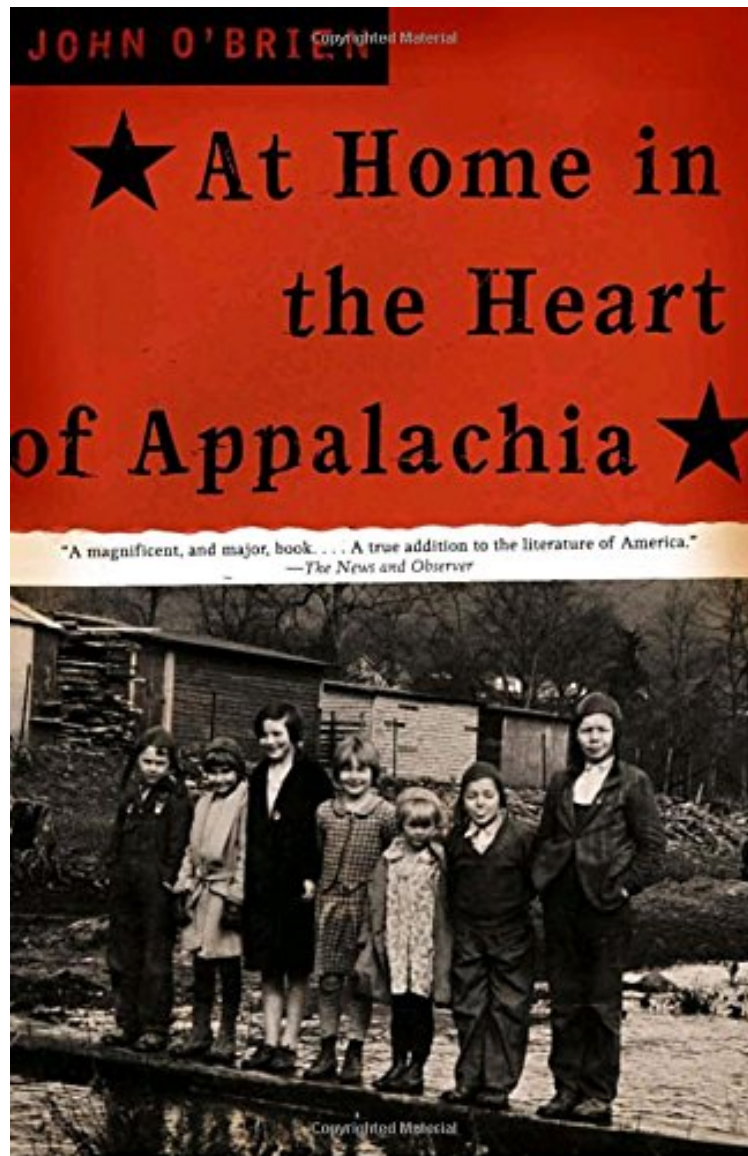


[Mobile book] At Home in the Heart of Appalachia

At Home in the Heart of Appalachia

John O'Brien

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#761698 in Books 2002-09-17 2002-09-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x .80 x 5.20l, .75 #File Name: 0385721390320 pages | File size: 62.Mb

John O'Brien : At Home in the Heart of Appalachia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At Home in the Heart of Appalachia:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. easy to readBy Anthony P PainterWell written book about the author's inner struggle to please his father and then miss his funeral when he dies.easy to read , and full of descriptive Appalachian culture and life in WV during the 1970s and 80s.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. After reading it I recommended it to others outside of the class as a ...By CustomerNeeded this book for a sociology class in

college. After reading it I recommended it to others outside of the class as a good read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. BookBy Brenda K. Mullins Love the country side descriptions, historical facts, true facts, but the story is a little drawn out. Writing style great.

John O'Brien was raised in Philadelphia by an Appalachian father who fled the mountains to escape crippling poverty and family tragedy. Years later, with a wife and two kids of his own, the son moved back into those mountains in an attempt to understand both himself and the father from whom he had become estranged. At once a poignant memoir and a tribute to America's most misunderstood region, *At Home in the Heart of Appalachia* describes a lush land of voluptuous summers, woodsmoke winters, and breathtaking autumns and springs. John O'Brien sees through the myths about Appalachia to its people and the mountain culture that has sustained them. And he takes to task naive missionaries and rapacious industrialists who are the real source of much of the region's woe as well as its lingering hillbilly stereotypes. Finally, and profoundly, he comes to terms with the atavistic demons that haunt the relations between Appalachian fathers and sons.

John O'Brien's scrupulous, exactingly honest memoir opens in 1995 on the day of his father's funeral in Philadelphia, which he will not attend because "eighteen years of silence stand between us [and] my presence would only add to family stress." Instead, he chooses to visit his father's birthplace in Piedmont, West Virginia, and consider the roots of their estrangement in the region that indelibly shaped them both. In a subtle, ruminative text, the author interweaves his memories with a history of Appalachia that debunks many myths. (The Hatfield-McCoy "feud," for example, had more to do with dislocation caused by the coal and timber industries than any native blood lust.) Much of the book limns O'Brien's first few years in Franklin, a small town two hours south of Piedmont where he and his family settled in 1984. A bitter conflict involving the Woodlands Institute, an educational establishment that locals feared was trying to "take over" their school system, becomes a paradigm for O'Brien of the way affluent outsiders have always stereotyped Appalachia as a primitive backwater peopled by hillbillies, while the residents resisted attempts by strangers to "improve" their home ground with a stubborn fatalism about the possibility of (or need for) change. The author's own conflicts with his parents--who were skeptical when he went to college and horrified when he admitted to seeing a psychiatrist--reveal a provincialism and narrow-mindedness he does not deny are common in the region. At the same time, he affirms the joy of living close to nature and honors the "plainspoken, empathetic, and genuine" native character. Because his complex work doesn't trade in stock nostrums or easy sentimentality, the portrait that emerges of a people and a place rings deeply true. --Wendy Smith From Publishers Weekly "I have spent my life leaving Appalachia and coming home again," writes John O'Brien in his first book, *At Home in the Heart of Appalachia*. Born in Philadelphia to a father who'd fled a painful Appalachian childhood, O'Brien moved back to West Virginia as an adult. Upon his estranged father's death in 1995, O'Brien did not attend the funeral; instead, he further explored his family's roots and his own experience, yielding this memoir. Dealing deftly in fact and perception, he recalls his childhood confusion about his origins. His family considered itself West Virginian; outsiders called them Appalachian: "[i]n time I would learn that Appalachia was an imaginary place and that being Appalachian was imaginary but terribly damaging." In lovely, sensitive, frank prose, O'Brien portrays a West Virginia beset by coal-mining tragedies and poverty, blessed with lush beauty and rich mountain culture. (Knopf, \$25 320p ISBN 0-394-56451-0) Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. A magnificent, and major, book.... A true addition to the literature of America. --The News Observer This is a heartfelt book that you quickly get comfortable in. As endearing as a friend. --Edward Hoagland An illuminating meditation on a singular American place . . . rich and bighearted."--Atlanta Journal Constitution "Offers deep, lingering pleasure."--Jonathan Harr [A] beautiful reading experience. --Stuart Dybek