason, a charismatic yet flawed itinerant worker whose restless spirit shapes the destinies of his family. The novel spans several decades, tracing Bo's relentless quest for opportunity and personal freedom, while exposing the often harsh realities hidden behind the mythic allure of the frontier.

Wallace Stegner, often dubbed the "Dean of Western Writers," uses this work to dissect the mythos of the American West, moving beyond simple romanticism to reveal the nuanced struggles of individuals caught between hope and hardship. The novel's title itself evokes a folk song symbolizing an idyllic paradise, which Stegner uses ironically to underscore the elusive nature of such dreams in reality.

Thematic Exploration: The American Dream and Disillusionment

At the core of **Big Rock Candy Mountain** lies a profound meditation on the American Dream—a dream that promises prosperity and happiness but often yields disillusionment. Bo Mason's character embodies this paradox. His ceaseless wanderings and refusal to settle reflect a yearning for freedom and reinvention, yet his impulsive decisions and moral ambiguities bring turmoil to his family.

Stegner's narrative critiques the myth of boundless opportunity in the West by illustrating the limitations imposed by economic hardship, personal flaws, and social constraints. Through Bo's family, readers witness the collateral damage of his pursuit, including fractured relationships and the erosion of stability.

Characterization and Narrative Style

Wallace Stegner's approach to characterization in **Big Rock Candy Mountain** is both empathetic and unflinching. Bo Mason is not idealized; rather, he is

portrayed with all his contradictions, making him a complex anti-hero. This nuanced depiction allows readers to grapple with questions of morality, identity, and survival.

The novel's narrative style is marked by vivid descriptions of the Western landscape, which function almost as a character in itself. Stegner's prose blends lyrical passages with straightforward storytelling, creating a rhythm that mirrors the unpredictable ebb and flow of frontier life. This balance enhances the immersive quality of the novel, inviting readers to experience the environment and era intimately.

The Significance of *Big Rock Candy Mountain* in Western Literature

In the context of Western American literature, *Big Rock Candy Mountain* occupies a distinctive place. Unlike traditional Westerns that often emphasize heroic exploits or clear-cut morality, Stegner's work delves into psychological complexity and social realism. This shift reflects the evolving literary landscape of the mid-20th century, where introspection and critique gained prominence.

Comparison with Other Western Narratives

When compared to contemporaneous Western novels, Stegner's *Big Rock Candy Mountain* stands out for its focus on internal conflicts rather than external adventure. For instance, while authors like Zane Grey or Louis L'Amour often celebrated the taming of the frontier through rugged individualism, Stegner highlights the costs of such pursuits on personal and familial levels.

Furthermore, Stegner's emphasis on the environmental and cultural context aligns his work with later Western writers who prioritize authenticity and complexity over mythologizing. This approach has influenced generations of writers interested in portraying the West as a multifaceted and dynamic region.

Stegner's Environmental Consciousness

Another dimension of *Big Rock Candy Mountain* worth noting is its subtle engagement with environmental themes. Stegner, a known advocate for conservation, weaves an underlying respect for the natural world into his descriptions. The Western landscape is not merely a setting but a force that shapes human experience.

This environmental consciousness presages Stegner's later works and activism, which contributed to the development of Western environmental literature. Readers can discern an early awareness of the tension between human ambition and ecological limits within the novel.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Upon its release, *Big Rock Candy Mountain* received critical acclaim for its ambitious storytelling and rich character development. Critics praised Stegner's ability to capture the spirit of the West without succumbing to clichés. Over time, the novel has maintained its relevance, studied in academic circles for its literary merit and cultural insights.

Pros and Cons of the Novel in Modern Contexts

- **Pros:** The novel offers a timeless exploration of human aspiration and failure, with multidimensional characters and evocative prose that resonate with readers interested in historical and psychological depth.
- **Cons:** Some contemporary readers may find the pacing reflective of its era, with slower narrative developments compared to modern novels. Additionally, the novel's focus on a predominantly white settler perspective limits its engagement with Indigenous experiences and other marginalized groups of the time.

Despite these critiques, *Big Rock Candy Mountain* remains a foundational text for understanding the literary evolution of Western themes and remains influential in shaping perceptions of the American West.

Wallace Stegner's Enduring Influence through *Big Rock Candy Mountain*

Stegner's *Big Rock Candy Mountain* continues to be a vital reference point not only for readers of Western literature but also for those interested in American cultural history and narrative form. The novel's intricate portrayal of family dynamics, the elusive quest for happiness, and the interplay between man and environment exemplify the qualities that have cemented Stegner's reputation as a master storyteller.

As interest in nuanced depictions of the American West grows, *Big Rock Candy Mountain* offers a compelling lens through which to examine the contradictions and complexities that define this region's history and mythology. It challenges readers to reconsider simplistic narratives and embrace a more textured understanding of the frontier experience—a testament to Wallace Stegner's enduring literary legacy.

Wallace Stegner Big Rock Candy Mountain

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Wallace Earle Stegner,

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* Wallace Stegner,
2017-11-28 Bo Mason, his wife, Elsa, and their two boys live a transient life of poverty and despair. Drifting from town to town and from state to state, the violent, ruthless Bo seeks out his fortune--in the hotel business, on new farmland, and, eventually, in illegal rum-running through the treacherous back roads of the American Northwest. Bo chases after the promise of the American dream through Minnesota, the Dakotas, Saskatchewan, Montana, Utah and Nevada, but ultimately there is no escaping the devastating reach of the Depression and his own ruinous fate. In this affecting narrative, a defining masterpiece by the dean of Western writers (The New York Times), Wallace Stegner portrays more than three decades in the life of the Mason family as they struggle to survive during the lean years of the early twentieth century. With an introduction by Robert Stone.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: *Wallace Stegner's Unsettled Country* Mark Fiege, Leisl Carr Childers, Michael J. Lansing, 2024-02 This collection shows that Wallace Stegner's work, however flawed, remains a useful tool for assessing the past, present, and future of the American West.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: Big Rock Candy Mountain Wallace Stegner, 2009-07-01 America can be a harsh land during tough times, this is the story of America and its down times as experienced by one family.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: The Big Rock Candy Mountain Wallace Earle Stegner, 1968

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: "Where's Wally?" , 2011

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: *Grasslands Grown* Molly Patrick Rozum, 2021-08
In *Grasslands Grown* Molly P. Rozum explores the two related concepts of regional identity and sense of place by examining a single North American ecological region: the U.S. Great Plains and the Canadian Prairie Provinces. All or parts of modern-day Alberta, Montana, Saskatchewan, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Manitoba form the center of this transnational region. As children, the first postconquest generation of northern grasslands residents worked, played, and traveled with domestic and wild animals, which introduced them to ecology and shaped sense-of-place rhythms. As adults, members of this generation of settler society worked to adapt to the northern grasslands by practicing both agricultural diversification and environmental conservation. Rozum argues that environmental awareness, including its ecological and cultural aspects, is key to forming a sense of place and a regional identity. The two concepts overlap and reinforce each other: place is more local, ecological, and emotional-sensual, and region is more ideational, national, and geographic in tone. This captivating study examines the growth of place and regional identities as they took shape within generations and over the life cycle.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: The Unexamined Orwell John Rodden, 2012-08-17 A reflection on Orwell-as-idea that "outlines some of the misconceptions and misuses of the Orwell name" (Modern Fiction Studies). The year 1984 is just a memory, but the catchwords of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* still routinely pepper public discussions of topics ranging from government surveillance and privacy invasion to language corruption and bureaucratese. Orwell's work pervades the cultural imagination, while others of his literary generation are long forgotten. Exploring this astonishing afterlife has become the scholarly vocation of John Rodden, who is now the leading authority on the reception, impact, and reinvention of George Orwell—the man and writer—as well as of "Orwell" the cultural icon and historical talisman. In *The Unexamined Orwell*, Rodden delves into dimensions of Orwell's life and legacy that have escaped the critical glare. He discusses how several leading American intellectuals have earned the title of Orwell's "successor," including Lionel Trilling, Dwight Macdonald, Irving Howe, Christopher Hitchens, and John Lukacs. He then turns to Germany and focuses on the role and relevance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the now-defunct communist nation of East Germany. Rodden also addresses

myths that have grown up around Orwell's life, including his "more than half-legendary" encounter with Ernest Hemingway in liberated Paris in March 1945, and analyzes literary issues such as his utopian sensibility and his prose style. Finally, Rodden poses the endlessly debated question, "What would George Orwell do?" and speculates about how the prophet of Nineteen Eighty-Four would have reacted to world events. In so doing, Rodden shows how our responses to this question reveal much about our culture's ongoing need to reappropriate "Orwell."

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: Utah Historians and the Reconstruction of Western History Gary Topping, 2003 Among historians of Utah and the American West, few names have greater resonance than Bernard DeVoto, Dale Morgan, Juanita Brooks, Wallace Stegner, and Fawn Brodie. Each of these writers made enduring contributions not only to our knowledge of the American West but also to our view of the region and its history. In many ways their writing set the standard for scholarship and interpretation, and their influence is still felt today. Yet they were not flawless. As Gary Topping explains in this, the first comprehensive appraisal of their work, each had serious shortcomings. DeVoto and Stegner, master storytellers, distorted their histories with excessive use of literary and artistic techniques; Morgan, the thorough researcher, failed to see larger contexts and interpretive possibilities; Brooks, courageous in finding damning new information on the Mountain Meadows massacre, stopped short of drawing conclusions that might alienate her from her fellow Mormons; and Brodie, psychobiographer extraordinaire, nonetheless succumbed to reading too much into the lives of her subjects based on her own emotions and conflicts. All five writers experienced Mormon Utah in the formative stages of their lives and, whether they wanted to or not, fashioned their work on the American West under that indelible influence. Topping shows ultimately how, despite weaknesses, each created exemplary models of diligent research and narrative elegance while establishing new traditions in western historical scholarship.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: Chasing the Sun Edward Joseph Beverly, 2008 Chasing the Sun is a guide to Western fiction with more than 1,350 entries, including 59 reviews of the author's personal favorites, organized around theme.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American West Steven Frye, 2016-04-26 This Companion provides a comprehensive introduction to one of the most vibrant and expansive traditions in world literature. The American West occupies a unique place in the global imagination, and the literature it produced transcends the category of 'region' in theme and form. Written by prominent international scholars, the essays cover a diverse group of key texts and authors, including major figures in the Native American, Hispanic, Asian American, and African American movements. Treatments range from environmental and ecopoetic to transnational and transcultural, reflecting the richness of the field. This volume places the literature in deep historical context and features a chronology and a bibliography for further reading. It will be an essential guide for students of literature of the American West and of American literature generally.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: The Lost Frontier Mark Asquith, 2014-06-19 Annie Proulx is one of the most provocative and stylistically innovative writers in America today. She is at her best in the short story format, and the best of these are to be found in her Wyoming trilogy, in which she turns her eye on America's West--both past and present. Yet despite the vast amount of print expended reviewing her books, there has been nothing published on the Wyoming Stories. The Lost Frontier fills this critical void by offering a detailed examination of the key stories in the trilogy: Close Range (1999), Bad Dirt (2004), Fine Just the Way it Is (2008). The chapters are arranged according to western archetypes--the Pioneer, Rancher, Cowboy, Indian, and, arguably, the most important character of them all in Proulx's fiction: Landscape. The Lost Frontier offers students a clear sense of the novelist's early life and work, her stylistic influences and the characteristics of her fiction and an understanding of where the Wyoming Stories, and Annie Proulx's work as a whole, fits into traditional and contemporary writing about the American West.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: A Companion to the Regional Literatures of

America Charles L. Crow, 2008-04-15 The Blackwell Companion to American Regional Literature is the most comprehensive resource yet published for study of this popular field. The most inclusive survey yet published of American regional literature. Represents a wide variety of theoretical and historical approaches. Surveys the literature of specific regions from California to New England and from Alaska to Hawaii. Discusses authors and groups who have been important in defining regional American literature.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: Great Plains Quarterly , 1999

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: The Life and Truth of George R. Stewart Donald M. Scott, 2012-09-21 Best known for his 1949 post-apocalyptic thriller *Earth Abides*, George R. Stewart (1895-1980) spent a lifetime wandering the American landscape and writing books about its geography and history. An English professor at the University of California at Berkeley, the exceptional scholar-author penned some of the most remarkable literary works of the 20th century, inventing several types of books along the way—including the road-geography book, micro-history, place-name history, ecological history, and the ecological novel. By weaving human and natural sciences and history into his books Stewart created works with a multi-disciplinary perspective on events and places that influenced numerous other writers, artists, and scientists, including Stephen King, Greg Bear, and Page Stegner. This volume considers George R. Stewart's rich oeuvre while chronicling a life-long quest to uncover the deepest truths about the man and his work.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: The Greatest English Novels to Read in a Lifetime Various, 2020-04-28 Fifty timeless novels in one collection, plus additional bonus classics: *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus *Rashomon* and *Seventeen Other Stories* by Ryunosuke Akutagawa *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri *Between Past and Future* by Hannah Arendt and *Jerome Kohn* *Eichmann in Jerusalem* by Hannah Arendt *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard *Peter Pan* by J. M. Barrie *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days and Other Writings* by Nellie Bly *The Brontë Sisters* by Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, and Anne Brontë *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll *In Patagonia* by Bruce Chatwin *The Spy* by James Fenimore Cooper *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* by Sigmund Freud *The Iliad* by Homer *The Odyssey* by Homer *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* by Shirley Jackson *Niels Lyhne* by Jens Peter Jacobsen *On the Road: The Original Scroll* by Jack Kerouac *Tristes Tropiques* by Claude Levi-Strauss *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, and *Other Stories* by Jack London *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories* by H. P. Lovecraft *The Moon and Sixpence* by W. Somerset Maugham *Of Human Bondage* by W. Somerset Maugham *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller *Anne of Green Gables* by L. M. Montgomery *A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe* by Fernando Pessoa *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* by Adam Smith *Angle of Repose* by Wallace Stegner *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* by John Steinbeck *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck* by John Steinbeck *Of Mice and Men* and *The Moon Is Down* by John Steinbeck *Dracula* by Bram Stoker *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* by Rebecca West *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton *Three Novels of New York* by Edith Wharton *Gray When You Are Old* by William Butler Yeats *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin

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Richard W. Etulain, 1996-09 Describes changes in how the West has been seen, from a male-dominated frontier, to a region with a powerful sense of place, to a modern center of both genders, ethnic groups, and environmental interests

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: The New Western History Forrest Glen Robinson, 1998 Seven scholars examine the work of the new western historians, who retell the story of the American West from the point of view of the oppressed and colonized, and discuss ways to expand the horizons of this new approach to include fiction, literature by women, racial categories, writers

who presaged the movement, popular culture, and natural history.

wallace stegner big rock candy mountain: Works Cited Brandon R. Schrand, 2020-04-15
Doing things by the book acquires a whole new meaning in Brandon R. Schrand's memoir of coming of age in spite of himself. The works cited are those books that serve as Schrand's signposts as he goes from life as a hormone-crazed, heavy-metal wannabe in the remotest parts of working-class Idaho to a reasonable facsimile of manhood (with a stop along the way to buy a five-dollar mustard-colored M. C. Hammer suit, so he'll fit in at college). The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn informs his adolescent angst over the perceived injustice of society's refusal to openly discuss boners. The Great Gatsby serves as a metaphor for his indulgent and directionless college days spent in a drunken stupor (when he wasn't feigning interest in Mormonism to attract women). William Kittredge's Hole in the Sky parallels his own dangerous adulthood slide into alcoholism and denial. With a finely calibrated wit, a good dose of humility, and a strong supporting cast of literary characters, Schrand manages to chart his own story--about a dreamer thrown out of school as many times as he's thrown into jail--until he finally sticks his landing.

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Wallace Stegner, 1969

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