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The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends And Their Meanings



Synopsis

The book that launched America's urban legend obsession! The Vanishing Hitchhiker was Professor Brunvand's first popular book on urban legends, and it remains a classic. The culmination of twenty years of collection and research, this book is a must-have for urban legend lovers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A uniquely entertaining book, edifying scholarship, diverting social history." A uniquely entertaining book, edifying scholarship, diverting social history. --Elaine Kendall"

Jan Harold Brunvand lives in Salt Lake City, where he is professor emeritus at the University of Utah. He is the author of numerous books, including The Vanishing Hitchhiker; The Choking Doberman; The Baby Train; Too Good to Be True; and Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid.

Let me begin by saying that I am not someone who enjoys reading. I was required to purchase this book for a class. With that said, I actually enjoyed reading this. It was interesting to see the variations on different urban legends, and even learn some new ones. There were several that I knew one form of, but did not realize had morphed from an earlier variation. The book is written as an informative piece, more like a textbook than a story. The chapters are set up to be for one or two legends each, and can include multiple variations of those legends. Each legend has an explanation of where it was first heard, and even what could be considered a historical reasoning for its existence. I found it interesting to follow the evolution of an urban legend through time. I would

recommend this book to anyone who enjoys horror stories or science fiction. This is more of a historical view of both, but you will realize that many films take these urban legends and twist them to fit their own plot. Very interesting book for a non reader. Pros: Informative. Interesting. Good separation of legend to legend. Cons: Sometimes too informational.

Jan Harold Brunvand's "The Vanishing Hitchhiker" is the first of several books he has published which take a scholarly look at Urban Legends. Where did these legends start, how have they evolved to fit a new time or situation. Urban Legends are interesting stories, as you will find people who are swear that they happened (usually not to them, but to a friend or a relation or a relation of a friend, etc.), and you can even find cases where they are reported as happening. They can be based on something which really happened, or something which never have happened, but regardless, their spread and retelling takes on a life and purpose of its own. The first chapter of the book deals with all the foundational information. What are "Urban Legends"? How should they be interpreted? Brunvand uses "The Boyfriend's Death" legend to help explain the phenomena and how they are studied. By far this is the most important chapter of the book, as this is then the material the reader will use on the majority of the rest of the book. Chapters 2 through 7 are all about the legends, broken into groupings such as Automobile, Teenage Horrors, Contaminations, the dead, kind of a catchall he titles "Dalliance, Nudity, and Nightmares, and then finally two favorite media legends. Chapter 8 then looks at urban legends in the making, where he looks at legends which never take off into the population as a whole (or haven't yet), or have gone into a period of inactivity, etc. This is a good introduction into the study of Urban Legends. My negatives are all on the writing style of the book, and not the content. The presentation could have been much more accessible and interesting. While that may not matter as far as the quality of the information is concerned, it would have helped bring more people to a point where they can appreciate the topic and the significance of studying these stories.

A fascinating exploration of the traditions involving vehicular folklore as well as the roots of newer American urban and traveling legends, with clear examples and specific versions of the legends given. Most, if not all, of the examples are clearly examined, analyzed, and considered, with explanations of meaning and significance included for consideration.

Easy to see how simple assumption or hearsay can become fact, truth, or in today's environment even law. Displays how truth and fiction can walk the same line and be reported as such.

I love this book. Its about how urban legends begin. I learned about some urban legends i never have heard before to.

I really liked the book, but thought that each story could've used a few less comparisons to other versions and could've used a few more other urban legends. Otherwise it was a really good read.

good book. like it alot. will try read again.

I was so happy when I received this book. It was in very good condition. So happy I bought it from here rather than paying for it at my school. Saved me so much money.

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