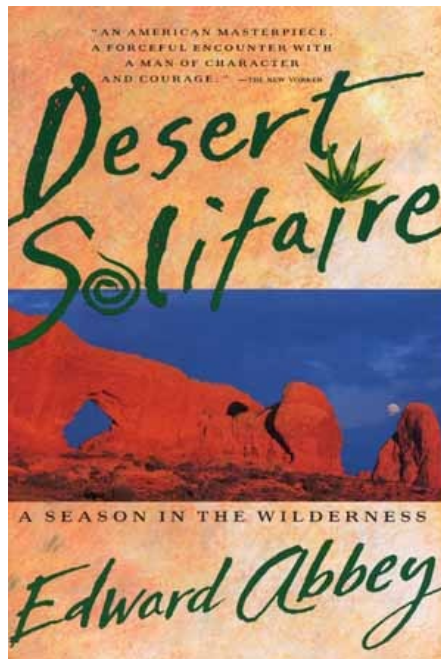




Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness

Edward Abbey , Peter Parnall (Illustrator)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness

Edward Abbey , Peter Parnall (Illustrator)

Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness Edward Abbey , Peter Parnall (Illustrator)

When *Desert Solitaire* was first published in 1968, it became the focus of a nationwide cult. Rude and sensitive. Thought-provoking and mystical. Angry and loving. Both Abbey and this book are all of these and more. Here, the legendary author of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, *Abbey's Road* and many other critically acclaimed books vividly captures the essence of his life during three seasons as a park ranger in southeastern Utah. This is a rare view of a quest to experience nature in its purest form--the silence, the struggle, the overwhelming beauty. But this is also the gripping, anguished cry of a man of character who challenges the growing exploitation of the wilderness by oil and mining interests, as well as by the tourist industry.

Abbey's observations and challenges remain as relevant now as the day he wrote them. Today, *Desert Solitaire* asks if any of our incalculable natural treasures can be saved before the bulldozers strike again.

Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness Details

Date : Published January 15th 1990 by Touchstone (first published 1968)

ISBN : 9780671695880

Author : Edward Abbey , Peter Parnall (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 268 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Environment, Nature, Autobiography, Memoir, Travel, Adventure

 [Download Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness Edward Abbey , Peter Parnall (Illustrator)

From Reader Review Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness for online ebook

Scott says

Part *Walden*, part *Mein Kampf* ... *Desert Solitaire* (1968) is to a certain extent sand-mad Edward Abbey's homage to the beauty of the American Southwest and to the necessity of wilderness ... but mostly, the book is an autobiographical paean to the sheer wonder of Abbey himself. Like the pioneers, prospectors, and developers who preceded him, Abbey lays claim to all the canyonlands and Four Corners region of southern Utah and northern Arizona: "Abbey's Country" he calls it, and he seeks to fill every twisting canyon and windswept plateau of his private playground with his own immense, misanthropic ego. His collected jottings form a notebook of random, often paranoid observations cast in anemic prose. He throws in everything that crosses his mind: a wearisome narrative of his float down the Colorado with a laconic traveling companion; bare, boring lists of plant names; a violent short story about prospecting; a dishonoring and disgusting story about finding the body of a lost tourist; jejune meditations on death and mortality; all of it crusted over with inane metaphysical babbling, insulting rants, and absurd polemics directed against technology, development, Native Americans, tourists, religion, the Park Service, the aged, the young, the government, and anyone or anything that is not Ed.

Yes, there are a few colorful descriptions of the scenery, but they are obscured by beer-swigging, cigar-chomping, beefsteak-chewing, bacon-burping, Bull-Durham big-mouth Ed's constant grab for attention. Abbey needs solitude about as much as a jackass needs a flush toilet. Ed's like your 10-year-old brother who torments you by jumping in front of your camera while you're trying to take a picture of a sunset or like a blathering guide who can't stem his prattle long enough to let you listen to the wind blowing through the canyons. All too often I found myself thinking, "Ed, shut up already and let me look around!" But he won't because he's got to tell me how he's crushed a rabbit's skull with a rock (it was an "experiment"), or how in a lovelorn moment he carved his name in an aspen (graffiti that will be twice as big in fifty years), or how he tore up dirt roads in his government-owned Chevy pickup, or how he insulted some tourist or some tourist insulted him, or how he burned everything in sight with his paraffin-coated matches.

Desert Solitaire is gonzo environmentalism, and it's showing its age. The immense majesty and haunting beauty of southern Utah's canyons deserves a far better panegyrist.

Update: It's been ten years since I read *Desert Solitaire* and wrote this review. Since then, I'm happy to write that I've come across many excellent books on the Four Corners region. Two of the best are Ellen Meloy's *The Anthropology of Turquoise: Reflections on Desert, Sea, Stone and Sky*, a new journalistic approach filled with wit and charm. And next, Ann Zwinger's very detailed and still readable *Wind in the Rock: The Canyonlands of Southeastern Utah*. In fact, you can't go too far wrong with anything written by these two authors.

Kris says

NYT essay: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/26/bo...>

Ms.pegasus says

Humanist/misanthrope, spiritual atheist, erudite primitive, pessimistic idealist – not that these traits are incompatible. As descriptions of the author, Edward Abbey, they hint at a complicated man struggling to reconcile the contradictions he finds in himself. He embraces an individuality that defies categorization, and that often places himself in an uncomfortably ambivalent relationship with the reader. It is a point worth confronting because DESERT SOLITAIRE is in part a memoir of Abbey's year as a park ranger at Arches National Park. Abbey voices at times a surly and wounded outrage. Destruction of natural habitats by a society consumed by growth, government using its power as a profiteer rather than as a steward, and the alienation of people from nature are the primary targets of his outrage.

I only began to like this book when he relaxes into a description of the terrain. The spring blooming of desert flowers, the symbiosis between the yucca and a particular type of moth, the animated awakening of sparse and precious life are described in vivid prose. We see the colors, feel the movement of wind and sand, taste the water, and smell the dried sage. Four plant communities are described: Pinyon pines and junipers on the mesa, brushes and grasses in the Salt Valley, poplar and cottonwood along the washes and streams, and fern, primrose, and columbine along the canyon walls. Each season is distinct and yet part of a total continuity: "Balanced on a point of equilibrium, hesitating, the world of the high desert turns toward summer."

One of Abbey's most interesting digressions from the present is his story of an excursion through Glen Canyon just before it was flooded by the Glen Canyon Dam which created Lake Powell. The imagery of architecture, geology, and a polyglot of history bring this now lost scenic wonder to life. This story is a perfect blend of personal testament, poetry, and historical perspective. Other reminiscences from the author's life are also embedded in this year's chronicle.

DESERT SOLITAIRE is a thought-provoking book. Although published in 1968 it's relevance has, if anything, grown. Demands for oil drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, denial of the reality of Global Warming, Bureau of Land Management round-ups of mustangs, and legalization of wolf hunting are issues under debate today. In 2008 the Wall Arch collapsed, to much publicity. DESERT SOLITAIRE allows us to understand that event in a deeper way. Although there is a pervasive strain of pessimism, I'm glad that I read this book.

NOTE:

added 2/27/2018: Abbey's outrage has become an inspired plea in view of the latest political outrages. Had I read his book today, I would have found his voice less curmudgeonly and more of a rallying cry. There was an excellent essay: "Our Public Land," by Douglas Brinkley that appeared in the January 28, 2018 edition of the New York Times Book Review (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/26/bo...>)

Rachael says

This is one of the few books I don't own that I really really really wish I did. I love this book. It makes me want to pack up my Jeep and head out for Moab. I love Abbey's descriptions of the desert, the rivers, and the communion with solitude that he learns to love over the course two years as a ranger at Arches National Park.

Abbey explores environmentalism and government policies on the national parks. It wasn't my favorite part of the book, but he manages to do it in such a way that it's not too invasive. What makes this book really work for me is the sheer love that Abbey has for Arches and Canyonlands, and the way in which he manages to make me believe I'm right there on the red rock with him. It's the literary equivalent of Ansel Adams.

Oh, and I love how he throws beer cans out his truck window as he's meditating on the destruction of the wilderness by tourists and the government. Classic.

Christy says

I wanted to like this a lot more than I was able to. Abbey includes some beautifully poetic writing about the desert landscape at times and if that remained the central focus of the book, it would be fantastic; however, the other focus of *Desert Solitaire* is Abbey himself and, at least based on the way he presents himself here, I just don't like Edward Abbey. He's pompous, both racist and sexist, hypocritical, and a rabbit murderer. He's not the kind of company I want to keep.

Lucas says

I'm not sure why everyone loves this book, or Edward Abbey in general. I couldn't even finish this. He is a macho hypocritical egomaniac, hiding behind the veil of saving the earth.

totally thumbs down.

El says

In his early 30s in the late 1950s, Edward Abbey worked as a seasonal ranger at Arches National Monument (now Arches National Park) in east Utah. He lived in a trailer from April-September; his responsibilities included maintaining trails, talking to tourists, and, at least once, had to go on a search party to find a dead body. Remember that anecdote when you're working whatever summer job you have this year and feel like complaining about it. *At least you didn't have to go look for and help carry back a dead body in 100-degree weather.* For many of you, anyway. I probably have one friend on my list here who is all like "But that's what I do everyday!"

Years ago when I actually gave a fuck about my partner's family and their friends, his brother's best friend and I got to talking about books. I asked him what his all-time favorite book was, and he told me about this book. I had heard of Abbey's more well-known *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (which I still haven't read, but at least I had heard of it), but *Desert Solitaire* was a new title for me at that time. This friend went on and on about how much of an impression it made on him when he read it as a teenager, and how it helped form him as an adult and made him decide to get into whatever education and career he wound up in. Sorry to say, because I give no fucks anymore, I have forgotten what that was.

Regardless of whatever personal issues I have with the people in my partner's past, the fact that this particular person was so adamant that I had to read *Desert Solitaire* really stood out to me. A few years back I picked up a used paperback copy for a buck just because I had once made a promise that I would read the book, even though I knew I would not want to see this person to have a discussion about the book now.

Edward Abbey is the sort of person I probably would have liked to know. He was a curmudgeon, I think, based on some of what he wrote in this autobiography about his time working for the park service. He loved his job - I think that's evident in his words. He loved the scenery, he loved the wilderness. He loved the

animals and critters, and everything that comes with that wild energy. He didn't even mind the heat which is just bizarre to me, but I also cry anytime the temperature rises above 78 or so.

But he hated people. Rather, he hated *tourists*. Even though he had a job *because* of the tourists, he hated them. And rightly so. The aspect he saw in his job involved people who didn't want to get out of their cars, who complained because there were no paved roads (the roads are now paved, by the way - something that would make Abbey roll over in his grave, I think), and the sort who throw their trash out their car windows.

This is where Abbey and I would probably have gotten along smashingly. I too hate tourists, even when I am one, and we try really hard not to be *those* kinds of tourists.

No more cars in national parks. Let the people walk. Or ride horses, bicycles, mules, wild pigs - anything - but keep the automobiles and the motorcycles and all their motorized relatives out. We have agreed not to drive our automobiles into cathedrals, concert halls, art museums, legislative assemblies, private bedrooms and the other sanctums of our culture; we should treat our national parks with the same deference, for they, too, are holy places. An increasingly pagan and hedonistic people (thank God!), we are learning finally that the forests and mountains and desert canyons are holier than our churches. Therefore let us behave accordingly.

p 65 (Chapter 5: *Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks*)

Most of this autobiography is quite beautiful, almost poetic. Abbey had a way with words when he was writing about something he loved. I most liked the chapters that involved his thoughts on his surroundings, his experiences with wildlife, or just his rambles about thoughts on life, monuments, and people in general. At times he wrote about his environment with such love that I wanted to get in the car and drive out there right now, go sunbathing amongst the rocks. But then I remembered that I go outside to walk to the cafeteria for lunch and I nearly shrivel up because I live like a shrew and hate the sunlight and you can practically hear my skin screaming from the contact of the rays.

Where he lost me a bit are the few chapters that were about specific people, and their older stories. They were the sorts of things that if someone wanted to tell me an old-timey story, I'd be down, but in this book they felt somewhat out of place and disrupted the poetic flow. But I'm also fairly certain Abbey gave no fucks about what someone like me would think about his writing, or his choices in material to include.

The reason I recommended this book for my book club is because of #45's opinions on the United States Environmental Protection Agency. I live in Pittsburgh, PA, where in the not-so-distant past every day was a "cloudy" day after years and years and years of pollution from the steel mills. There are buildings within walking distance of where I work that are still covered in soot. Pittsburgh knows what can be lost if the EPA goes away. We also have this claim to fame. Top 10!

And then don't even get me started on #45's opinions on the National Park Service.

In light of these serious issues, this book came to mind as something that seemed timely. Now that I've read it, I still maintain that. Abbey anticipated a lot of the issues that would come with, well, really anything as what he wrote here behind this spoiler link (which I've included only because the excerpt is so large, but it is not an actual spoiler - unless you're worried about our lives being spoiled...):

(view spoiler)

(hide spoiler)]

The Arches National Monument of Abbey's day is different today. As previously mentioned, there are roads cutting through the national park, it's quite a bit less "distant" from civilization than it used to be. Abbey would hate it the way it is now. It's still beautiful, don't get me wrong. But it's different from his world, and he would not be happy with how it is, and the level of bureaucracy occurring.

I had friends in high school and college who made regular pilgrimages to Moab for rock climbing purposes, and while I never went with them, the mere mention of Moab reminds me of them and their love of it. I don't know if they still go or not, because I've lost track of most of them, but I want that particular world to continue to exist for them and others to love and appreciate. It was there before us, it will be there after us, and in the meantime we should be able to enjoy it without destruction.

Lauren says

Why didn't I read this book sooner?? I asked myself.

...because I was meant to read it now.

Right now, as I am looking at the arches and canyons described - as they are so fresh in my mind just returning home.

As I can hear the canyon wren's song and feel the sun and breeze and snowflakes on my face.

With the Navajo sandstone dust still in my boots.

Now was the perfect time.

Emily says

I'm sorry, I know I should finish Book Club books. But they guy is an arrogant a**hole and I'd rather spend my little free time reading something I enjoy.

Stefani says

With great difficulty, I sometimes think about my own mortality, the years I have left on earth, how with each year that I get older, the years remaining disproportionately seem shorter. Admittedly, it's a depressing train of thought to entertain, and makes me want to crawl under a proverbial rock and die...it also has a sickening domino effect with my thoughts then residing in the eternal questions of life—why am I here, what is my purpose in life, etc...and all the anxieties and regrets that go along with those ponderings. *Sigh* I think I know now what it's like to be Scandinavian or French.

In any case, I feel a little calmer about everything after reading this book.

Although Abbey is admittedly a bit of a hypocritical prick with an axe to grind against humanity—calling the world overpopulated when he himself had five children is among one of several such statements he makes—he seems to have a very tender reverence for the natural world, and devotes much of the novel to prodigiously recording the natural beauty of Arches Natural Park from his six-month tenure as a park ranger. At the same time, he abhorrently rejects man's infringement on nature and lack of respect for the natural world, opposing development of all forms (including the dam that was being constructed in the park circa 1968).

But if you can overlook all these short-lived rants, there is something meaningful to be gleaned from Abbey. I think the below passage sums it up pretty well:

A few of the little amphibians will continue their metamorphosis by way of the nerves and tissues of one of the higher animals, in which process the joy of one becomes the contentment of the second. Nothing is lost except an individual consciousness here and there, a trivial perhaps even illusory phenomenon. The rest survive, mate, multiply, burrow, estivate, dream and rise again. The rains will come, the potholes shall be filled. Again. And again. And again.

Despite the sentimentalities we humans heap on the significance of our individual lives, we are only a small part of a much larger universe.

Marvin says

Any discussion of the great Southwest regional writer Edward Abbey invariably turns to the fact that he was a pompous self-centered hypocritical womanizer. And those were his good qualities (just kidding, Michelle). He advocated birth control and railed against immigrants having children yet fathered five children himself, he fought against modern intrusion in the wilderness yet had no problem throwing beer cans out of his car window, He hated ranchers and farmers yet was a staunch supporter of the National Rifle Association, he hated tourists yet saw the Southwest as his personal playground, and (my favorite) he advocated wilderness protection with one reason being they would make good training grounds for guerrilla fighters who would eventually overthrow the government.

Yet with all that, his readers forgive him mainly because he realized the total insanity of his contrary positions and made fun of it in his writings. And even his detractors have to admit that no other writer wrote more eloquently about the Southwest, often with the passion of a John Muir and the radical zeal of a Che Guevara. Desert Solitaire is a love song to the American Southwest and Abbey is the Thoreau of the desert. Laugh if you must at the author's ridiculous antics. There are many of them in this collection of essays. But it is worth it to get past the man and marvel at this eloquent plea for the preservation of the wonders of the Southwest desert.

One more point, I first read this book while on a backpacking trip in Utah's Canyonland National Park. I don't think I ever read a book in a more appropriate and inspiring setting.

Ken-ichi says

Anyone who thinks about nature will find things to love and despise about Desert Solitaire. One moment he's waxing on about the beauty of the cliffrose or the injustice of Navajo disenfranchisement and the next he's throwing rocks at bunnies and recommending that all dogs be ground up for coyote food. He says "the

personification of the natural is exactly the tendency I wish to suppress in myself" (p. 6) and then proceeds to personify every rock, bird, bush, and mountain. He's loving, salty, petulant, awed, enraptured, cantankerous, ponderous, erudite, bigoted and just way too inconsistent to figure out what he's really trying to say.

Which, clearly, is the wrong question all together. This book is about the desert and it is about Abbey and I don't think judging either of them is a particularly fruitful line of inquiry. Instead, think of Abbey as the naturalist's Id, the unfiltered conservationist urge, and the desert as the distilled un-human world where that beast rages and sleeps. If you love nature and you're appreciating an amazing view, you probably feel a very basic, child-like wonder. And if you then see some idiot drive by and throw an empty bottle out of his Hummer, I bet that at least for a moment, there is an Abbey-esque part of you that wishes the humans were dead. Well, most of the humans. Except for the ones that you like. And the ones that they like. And you know, the Hummer guy probably isn't all bad, just ignorant. But that *first* set of emotions, that, to me, seems to be the human half of this book, and in that sense, Abbey does a wonderful job exploring a wide range of emotional, personal reactions to the outdoors. And in the end, I think he provides so many contradictory personifications of the desert that they get all get stuck in the door Three Stooges style, and you're left with fairly dehumanized sense of the desert itself.

I've never been to Utah myself, so I put together this gallery of some of the scenes and things in the book.

Words & Notes

demesne (n): a feudal lord's land, where the serfs labored. (p. 5)

usufructuary (n): the holder of an usufruct, which is the right to use or benefit from property that you do not own. (p. 5)

"Loveliness and exultation." This line made me consider the possibility that my favorite nature writers tend to spend as much time describing discomfort and horror at the hands of nature as they do adulating it. Abbey definitely gets at the former later in the book. I wonder if part of the reason some people find this kind of writing boring is a surfeit of ecstasy most readers don't share.

gelid (adj): icy, cold. (p. 16)

"Don't really care for ants." He also apparently doesn't like tarantulas. Sad. (p. 26)

pismire (n): an ant, apparently because formic acid smells like piss. (p. 26)

"There is no beauty in nature, said Baudelaire." Would love a citation. (p. 36)

sinecure (n): an office without power or responsibility. (p. 41)

"To refute the solipsist or the metaphysical idealist all that you have to do is take him out and throw a rock at his head: if he ducks he's a liar." (p. 97)

"Fear betrays the rabbit to the great horned owl. Fear does the hard work, making the owl's job easy. After a lifetime of dread it is more than likely that the rabbit yields to the owl during that last moment with a sense of gratitude, as pleased to be eaten—finally!—as the owl is to eat." This is the kind of anthropomorphism I'm talking about (p. 98)

"Has joy any survival value in the operations of evolution? I suspect that it does; I suspect that the morose and fearful are doomed to quick extinction." (p. 125)

"'In the desert', wrote Balzac, somewhere, .there is all and there is nothing. God is there and man is not.'" I would love to source this quote but I just can't find it. Was Abbey's recollection faulty? (p. 184)

He occasionally makes the point that the most horrifying thing about nature is not its capacity to mame, murder, and eat us, but its "implacable indifference." We don't fear the world because it's out to get us, we fear it because it doesn't even notice us, it doesn't even care enough to despise us. I like this idea. Oceans crush us, storms flatten us, lions eat us, viruses subvert us, not because we deserve it, but just because we happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. They're scary because they don't acknowledge us, and make us doubt our own reality. This is why Alien will always be scarier than the Predator. (p. 191)

"Gaze not too long into the abyss..." Apparently this is Nietzsche. Reminds me of Neal's paraphrasing, "If you look too long at a makefile, the abyss looks back at you." (p. 210)

I had no idea delphinium was toxic enough to kill cows. Go delphinium! (p. 222)

In possibly his only citation, Abbey notes (I think) 2 Kings 3, which describes how the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom lay waste to the Jordanian land of Moab. Not sure what he was getting at. That Moab, UT also suffers at human hands? Incidentally, the Moabites were founded when Lot's own daughters seduced him and got preggers. Scandalous! (p. 227)

Will Byrnes says

Desert Solitaire seemed the right book to take along on a trip to the southwest in September 2009.

Abbey writes of the beauty of the southwest. As a ranger at Arches National Park he had a close relationship with some of our country's most exquisite scenery. In the 18 essays that make up the book, he offers not only his appreciation for the sometimes harsh environment of Utah and Arizona, but his notions on things political. Those are not so compelling. He tells tales of people he has known and in doing so enhances an image of his southwest as at once a beautiful and terrible place.

North Window in Arches National Park

However, I have concluded, with apologies to Ernest Thompson, that Edward Abbey is an old poop. It is one thing to have a deep and abiding appreciation for a place, a thing, an experience, an environment, but Abbey seems determined that only certain sorts should be allowed to share that joy. And while he may wish for us as readers to appreciate what he appreciates, he seems uninterested in allowing for other joys by other people. While he offers detail and poetry about the desert and about untouched places, he sneers at the urban, at those he sees as lesser than himself. As such he taps into some tried and true American themes such as the romantic myth of self-sufficiency and our persistent national history of anti-city bias. Toss in some other dark impulses when he suggests that perhaps birth control for some poor people should be mandatory. Add a dose of survivalist paranoia as he sees one strong reason to support National Parks to be preserving a staging area for rebel militias after big government comes after us all. But don't forget a gift for language, for description, for story-telling, and a strong poetic sensibility.

Park Avenue - in Arches National Park

For those of us who, for whatever reasons, may not be able to manage ten-mile hikes, or who cannot rappel

down canyon walls to experience the full range of experience available at our national parks, for those who may not have dedicated our existences to living as closely to the land as possible, we also are Americans, we also are people, and it is possible to take joy in natural wonder without the benefit of Abbey's athleticism. He clearly winces at the possibility of roads being built that allow the non-hikers among us a chance to see at all, up close, or, at least closer, some of the parts of our parks that are currently inaccessible and he decries as abominations the possibility of mechanisms being constructed that provide an enhanced experience to those in wheelchairs, as if that were somehow shameful. Having just returned from several of the national parks mentioned in this book, I can safely report that I saw much stunning beauty, felt my appreciation of my country's natural wonders swell, and believe that it is my entitlement as an American, no less than 20-something backpackers, to take joy in this common heritage. My inability to manage a back-country hike should not prevent me and others like me from sharing in our nation's natural wonders. Surely there is a happy medium between the paving over of everything that Abbey fears and allowing reasonable access to our nation's natural treasures to those of us who are not outdoorsmen.

Balanced Rock - at Arches National Park

Beyond my gripes about his notions concerning who should be allowed into our parks, and other dark political impulses, Abbey is a very gifted writer. He has many stories to tell both about his personal experiences and about other characters he has encountered in his southwest existence. His love of the land comes through like a cactus barb into an unshod foot. You will get a feel for the lands he portrays, the land he loves. In addition, he seasons his narrative with references to more refined culture that one might find a bit surprising in a guy who presents as a mountain man.

I have not read Abbey's later writings so will keep an open mind on where he wound up regarding his politics. I may not harbor particularly warm feelings for the guy overall, but I do share his love of our national parks, his visceral appreciation for natural beauty and appreciate his great skill as a writer. Hold your nose over some of the darker parts of this book, but it is a special read when he is not ranting.

(The shots in the review are mine from that trip.)

Jamie says

The only problem with waiting so long to read a seminal work, by a seminal author, is that you have the idea in your head who they will be. *This?* I kept thinking. *This* is the controversial Edward Abbey? This is what's considered polemic? What, this good-humored *common sense*?

More funny than it has a right to be. More alive. Also, what Abbey held up himself as his standard: interesting, original, important, and true. A deep respect for our wilderness— and more importantly, our wildness— and a deep offense taken at the myriad threats to it. I like finding my people. Abbey is my people, without a box to hold him.

(I knew myself well enough to have more Abbey on hand once I read my first one, and what's interesting is, in *Postcards From Ed*, how harsh his own commentary is on *Desert Solitaire*. Well, not harsh. He honored it. But he saw it as the first stepping stone, one rock of many, whereas, apparently, he got weary of the lifelong fire from those who saw fault and not virtue— and humor— in what he called its "superficial notions." "With *Desert Solitaire* I was only getting started," Abbey wrote, and thank God for that.)

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Almost all my friends who have read this book have given it five stars but not written reviews. Hey friends.
poke

I feel like this book has been recommended to me numerous times, enough to compel me to buy it one day from Amazon, where it has festered unread in my Kindle library for at least a year. But the universe was commanding me to read it, three mentions in 2015, so I buckled down to read it. My only wish is that I had been reading it IN Utah so I could have seen some of the places mentioned in person rather than in my endless image searching on the internet.

Of course, Edward Abbey warns that the places he describes won't exist once the reader encounters them in the book, because the desert is destined for gross commercialization and some of the land will literally disappear underwater because of damming ("you're holding a tombstone in your hands".) And the book was printed in 1968. It went on to become one of the most important early environmental works, alongside books like Silent Spring.

Edward Abbey is admonishing, cranky, but completely reverent about the space he gets to live for a "season." He embraces the solitude, the heat, the utter lack of moisture, and the natural features that are only possible in this specific climate.

I have so many parts of this book marked, but to do them justice would write a book in itself. I'd read the book, but feel that Abbey would be admonishing you for trying to experience anything through a book instead of getting OUT there.

"I entreat you, get out of those motorized wheelchairs, get off your foam rubber backsides, stand up straight like men! like women! like human beings! and walk - walk - WALK upon our sweet and blessed land!"