



Wild Apples

Henry David Thoreau

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Henry David Thoreau was an American author, poet, naturalist, tax resister, surveyor, historian, philosopher, and leading transcendentalist. He is best known for his book *Walden*. He was deeply interested in the idea of survival in the face of hostile elements, historical change, and natural decay. He was a strong abolitionist and his belief in a philosophy of civil disobedience influenced the political thoughts and actions of such later figures as Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. First published in "The Atlantic Monthly" in 1862, Thoreau's essay begins with a history of the apple tree, and ends with a meditation on parallels between the wild apple and humanity.

Wild Apples Details

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From Reader Review Wild Apples for online ebook

Jeff says

Henry David Thoreau really liked apples. Really. This short piece is a love story to apples. At times he sounds like Bubba enumerating the various ways to prepare shrimp in Forrest Gump, but there are some entertaining tidbits and nuggets of wisdom. For example, after Thoreau explains that there are different contexts in which one should eat certain apples, he says this: "So there is one thought for the field, another for the house. I would have my thoughts, like wild apples, to be food for walkers, and will not warrant them to be palatable, if tasted in the house." So go read Thoreau in the wild instead of on the couch! :)

(I wouldn't highly recommend this book unless you are really "into" Thoreau).

Meghana says

This is a book that is literally about apples. More specifically, wild apples. And none but Thoreau could have salvaged such a commonplace topic from slipping into total banality.

Centered around the wild apple fruit, Thoreau describes the tree, weather, and environment required for its fruition, with the skilful prose only he can employ. Certain turns of phrase and comparisons are so lovely, I had to stop to write them down. Amazing how the author can experience such moments of clarity while describing a fruit most of us never trouble to appreciate or admire.

Descriptive and unexpectedly profound, this would be an ideal read for a naturalist.

John P says

This Kindle edition handles footnotes in an odd way, no doubt due to the digitization of the work. It's readable and acceptable once one realizes what is happening.

Now, about the apples! Strange to say, this short-ish work IS, in fact, all about apples and apple trees. It comes to mind after only a few pages that it's enough already about apples - cultivated, wild, or crab. Is there really that much to say? Thoreau's answer: "Yes, and then some."

I find that in reality the work is about the man not the fruit tree. The depth of his perceptions and the power of his associations and conclusions cannot be overstated. These intangibles are, for me, the main source of enjoyment in reading Wild Apples. He clearly spent a LOT of time thinking about his subject and its relation to the environment including man, animals, the weather, history, and mankind in general.

His interest in both the North American native 'wild' apple and the crab apple is indicative, according to other sources I have read, of his particular concern with the common and local, rather than the exotic or foreign (even though he had to travel outside of New England to find his first crab apple tree).

In the end, observing, through his writing, the mind of this most unusual man was interesting and enjoyable.

Asderathos says

I assume this is the best book in the world about wild apples, though I doubt there is any great number of them to distinguish it.

Caitlin says

Wild Apples - It gave me warm thoughts of Autumn, desire to explore the woodland of New England and have Vermont apple cider from the Tunbridge Fair freshly pressed touch my lips.

Julesmarie says

Feeling strongly enough about something like apples to write an entire essay about them boggles my mind. This was delightful, though.

Some Favorite Quotes:

There is thus about all natural products a certain volatile and ethereal quality which represents their highest value, and which cannot be vulgarized, or bought and sold.

Nay, they spring up wild and bear well there in the midst of pines, birches, maples, and oaks. I am often surprised to see rising amid these trees the rounded tops of apple-trees glowing with red or yellow fruit, in harmony with the autumnal tints of the forest.

I know of no trees which have more difficulties to contend with, and which more sturdily resist their foes. These are the ones whose story we have to tell.

So are human beings, referred to the highest standard, the celestial fruit which they suggest and aspire to bear, browsed on by fate; and only the most persistent and strongest genius defends itself and prevails, sends a tender scion upward at last, and drops its perfect fruit on the ungrateful earth.

deserted now by the owner, who has not faith enough to look under their boughs.

Indeed, I have no faith in the selected lists of pomological gentlemen.

The Saunter-er's Apple not even the saunterer can eat in the house. The palate rejects it there, as it does haws and acorns, and demands a tamed one; for there you miss the November air, which is the sauce it is to be eaten with.

These apples have hung in the wind and frost and rain till they have absorbed the qualities of the weather or season, and thus are highly seasoned, and they pierce and sting and permeate us with their spirit. They must be eaten in season, accordingly,--that is, out-of-doors.

Lizzy says

this book did not of course take me a month to read, it took an hour. I had just forgotten it. interesting histories - my favorite was his ending paragraph stating that in a hundred years new englanders would not find wild apples in the woods, which sadly he is right about

Miles Smith says

Thoreau is not going to fascinate or please everyone, but this is an elegant and thoughtful reflection on a fruit, the apple, that is much deeper than the title may imply. It also shows that Thoreau on some level understood the natural order as transcendent.

Carlos says

Henry David Thoreau es, junto a Ralph Waldo Emerson, una de las figuras centrales de la literatura norteamericana de la primera mitad del siglo XIX. Aunque su obra más conocida, “La desobediencia civil”, es un importantísimo ensayo sobre las libertades de la sociedad –donde deja en claro su acendrado individualismo militante–, también es calificado como un “precursor del pensamiento ecologista”, pues siempre manifestó su amor por la naturaleza: la empatía que sentía por la flora y la fauna, su defensa y apología de los medios de subsistencia alejados de la vida moderna, tecnológica y automática y su crítica contra las desproporciones de la industria.

En “Las manzanas silvestres”, publicado póstumamente en 1862, Thoreau describe y expone “su preferencia por las manzanas que crecen salvajes en cualquier lugar de la naturaleza”, y lo hace evocando la influencia que dicho fruto ha tenido en la humanidad, desde la Antigüedad hasta los tiempos modernos: cita a Homero y a Herodoto, al Antiguo Testamento y la Edda escandinava, o a biólogos y botánicos contemporáneos. “El arte de Thoreau, con su poder de evocación, nos sitúa en medio de una naturaleza a veces dura y extraña, pero sobre todo rebosante de belleza y generosidad”, nos dicen los editores del libro. Y es verdad: resulta extremadamente difícil no dejarse envolver por “el respeto” y “la gratitud” que este autor proclama por la biosfera. Un breve texto que nos contagiará de esta pasión, y nos hará revalorar cada vez que veamos al mal denominado “fruto prohibido”.

Funda says

Türkçedeki en düzgün, en okunaklı? Thoreau çevirisi. Bir kez olsun "bu ne biçim cümle böyle" diye dü?ünerek orijinal metne göz atma ihtiyac? hissetmedim.

Thoreau'nun yabani elma övgüsü de e?ine az rastlan?ır türden bir do?a ve yaban?ıl ya?am güzellemesi.

Dan Fulghum says

Thanks to my West Texas High School American Literature teacher, I've been a fan of Henry David Thoreau for 40 years. Wild Apples is one book that I have not had a chance to read until this point in life. It is quite different and gives the reader an insight into the history and variations of the apple. This book reflects more of Thoreau's insights into one of nature's products. Like the apple, this book is an acquired taste.

Praveen says

I am preparing myself to read Walden. So before that I chose this short writing piece of Henry David Thoreau to know about his writing. This short book speaks about apples...History of Apple tree, how wild apples grow, the fruit and its flavor, their beauty, naming them.. etc.

After the first paragraph of this book, I thought for a moment that this would be an uninteresting fact sheet about apples. I was proved wrong soon as it was not a boring sort of writing piece, it is written in a very delightful language. Beautiful poetic references and panoramic description of the journey of 'Apple' has given me a sweet smelling palatable feel in reading !

There are some very interesting things from Greek mythology to modern geology, about apples in this book.

“Some have thought that the first human pair were tempted by its fruit. Goddesses are fabled to have contended for it, dragons were set to watch it, and heroes were employed to pluck it”

“Of trees there are some which are altogether wild, some more civilized.” Theophrastus includes the apple among the last one.

He writes how insects and birds welcomed the apple tree in the forest of France...

“The tent-caterpillar saddled her eggs on the very first twig that was formed, and it has since shared her affections with the wild cherry; and the canker-worm also in a measure abandoned the elm to feed on it. As it grew apace, the bluebird, robin, cherry-bird, king-bird, and many more, came with haste and built their nests and warbled in its boughs, and so became orchard-birds, and multiplied more than ever.”

Then encircling one of the best bearing trees in the orchard, people drank the following toast there several times:—

**“Here's to thee, old apple-tree,
Whence thou mayst bud, and whence thou mayst blow,
And whence thou mayst bear apples enow!
Hats-full! caps-full!
Bushel, bushel, sacks-full!
And my pockets full, too! Hurra!”**

I don't know if this “apple-howling” is still practiced in various counties of England on New-Year's eve, where writer saysA troop of boys visited the different orchards, and, encircling the apple-trees, repeated the following words:—

**“Stand fast, root! bear well, top!
Pray God send us a good howling crop:
Every twig, apples big;**

Every bow, apples enow!"

Overall, I enjoyed this short book and it turned out to be a nice warm up reading for me before turning to Walden !

Emily says

I am not a Thoreau fan so take that into account as you judge my rating of the essay on Wild Apples. Thoreau does not try to trick you into reading anything more into this essay than the title states- it's all about apples, the history of apples, how apples have appeared in literature/ mythology, how wild apple trees grow, when/ how to pick and eat wild apples, naming types of apples. You must admit though that by the end of this essay, you desire to take a walk in the cool autumnal air while enjoying the crisp sour taste of a wild apple. I did enjoy the connection to a Biblical verse at the end of his essay about the apple trees withered in the field as man has turned away from God. Surprised me for a transcendentalist like Thoreau.

Bilal says

Henry David Thoreau goes into DEEP detail about apple trees and apples. The way they look, the way they taste, whether certain varieties should be eaten indoors or outdoors. This is one of those pieces you'd read at 2:00am when you can't sleep. He gives good detail and vivid examples of his experiences with apples and trees. It's not a bad piece, but it may not be for everyone. I'd recommend it though as a late night read or something just to warm your mind up.

Javier says

Decidí que era buen momento para leerlo ahora que tengo manzanos en casa. Como todo texto de Thoreau, resulta agradable y edificante. Además de unos cuantos datos curiosos sobre el árbol y su fruto, en este pequeño ensayo encontramos la esencia del pensamiento del escritor norteamericano.
