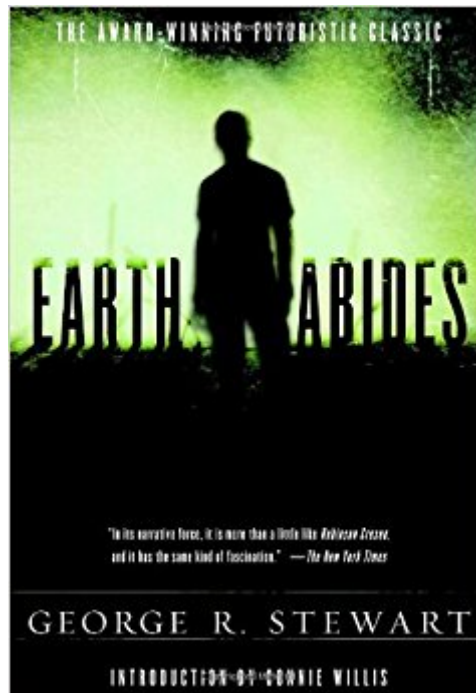




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# Earth Abides



## Synopsis

A disease of unparalleled destructive force has sprung up almost simultaneously in every corner of the globe, all but destroying the human race. One survivor, strangely immune to the effects of the epidemic, ventures forward to experience a world without man. What he ultimately discovers will prove far more astonishing than anything he'd either dreaded or hoped for. From the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Del Rey; Reprint edition (March 28, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0345487133

ISBN-13: 978-0345487131

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 876 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #34,617 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in [Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Short Stories](#) #920 in [Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Space Opera](#) #1070 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary](#)

## Customer Reviews

A disease of unparalleled destructive force has sprung up almost simultaneously in every corner of the globe, all but destroying the human race. One survivor, strangely immune to the effects of the epidemic, ventures forward to experience a world without man. What he ultimately discovers will prove far more astonishing than anything he'd either dreaded or hoped for. "From the Paperback edition.

George Rippey Stewart (May 31, 1895 – August 22, 1980) was an American toponymist, a novelist, and a professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. He is best known for his only science fiction novel *Earth Abides* (1949), a post-apocalyptic novel, for which he won the first International Fantasy Award in 1951. It was dramatized on radio's *Escape* and inspired Stephen King's *The Stand*. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It's a thought provoking book and worth reading and discussing. My problem is with the lead

character. The author warned me in the very first chapter about this guy, but I clung stubbornly to the hope he would act like a hero. Therein lies my disappointment. Throughout the well crafted twists, turns and philosophical dilemmas, I was fighting the urge to jump into the pages and shake some sense into the guy. His most outstanding trait was his human-ness. That's what both makes and breaks (for me at least) the book. It will definitely make you think and it will make you feel a gamut of emotions. If you are not a control freak you will probably really like this book.

George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* describes the experiences and musings of a believed sole survivor of a universally fatal medical epidemic. Over time and broad wanderings Isherwood, the main character, discovers that he is not totally alone and goes on to populate a new small tribe of humanity. This novel is a level of work that new age disaster writers could take lessons from. Well written, easily readable, meticulously considered and most importantly chillingly believable. Given that other than the Bible there are no examples of such an event in recorded history, the author's ruminations in fashioning this book are profound. He is meticulous in the breadth of his ponderings by creating a character innately compelled for contemplation rather than an action hero of swash-buckling. Although the happenings of his life are portrayed they are given lesser stature than the thoughts, philosophizing and analysis a lone survivor would be left to internalize. Most compelling is the probable sociological evolution of future generations and culture, exposing the irreparability of civilization, were it to be lost. Though unnerving, the reality is that a handful of survivors do not have the intellect, talents nor numbers to maintain the infrastructure of society. This requires a broad repopulation and re-establishment of skills set by which time most of society would be lost to weathering. Basic skills of resource procurement, energy utilization, fabrication, etc. would all have to be re-found, not necessarily in designs preserved in libraries, but more so in practice. Even the simplest of tools as Isherwood's hammer would require a re-capture of the broad spectrum of our manufacturing prowess. From mining to smelting to forging to product transport and all the peoples and intellect to actually do so. The book is particularly amazing since it was first published in 1949, a time when society hardly knew or considered what an apocalyptic event was. Excellent read and highly recommended for someone who wants to engage themselves in the reality of what the ramifications of a cataclysm might actually bring to civilization.

This was written in 1949. In the beginning it moves quickly from a virus killing almost everyone to searching, finding out who is around, to eventually starting a tribe. Food in a tin can from markets

become their food source, they take over homes in one area. One man is the designated leader and is concerned they know how to survive when the cans are gone and the matches they have are no longer around. It is somewhat dated as to how women are seen, though his thoughts change as they go through crises. I found it fascinating seeing what were his priorities and how he passed this on to the next generation.

I've read "Earth Abides" two or three times over the past dozen years. A few years ago I listened to "The Road". Recently a friend who loves "On The Beach" loaned me "Dog Stars" (which I quit reading after a few hours). All of these books are after-an-apocalyptic-event yarns, but "Earth Abides" stands out for me as the best-- though I like "On The Beach" too. Written 70 years ago by a professor of geography, "Earth Abides" isn't up to date in its depiction of infrastructure in the U.S., but the story moves precisely and meaningfully through the life of a pretty ordinary man who must face the world after a disaster we needn't strain to imagine. Surprises? Twists? Not if you're looking for gimmicks. Dull? No way. This green-cover version has some spoilers on the back. Just read the book, then read the intro and the cover blurbs if you want. I highly recommend "Earth Abides" and "On The Beach"-- old books that are well worth the time. The two newer books? In my opinion, not so much.

While focused on the inability of man to look forward, it also discusses the adaptability to overcome greed, avarice, and so many failings. A great precursor to so many apocalypse thrillers.

Although regarded as an early science fiction classic there are better examples of socially conscious science fiction out there. The text reads like a 1950s teleplay with moments of introspection thrown in. It might have worked for a Twilight Zone episode but in the realm of post apocalypse fiction it was a disappointment for me. I would recommend *Alas, Babylon* by Pat Frank as more of a period piece that influenced future works such as *The Postman*, and *One Second After*...these are more thought provoking books. Stewart writes more like a "get along with Nature" California fiction writer than he does a sociologist trying to discuss people's interactions after a pandemic. Even the threats of people from outside "The Tribe" are pale and clinical. Although I went in expecting to read a period piece I was disappointed. Not worth the price of admission and I don't think a copy could be found in a library. Save your money.

I highly recommend reading *Earth Abides*. It provides a new look at civilization and how a society

relies on expertise and workmanship of others to survive. You won't be disappointed in reading through the slower chapters as the book unfolds new generations replenishing the earth. Many heartbreaking events will captivate the reader!

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