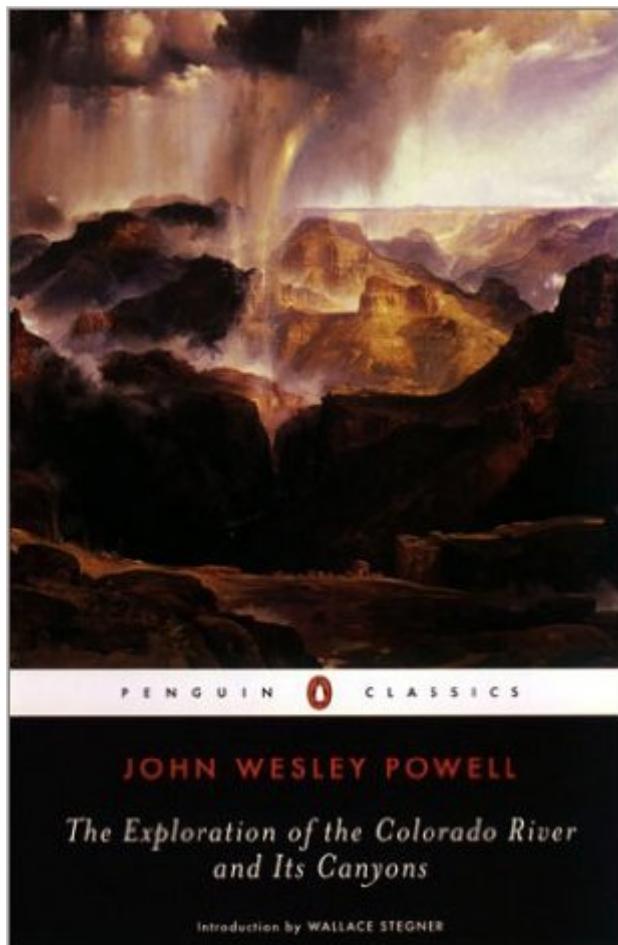


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The Exploration Of The Colorado River And Its Canyons (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

One of the great works of American exploration literature, this account of a scientific expedition forced to survive famine, attacks, mutiny, and some of the most dangerous rapids known to man remains as fresh and exciting today as it was in 1874. The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons, recently ranked number four on Adventure magazine's list of top 100 classics, is legendary pioneer John Wesley Powell's first-person account of his crew's unprecedented odyssey along the Green and Colorado Rivers and through the Grand Canyon. A bold foray into the heart of the American West's final frontier, the expedition was achieved without benefit of modern river-running equipment, supplies, or a firm sense of the region's perilous topography and the attitudes of the native inhabitants towards whites. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Even if you are illiterate, the drawings in this book are frequently incredible. While true, that the drawings don't always fit with the adjacent text, this will neither lessen the impact of the journal nor irritate the enjoyment of its descriptions. Like Lewis and Clark, Powell suffered great hardships on

the way, going so far along known courses, and then emerging into the great unknown. His account of his last ten critical days on the Colorado River is compelling, his descriptions of the Grand Canyon and other canyons are frequently better than the illustrious drawings, and his geographic and geologic explanations of the basin's creation help shape a broader view of one of America's most visited places. I highly recommend this as a reference book, a history book of the area, an adventure story, and an art portfolio.

Anyone who is enthralled by the beauty of the Southwest, or as Powell defines it - the Colorado River watershed, should read this book. It's not the same now as it was in his day. For one thing, Glen Canyon, which he named, is now submerged under Lake Powell (could any name be more ironic?). No one today can feel the same kind of wonder and awe as Powell and his companions did as they pushed their boats into the raging rapids of the muddy Colorado without having any idea of what was ahead. Even the part of the Colorado watershed that has not been developed, and there is a considerable extent of land under protective status, today has nothing like the remoteness that Powell experienced. Everything has been mapped and carefully scrutinized. Yet, anyone who has spent some time sizing up the immense water-carved rock canyons, can still feel something of the sublimity that Powell felt. It requires more imagination; it is true, but anyone who is determined to make more of a commitment than just standing at the rim of the Grand Canyon can still experience the really sublime features of this landscape. How much more difficult will it be in the future? Will these wilderness wonders become more degraded? The book describes by daily journal entries the historic river run of 1868 starting at the Flaming Gorge in Wyoming and ending at the Virgin River as well as a follow-up expedition the next year. Powell does not overdo the apprehensions and hardships of himself and companions, nor does he make mention that he accomplished the physical exertion of climbing the canyon walls and navigating the boats with one arm: but largely confines himself to descriptions of the events and the incredible landforms. The extent of the journey and all the spectacular features that he finds and names is impressive. That Powell's group experienced hardships there can be no doubt. One of the more interesting parts of the book to me was the way Powell approached the Indian tribe that killed his three companions, who decided to abandon the expedition and hike out of the Canyon. In those frontier days, it was the accepted norm to meet violence with violence. But Powell, I thought here, really showed himself to be an exceptional human being. He had a inquiring mind and a sincere desire to learn everything he could without inflicting retribution.

One of the most enthralling and astonishing adventure books I've ever read. Powell was an ace geologist, a pretty good naturalist, a fearless explorer, and a very good writer. Add the unexplored waters of the Grand Canyon -- they truly didn't know what they were getting into when they started down the Canyon -- and you have a great book. The illustrations are first-rate as well.

On May 24, 1869, Major John W. Powell, a one-armed veteran of the Civil War, along with nine others (geologists, geographers, scouts and adventurers), set out from Green River, Wyoming to explore the last great unmapped and unknown portion of the continental U.S. No man had ever descended the Colorado river as it cut its way through 1,000 miles of incredibly rugged badlands. However, Powell and his band of men completed a remarkable journey of exploration through this country. A passage from Powell's narrative of the expedition, after they had been on the river nearly two months, conveys very well a perspective of the challenge Powell and his men faced, the courage they demonstrated and Powell's matter of fact, but powerful writing style. "We are now ready to start on our way down the Great Unknown. Our boats, tied to a common stake, chafe each other as they are tossed by the fretful river. They ride high and buoyant, for their loads are lighter than we could desire. We have but a month's rations remaining. The flour has been resifted through the mosquito-net sieve; the spoiled bacon has been dried and the worst of it boiled; the few pounds of dried apples have been spread in the sun and reshrunken to their normal bulk. The sugar has all melted and gone on its way down the river. But we have a large sack of coffee. The lightening of the boats has this advantage--they will ride the waves better; and we shall have but little to carry when we make a portage. We are three quarters of a mile in the depths of the earth and the great river shrinks into insignificance as it dashes its angry waves against the walls and cliffs that rise to the world above. The waves are but puny ripples. We are but pygmies, running up and down among the sands or lost among the boulders. We have an unknown distance yet to run, an unknown river to explore. What falls there are, we know not. What rocks beset the channel, we know not. What walls rise over the river, we know not. Ah, well! We may conjecture many things. The men talk as cheerfully as ever. To me, the cheer is somber and the jests ghastly." This book is a classic tale of exploration and discovery!

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