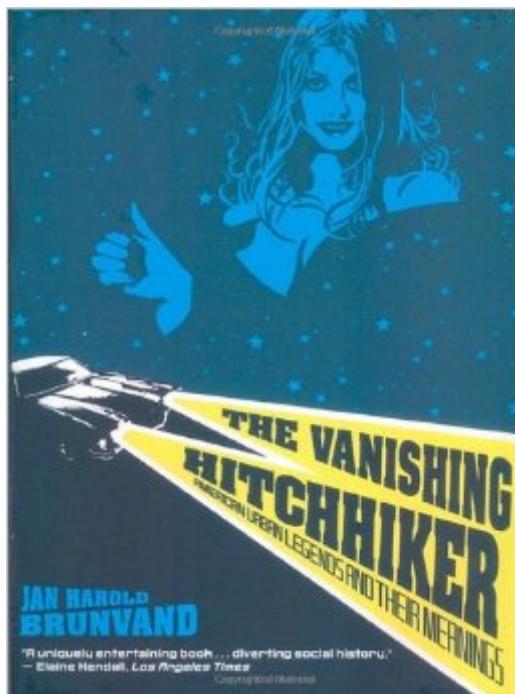


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The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends And Their Meanings



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

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; Revised ed. edition (December 17, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393951693

ISBN-13: 978-0393951691

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (25 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #446,005 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 inÂ Books > Humor & Entertainment > Humor > Urban Legends #964 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Urban #1140 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Folklore & Mythology

Customer Reviews

This is a book about American Urban Legends and their meanings. The book has two aspects to it. Firstly, it describes many common urban legends, and tries to trace the origin and evolution of the stories. Secondly, it attempts to provide an analysis or the reason for such legends appearing. The book has been organized under several broad categories for the purpose of analysis: CLASSIC AUTOMOBILE LEGENDS, TEENAGE HORRORS, DREADFUL CONTAMINATIONS, FEAR OF DEATH, NUDITY, and BUSINESS RIPOFFS. I enjoyed many of the urban tales. It brought back memories of my childhood when I was hearing or telling the same stories. There were also some stories that were new to me, and I look forward to telling them to my friends! The author also did a good job discussing the origin and history of each of these urban myths. Overall I enjoyed the book and would recommend to anyone who likes these types of tales.

Brunvand was so ahead of his time. This book was originally published before the term URBAN LEGEND was a film, a sequel and a catch phrase. In these days of email boxes crammed to the brim with fake virus alerts, cookie recipes, pyramid schemes, and hundreds of forwards you cannot open, we forget the origin of "urban legends." Told and retold from generation to the next, Brunvand

tells us the history of these "sworn to be true" stories such as "The Hook" and "The Boyfriend's Death" - how the stories got started and how they evolved into permanent teenage and campfire lore. Sure you can look 'em up on the Internet now, but you will never get the rich and wild history of tales told by the sister of an old boyfriend who had a cousin who SWORE it happened to her unless you read this book, and the many that Brunvand followed it up with.

This book is excellent. By reading it you get a good scope on what urban legends are and how they fulfil their role in communication in society. I have done some research in Folklore and Urban Legends in the Netherlands, and Brunvand's work has had a major influence on the scope of my thesis. He knows what he is talking about. This book gives a good insight in storytelling, culture and American Society. A must for researchers in cultural studies, and probably a good book for those who want to learn more about the American society. It is fun to read, clearly written and Brunvand has a nice style of writing. I think many people would like this book, whether they are doing research, are on holiday, on the train or whatever. It's a book of all times, and so are the stories...

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.

This author is a rare find in literature of this kind: a genuine, professional folklorist who carefully documents his subject and traces its beginnings. Brunvand is the first author to consult on urban folklore. This book is a keeper, one to read and re-read.

"The Vanishing Hitchhiker," folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand's first book on urban legends, provides a

thorough introduction to the definition, interpretation, and themes of urban folklore. About three dozen classic "friend of a friend" tales are covered in depth; each is presented through several examples, accompanied by a detailed analysis, and listed in a Notes section highlighting folklore journal articles about it. All in all, an excellent introduction for those who care to learn more about the field of urban folklore rather than just read collections of urban legends

Thanks to the work of Jan Brunvand, the term "urban legend" has become part of the English language lexicon. This is the first book that Brunvand wrote on urban legends, and it contains the classics. You can find out the scoop on rats in KFC, spiders in bananas, the hookman, and (of course) the vanishing hitchhiker. The work shows how legends are oftentimes accepted without critique for being true, and the analysis provides interesting ways for considering why these stories catch on amongst tellers and listeners.

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.

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