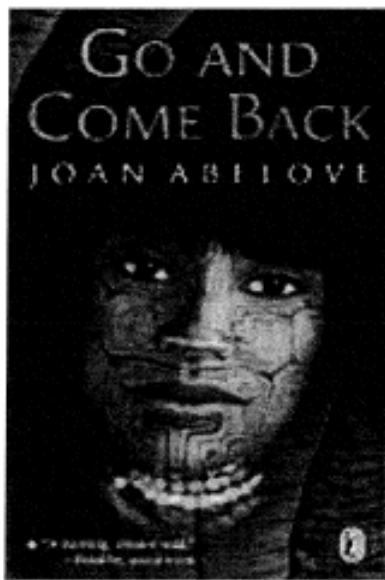


Go and Come Back Abelove, Joan

Puffin Books NY 1998
Ages 12+
177 pages

Winner of multiple prizes and awards including ALA best Book for Young Adults and the SLJ Best Book of the year, *Go and Come Back* is the story of two "old lady's" who arrive in the Amazonian Jungle of Peru to live among the native people and study their way of life. Joan Abelove herself lived in the Amazon for two years and it is delightful to imagine, as you read, that this is the story of her visit as told by Alicia, a young Isabo girl.



Alicia may only have just entered her teen age years, but she quickly sizes up these silly, ill equipped and ill mannered women who have come to stay in her village. What we learn about the characters evolves only as we become more familiar with Alicia, who is at first standoffish. She interprets the events around her with a clarity that is sometimes cutting, sometimes funny but

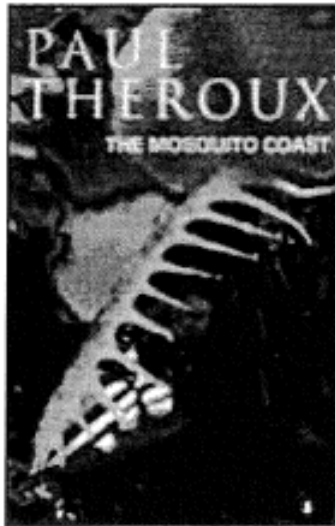
always direct. This is another book that is deceptive in its simplicity. Alicia watches with a cool eye as the anthropologists blunder their way along, and it is through her patient lessons to them that we learn about the tribes' attitudes toward marriage, sex, sharing, responsibility and fun. The Isabo have a special kind of philosophy that is akin to *que sera sera* – "happy or whatever I would be", they accept the world and their lot in it.

Go and Come Back is an intimate look at the Isabos' way of life. It is educational, but Alicia's dry wit and clarity of expression provide moments of both hilarity and tender sadness. This is the lighter side of anthropology.

The Mosquito Coast Theroux, Paul

Hamish Hamilton, London 1981
Ages 16+
392 pages

If you are into extreme camping, *The Mosquito Coast* is essential reading. This is the story of the rise and fall of Allie Fox, a Yankee inventor extraordinaire who has become completely contemptuous about life in the United States. His distaste for the rampant consumerism becomes so extreme he is driven to uproot his family from their home in Massachusetts, abandoning almost all their personal possessions and ship off to Honduras on a banana boat. Allie is convinced that the US is doomed and that by leaving they are not only escaping the consumer-driven society and the collapse of real values, but that they are actually saving themselves from destruction.



The Mosquito Coast is told by Allie's oldest child, Charlie, told from the perspective of a twelve year-old boy whose devotion to his father is fuelled by a combination of awe and fear. Although he's still a boy, Charlie worries like an old man, mostly about what his father is going to do next. "My father didn't care what anyone thought. And I envied him for being so free, and hated myself for feeling ashamed." Allie, or Father, likes to keep Charlie with him, almost constantly pelting Charlie with his philosophies and his ideas, and challenging the boy to feats that would test the nerve of a "Fear Factor" contestant.

This story could have been the precursor to other reality shows as well, like the participants on *Survivor* learn, when all you have to live on is one's wits, they can become a little "whacked". When they first arrive, they settle their own little village, Jeronimo. They have brought just minimal camping gear, hybrid seeds and hydrogen and ammonia, the ingredients to build a giant ice making machine.

Things start out well in Jeronimo, though, and the family flourishes with the irrigation and plumbing system, and plenty of ice to trade with the locals. Whenever they can, though, Charlie and his younger brother and sisters sneak away to their own little camp where they have created an "anti"-Jeronimo with schools and churches and commerce, all things their father despises.

With the dry season comes difficulty. Things go downhill rapidly, and from that point on there is a change in Father that seriously frightens Charlie and his brother. Living conditions continue to deteriorate as Father drives his family deeper into the forest.

Charlie describes his father's struggle with trying to prove his convictions while witnessing their destructive reality. At the same time, he relays his own struggle between the faith in and the fear of his Father's genius. Along the way, he also provides a clear illustration of how brutal the tropical environment of Honduras can be. The landscape becomes a living thing, another character in the book, but one that cannot be tamed or domesticated. One must surrender to it in order to survive.

Do try to Speak as we do, Diary of an American Au pair **Marjorie Leet Ford**

Thomas Dunne Books, NY 2001
Ages 16+
346 pages

After losing her job and postponing her wedding, Melissa escapes San Francisco to take up employment as an *au pair* in Britain.