



Age and Guile Beat Youth, Innocence, and a Bad Haircut (O'Rourke, P. J.)

P.J. O'Rourke

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Readers may be shocked to discover that America's most provocative (and conservative) satirist, P. J. O'Rourke, was at one time a raving pinko, with scars on his formerly bleeding heart to prove it. In *Age and Guile Beat Youth, Innocence, and a Bad Haircut*, O'Rourke chronicles the remarkable trajectory that took him from the lighthearted fun of the revolutionary barricades to the serious business of the nineteenth hole. How did the O'Rourke of 1970, who summarized the world of "grown-ups" as "materialism, sexual hang-ups, the Republican party, uncomfortable clothes, engagement rings, car accidents, Pat Boone, competition, patriotism, cheating, lying, ranch houses, and TV" come to be in favor of all of those things? What causes a beatnik-hippie type, comfortable sleeping on dirty mattresses in pot-addled communes - as P. J. did when he was a writer for assorted "underground" papers-to metamorphosize into a right-wing middle-aged grouch? Here, P. J. shows how his Socialist idealism and avant-garde aesthetic tendencies were cured and how he acquired a healthy and commendable interest in national defense, the balanced budget, Porsches, and Cohiba cigars. P. J. O'Rourke's message is that there's hope for all those suffering from acute Bohemianism, or as he puts it, "Pull your pants up, turn your hat around, and get a job." "From the fictionalized accounts of his career as a hard-drinking hippie to the Benchley-in-the-age-of-macho lampoon of fly fishing, Mr. O'Rourke shows an incorrigible comic gift and an eye for detail that keeps the wild stuff grounded." - The New York Times Book Review

Age and Guile Beat Youth, Innocence, and a Bad Haircut (O'Rourke, P. J.) Details

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From Reader Review Age and Guile Beat Youth, Innocence, and a Bad Haircut (O'Rourke, P. J.) for online ebook

Ted Summerfield says

P.J. O'Rourke is one of the best political satire writers.

Back in the 80's and 90's I'd read some of his musings in magazines and enjoyed his humor. His 'gonzo' style of writing was quite popular in those days. I was going through my library the other day, and grabbed it to read whenever I'm in the bathroom. I shouldn't have, as I now find myself spending far too much time in there.

The cover on my book is different, as you can see below. My edition is hardcover.

John says

This would be a two star deal if it had been read instead of audiobooked. After years of meaning to dip into O'Rourke, because of a Troy Patterson recommendation and a thinking that his "wit" might provide me with some tidbits to steal and jam into my own conversations I finally took this on after a great experience with Fear and Loathing at Rolling Stone in which HST references P.J. multiple times due to their both being writers for the magazine.

There's a personal bit in the beginning and a piece on his tenure at a socialist alt-weekly that are good, and his surf fishing, woodcock hunting, and golf pieces are interesting enough, but the wordplay didn't live up to my expectations. He's clever sure, but also very tiresome and with the exception of "drink myself blind" my smiles were restrained and always a touch queazy. Maybe his more recent stuff is better, but I didn't know where to start. The articles for Automobile Magazine are probably the low point of the book. I heard an interview on NPR with him awhile ago, and assumed he would be more "on" in the printed form but he was exactly the same so maybe try that out first. Goodness knows I try to avoid The Awl and it's ilk, but at least they and the rest of the internet have raised the benchmark for sharpish writing and deadline wit from where it was when these pieces were earning P.J. decent money.

Skylar Burris says

Political humorist P.J. O'Rourke was once a knee jerk, card-carrying, pot smoking, hippie liberal. Now he's more of a libertarian, but he re-lives those former days in this book. Some of the book is a little unpalatable, like all of those (often sexually explicit) excerpts from his fictional writings produced in those liberal days. But some of the book is funny, particularly his commentary on those very writings. The articles selected from numerous automobile magazines, however, grew a little dull for me, even if they are occasionally interspersed with some clever, cutting humor. Overall it's a pretty good work because O'Rourke is a very good writer, but it doesn't hold a candle to his other books, and in that respect, Age and Guile is a disappointment. I will say, however, that his spoof of modern poetry (or what might possibly be his serious

past attempts at it) is absolutely hilarious. I especially enjoyed his "poem on nothing at all."

Jason Farley says

Fun to read the transformation, though I almost didn't make it through the early years.

Curtiss says

P.J.'s story of his own political transformation from a long-haired, leftist liberal with penchant for indulging in "recreational drugs" and young women, into a cynical, world-wise conservative with an affinity for fast cars, alcohol, cigars, and young women; as told with his typical insight coupled with laugh-out-loud humor.

Rich says

Rather than have some muck-raker dig up dirt from his liberal past, conservative political humorist P.J. O'Rourke, beat them to the punch by publishing many of his early pieces, going all the way back to the sporadically published newspaper called Harvey. (He says they only published when they needed more money for marijuana.)

The result is a fun view of his life throughout the years, with a few surprises tossed in, such as a relatively tender foreword written for the anniversary publication of Emily Post's book on etiquette. Also included is a drop dead funny piece on however you look at it--conservative, or liberal--adding flouride to the water will drive your kids to communism, and a bit on 100 Reasons Why Jimmy Carter was a Better President than Bill Clinton.

Matthew says

classic o'rourke

Ryan Wulfsohn says

My favourite of his books. The piece "Why I Invaded Cambodia by Richard Milhous Nixon as told to PJ O'Rourke" is one of the funniest things I have ever read.

Cindy says

I like his style of writing and the stories he wrote on this book.

Favorite quote:

"People said they were a perfect couple. Perhaps they were. They were a little too vivid, like all perfect things, and like all perfect things they were destined for destruction. (And it is invariably satisfying to note that all perfect things are destined for destruction. Unfortunately, all imperfect things are destined for destruction also.)"

Robert Beveridge says

First and foremost: it is worth noting (and it pains and saddens me that this is the case) that the phrase "Youth, Innocence, and a Bad Haircut" is the first time I have seen a three-item list with correct grammar in a book printed in America after World War II.

Second, and not quite so foremost: P. J. O'Rourke is a very, very funny guy. He is completely politically incorrect, in most cases, and is therefore more than happy to pull out the jokes, puns, and other humorous concepts his more liberal colleagues have left to the dust.

Third, and not really far up there on the scale, but still worth mentioning: in most ways, P. J. O'Rourke is a tremendous boon to the right-wing American. He's not afraid to take pot-shots at just about anything, including fellow members of the right (Pat Buchanan is roasted almost as often as Bill Clinton), and he's not afraid to admit his mistakes, such as endorsing Clinton in 1992.

Combine those, and for most of this book you have a tremendously funny read, an almost literary roasting of such things as book tours, drinking, stupid sports, Whitewater, various makes and models of automobile, and the like. Unfortunately, it's the part that falls outside the realm of "most" that keeps this from being one of the finest political collections of the past decade. There are times when O'Rourke, who seems to be sitting right on the Libertarian partyline, veers far off to the left, and if he is to be trusted he was stuck out there in at least one case by the head of the Cato Institute (making me wonder how Libertarian they truly are), and he also has many of the strange and illogical hang-ups that keep me from ever wanting to vote Republican. He also, and he is well aware of it, asks a lot of our indulgence in the book's second section, a collection of short stories published (well, most of them) in the National Lampoon during his tenure as editor in chief there. Anyone who still wonders why I abhor the very idea of self-publishing need only read the section "The Truth About the Sixties and Other Fictions" in this book. It's shameless, awful, contorted, constipated prose, and O'Rourke is fully aware of this, and even says so in a few places.

But if you skip that section, and immediately stop reading any time you find one of those places where conservatives suddenly dismiss anything relating to logic (I have often theorized it's remnants of too many drugs during the sixties), this is most definitely a worthwhile book. Both the automobile and sports sections brought forth guffaws. And if you've ever heard me guffaw, you'll know that's something to stay away from.

Larry Eisner says

This is one of my favorite books of all time. It's just a wonderful look into this very funny satirist's

perspective of himself growing up. You see how he's lived as a lot of things, and how it's shaped him into who he is today.

Love this book. Can't say it enough.

Adrienne says

I was hoping to find out how he went from a silly hippie to a silly libertarian, but every autobiographical piece in here was so filthy I gave up reading it. There were two very good pieces in there, one was about why liberal education is so cool (written for Esquire or GQ or something). And the other was a foreward to an edition of Emily Post of all things. Both were wonderfully written and I still think about them and wish I hadn't had to wade through the Stephen King-like nastiness of poor P.J.'s life.

Margaret says

Didn't really enjoy this one. P. J. O'Rourke's early stuff is a little too raw and unbalanced. The later pieces were pretty good.

Tim says

While I did greatly enjoy P.J.'s style and general turn of phrase, I found his dismissive tone and constant use of poorly constructed logical strawmen (humorous as they may have been) to ridicule opinions that differed from his (self-admittedly) poorly informed opinions to be disastrously distracting once past the halfway mark. It essentially ruined the book for me.

Carl says

Not PJ's best book, but great essays from his past. It's funny to read through his essays and watch his transformation from a dirty unwashed hippy left winger into a clean cut yuppy right winger throughout the course of his years.
