

Steal This Book Study Guide

Steal This Book by Abbie Hoffman

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Introduction

In the introduction to *Steal This Book*, famous 1960s protest organizer Abbie Hoffman describes the work as "a manual for survival in the prison that is Amerika," spelling the country's name incorrectly to show disrespect for the law. First published in 1971, it was rejected by over thirty publishers and then went on to become a best-seller when Hoffman published it himself. The book is a compendium of methods that individuals can use to live freely, without participating in the social order. These tips range in levels of legality from addresses of free health clinics and inexpensive restaurants to ways of cheating pay phones and methods for making explosive devices.

Even in its day, Hoffman's advice was of questionable practicality. Some of his tips, the more complicated ones, involve multiple identities and underworld connections; others, such as switching price labels while shopping, are so obvious that they seem hardly worth writing. As time has passed, most of the loopholes Hoffman exploits in this book have been closed, due in part to the attention this book brought to them. Still, *Steal This Book* is an important historical document, a lively example of a time when America's youth felt at war with the status quo, and petty crime was considered a justifiable way to stand up against the corruption of the system.

Author Biography

Abbott "Abbie" Hoffman was born November 30, 1936, in Worcester, Massachusetts. His family was solidly American middle class: his father John worked as a pharmacist before opening a successful medical supply distribution company, and his mother Florence was a homemaker. For the early part of Hoffman's life, he followed the social mainstream. He graduated from Brandeis University in 1959 with a degree in psychology and then earned a master's degree at Berkeley. In 1960, at the age of twenty-three, he married his first wife Sheila, with whom he had two children. He and Sheila divorced in 1966.

The social changes that swept through America profoundly changed his perspective. He became involved in the civil rights movement in the early 1960s, first volunteering to go to segregated southern states and stand beside blacks who were challenging racist practices and later organizing a cooperative in New York City to distribute crafts made by southern blacks who had been fired for their activism. By the mid-1960s, he shifted his attention to fighting the growing Vietnam conflict. As a leader of the antiwar movement, Hoffman gained a reputation around New York for his organizational skills and his skill at getting the attention of the media. In 1967 he married Anita Kushner, who became his partner in many antiwar activities. He and Anita had one son and divorced in 1980.

In 1968, along with Jerry Rubin and other likeminded activists, Hoffman created the Youth International Party or Yippie Party. The Yippies held several high-profile, antiestablishment protests, including showering the floor of the New York Stock Exchange with money and a mock attempt to "levitate" the Pentagon. They gained international attention as protest leaders at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The convention became a violent spectacle of demonstrators facing off against the police, National Guard, and Army. News footage of Chicago police in riot gear beating teenagers with nightsticks shocked the world. Because of the violence in Chicago, Hoffman and six other organizers became defendants in the infamous Chicago Seven trial. Hoffman mocked the court proceeding as a circus by showing up in costumes and doing handstands, showing a disdain for the establishment shared by many youths of the time.

By the end of the 1960s, Hoffman had receded from public attention. In 1973 he was arrested for taking part in a cocaine deal. Faced with jail time, he instead went underground, traveling under an assumed name. He continued to publish books and magazine articles and took up with Johanna Lawrenson, who would be his companion for the rest of his life. In 1980 Hoffman surrendered to the authorities. The world found out that under the false identity "Barry Freed," Hoffman had been instrumental in working for environmental causes in upstate New York. In light of the community work he had done as Barry Freed, he was given a light sentence.

Throughout the 1980s Hoffman served as an organizer for social causes and supported himself by giving lectures on college campuses. Few of his friends knew he suffered

from severe bipolar disorder. In 1989, in the throes of an acute bout of depression, he committed suicide with a barbiturate overdose.

Plot Summary

Survive!

The first section of *Steal This Book* offers advice on how to live cheaply or freely in America. Doing so is explained as a political statement, a way of showing resistance to the exploitation that Hoffman says is inherent in a capitalist society. This section starts out with tips about "Free Food," covering such diverse methods as crashing a bon voyage party on a steamship, putting a bug on a restaurant plate to avoid paying the meal, shoplifting, and inexpensive recipes. Other parts of this section include advice on "Free Clothing and Furniture," "Free Housing," "Free Education," "Free Money," and "Free Dope."

Some of the methods Hoffman suggests for obtaining free goods and services are presented in the form of lists of social organizations in the business of helping impoverished people, such as community health clinics and food pantries. Other advice comes in the form of suggestions for how to use commonly available objects around the house. Most of Hoffman's tips reflect the book's revolutionary spirit, showing readers techniques for using established services such as busses, phones, hotels, and electricity, without having to pay for them. The details offered in the book range from advice for growing marijuana to lists of which foreign coins will work in vending machines in place of higherpriced American currency.

Fight!

In the second section of the book, Hoffman addresses issues related to the area with which he is most often associated: that of violent and nonviolent social protests. This section includes methods of spreading one's political message, such as operating printing presses and underground radio stations and cutting into the broadcast frequencies of television stations in order to broadcast one's own programming.

A large part of this section is devoted to survival tips to be used during street demonstration. Hoffman suggests when and where to plan demonstrations to get the most media attention, as well as such minute details as sensible ways to dress and what kind of shoes to wear. Much of his advice assumes that protests will turn into violent confrontations; therefore, his advice is geared toward clothes that cannot be grabbed by police officers and strong shoes with which to kick. Gas masks and helmets are also recommended.

This section of the book also deals with weapons radicals can use to defend themselves against the police and, in general, to destroy businesses. Hoffman gives tips about street fighting and knife fighting and reviews which kinds of guns are useful for which situations. He also explains several methods for making crude bombs. There is also information about dealing with the results of demonstrations, including first aid tips and

advice for finding free legal counsel. This section ends with some advice about living underground under an assumed name in order to avoid the law.

Liberate!

In the last section of the book, Hoffman gives specific advice for living inexpensively in four U.S. cities: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. In each, he tells readers where to go for free housing, food, medical care, and legal aid. He also recommends diversions such as theaters, movie houses, and places that hold poetry readings. Restaurants that have free food available or that offer large portions at small prices are also recommended. Each city has some area of advice specific to it alone. The New York section, for instance, tells about sneaking onto the subway for free; in Chicago, Hoffman praises the availability of cheap food; Los Angeles has a section rating the beaches; and his writing about San Francisco emphasizes the city's parks.

Survive!

Survive! Summary

Steal This Book is a compendium of survival strategies and techniques for those in America's counterculture in the 1960's and 1970's. The author, Abbie Hoffman, was famous for his revolutionary thinking and ability to organize protests against social, political and government icons. Hoffman is most famous for his participation in the Chicago Seven trial held in Chicago as a result of his protests held near the convention center where the Democratic National Convention was being held in 1968.

The book is divided into three sections: *Survive!* covers the processes of accessing free food, clothing and shelter; *Fight!* provides techniques for mobilizing protest efforts and developing fighting weapons and strategies; and *Liberate!* lists organizations in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco that have relevance to living and surviving in these urban areas.

Hoffman begins the book by covering techniques for acquiring food for free or next-to-nothing in an attempt to meet a basic human need while at the same time chipping away at the economic structure of establishment in its most basic form. Hoffman suggests donning good clothes and visiting the Happy Hour buffets held at many hotels and restaurants in cities. If not a drinker, simply fill a glass half full with water pretending it is a mixed drink and browse the buffets filled with hors d'oeuvres. Vary the venues visited so that suspicions will not be raised.

When in restaurants, it is always a good idea to bring along some sort of insect to put into food at the table and then complain to the waiter about the unclean conditions. This move will earn either another meal or compensation for the one ordered. Either way, the insect routine has merit. An alternate to the insect is crushed glass, which can be equally effective in procuring a meal or compensation since restaurants cannot afford the negative publicity associated with foreign objects appearing in their cuisine.

Hoffman recommends self-serve restaurants as good sources for procuring condiments, paper products and silverware, which can be easily pocketed. All-you-can-eat restaurants are great sources for counterrevolutionaries and Hoffman provides details on how to construct long coats with big internal pockets just perfect for stashing food without causing any attention. Hoffman also provides ideas on how to evade paying the bill at restaurants where payment is expected when the patron is ready to exit. After eating a large meal simply go the restroom and then enter another section of the restaurant to order pie and coffee. Upon finishing dessert simply pay the smaller check and exit the restaurant.

If dining with a friend, take seats at the counter where one person can order a full meal while the other orders only coffee. The person who has consumed the meal takes the bill for the coffee to the register to pay and leaves. The remaining friend is left with a bill



for a meal, which he has not consumed and launches into a routine of how someone has picked up the wrong check. The restaurant will ask only for payment for the coffee consumed, not the meal consumed by the friend. Repeat this routine at another restaurant so that the other person will have the opportunity to eat. Other great places to get good meals are bar mitzvahs, weddings and other celebratory events where anyone can mingle in the crowd and munch on hors d'oeuvres and even have dinner at the buffet. This technique works particularly well in larger cities where the probability of anonymity is greater, which lessens the possibility of discovery.

Hoffman advocates utilizing the Welfare program to get food assistance and counsels the reader on how to manage the system in procurement of food stamps. Supermarkets are the nirvana of free shopping and Hoffman advocates the practice, which he has been doing for years. According to Hoffman women should always carry a large handbag into which goods are stuffed with relative ease especially in crowded aisles. Huge pockets may also be sewn into the lining of large coats for the deposit of other items.

Hoffman negates the possibility of getting caught because attendants never look at the mirrors and promotes shoplifting near dinnertime because employees are more concerned with preparing to go home for the evening. There is value in having a partner to act as look out with prearranged signals just in case to alleviate the possibility of being caught. If the situation arises where being caught is almost certain, simply knock over a huge display of canned goods or break a plate glass window to create the necessary diversion in which to make an escape.

Hoffman also advises to take gourmet items for some of life's finest things. One other effective technique is to load some items in a cart and eat other things while shopping under the pretense of paying for them before leaving the store. For bigger hits Hoffman suggests hitting on wholesale markets and other food distributors with a story about being linked to a charity or some other social organization in need of food items to feed disadvantaged people. These items can then be consumed personally and by friends or put into a food cooperative where other stolen goods are made available for low cost. Profit is not the motive in a food cooperative but some operating capital is necessary to pay building rent and utilities. There are some recipes for cheap eating utilizing ingredients popular among the counterculture movement of the time including rice, beans, wheat germ and yogurt.

Hoffman moves on to the ease of stealing clothes and furniture. The most obvious method of shoplifting clothes is to take many non-bulky items into the dressing room and emerge with them either in hidden coat pockets or rolled up and held between the legs. This technique works especially well for women who can hide bulk under full skirts. The author suggests practicing in front of a mirror at home before attempting the move in public.

One less obvious technique is to drive through wealthy neighborhoods and solicit clothing and furniture under the guise of a charity or other social organization. If this move is a bit too bold, simply shop at the Salvation Army store for items available for

next to nothing in cost. Don't forget to take note of any friends with significant weight changes whose closets must be full of unused clothing, which may be of use. Hoffman even offers instructions and a visual of the construction of a pair of very comfortable and sturdy sandals made from old tires and inner tubing. As a last resort in winning the war against the high cost of clothing, simply move to a tropical climate where skin is available to everyone and, of course, free.

In terms of stealing furniture, Hoffman recommends taking whatever is necessary from the lobbies of apartment buildings and dormitories. Rent a U-Haul van and dress in coveralls and work under the guise of having been hired by the company to remove the items in preparation for new furniture and accessories coming soon. Construction sites are good sources of raw materials from which furniture can be made. Simple planks of wood serve as tabletops and bookcase shelving held up by cinder blocks. Huge cable spools make excellent tables while nail kegs serve quite nicely as stools.

Once food and furnishings have been established, move on to the strategies of securing free transportation. The easiest method advocated by Hoffman is hitchhiking which is available in cities as well as for cross-country trips. New England and the entire West Coast are the most amenable locations for hitchhikers to get rides. Lone hitchhikers have the best chance of being picked up and couples also have good results. Hoffman does not advocate that a woman hitchhike alone because of the risk of physical and sexual attack.

Although hitchhiking is legal at this time, Hoffman warns that any hitchhiker may be picked up by local pigs (Hoffman's name for police or any bureaucratic organization) in a "say-so" arrest. When the arrested person wants to know why he or she is being held, the pig will simply reply "cause I say so." This form of arrest applies to other offenses other than hitchhiking but the author wants the reader to be aware of the possibility in these circumstances. The occurrence of a "say-so" arrest increases with males with long hair, especially in small towns in Amerika (Hoffman's rebellious spelling of the word).

A form of hitchhiking, which provides greater speed and anonymity, is freighting, where one can jump on freight trains and travel with relatively little interference from guards. It is recommended that the rider find a boxcar with both doors open to eliminate the possibility of being locked in. The boxcar, while cold during travel, does provide more shelter than the flat cars. If easily managed, try to find a boxcar with a hydro-cushion suspension system for the smoothest ride available.

Anyone who knows how to drive can take advantage of the auto transportation agencies that have cars, which need to be delivered in cities normally at some distance. The car and a tank of gas are provided but the driver can always take friends to share the cost of gas for the whole trip. Gas can also be secured by emptying the hoses at filling stations because there is always some residual fuel in the hoses left by the prior customer.

Siphoning gas can be achieved by sticking a tube into the gas tank of another vehicle, preferably a big Cadillac on a dark street, and sucking on the free end of the tube to get the flow started. Simply place the free end into the vehicle's gas tank where the empty tank will fill with the gas running from the other vehicle. A more direct way of procuring fuel at a gas station is to position a car over the filler hole, lift off the lid and insert about twenty feet of tubing from the hole in the car's floorboard. It is important to have installed an electric pump inside the car to pump from this depth but it is an extremely advantageous method because the station attendant will never see anything but a parked car at a pump.

Hoffman provides methods of riding public bus transportation such as Greyhound where a person can pretend that the bus has left while he was in the restroom. Unfortunately luggage containing a ticket is on the other bus and complaints and legal action may be necessary if the luggage is stolen or damaged in any way. Normally the station manager will allow boarding the bus free of charge to avoid any further negative situations.

One of Hoffman's greatest delights is in strategizing free transportation from airlines, which he feels is one of the biggest bureaucratic pigs in Amerika's economic structure. The first method Hoffman recommends is accessing underworld connections to obtain stolen tickets and then flying under that phony name. Another method is posing as an executive secretary and ordering tickets over the phone for an executive in a local corporation and having the tickets sent to another address. If a last minute guilty conscience should arise simply go to another airline counter and have the tickets exchanged.

One other method is pretending that a boarding pass has fallen out of an envelope and offering to re-trace steps in an attempt to find it. Most boarding gate agents will prefer boarding a passenger without a pass instead of holding up the rest of the passengers. If these moves seem a bit daunting at least get a Youth Pass and travel for half-price and be sure to steal the headsets, which are interchangeable on every airline. Getting rides with pilots of private planes is another option, especially when using the lost ticket excuse. Simply tell the pilot about the lost ticket, that parents are out of town and it is necessary to get back to school. Pilots are an adventurous sort and like to have the company, plus the ride on a small plane has benefits all its own.

For the extreme air traveler who does not want to pay one cent, skyjacking is always an option. Crews have instructions to transport hostile passengers wherever they want to go even if the plane has to be refueled. An important note is to plan a destination to a country that is hostile to Amerika. Authorities in friendly countries will transport offenders back to Amerika for prosecution. Hoffman also advises to keep a knife in a shoe to avoid metal scanners. Plastic knives and bombs are also acceptable. It is also a good idea to wrap dope in plastic wrap, not foil, which will set off metal detectors. Although not for the faint of heart, skyjacking is a cheap and fast method of air travel.

If there is no place to stay after arrival, many cities have free housing, which can be identified through the local underground newspapers. Some cities have crash pads already established and are well known so accommodations come and go quickly. For

rural environments there are communes set up across Amerika to provide temporary and even long-term housing for members of the counterculture. Hoffman urges readers to be considerate and not become freeloaders on those who run communes, who are brothers and sisters in the revolution.

In terms of obtaining a free education, Hoffman advocates auditing college courses especially in big universities where attendance is never taken and there are so many students that one more person can blend in easily. Hoffman notes that there is a difference in getting an education and getting a degree, in that an education will further knowledge, while the purpose of a degree is so a person can take his or her own place in the bureaucracy and become one of the pigs. Free or affordable medical care is also available on college campuses and Hoffman delineates many of the diseases, most of which are sexually transmitted, which are treated for free in these clinics. Hoffman also details all the methods of birth control available along with the advantages and drawbacks to each.

Hoffman is as much a dramatist as an activist and recommends that any revolutionary act be staged appropriately. For example dying the water in a city fountain red and then informing the local media that the red water signifies the death of innocent people dying in the Vietnam War is dramatic and significant. Posters and flyers are always good elements to promote revolutionary activities. Wall painting and press conferences are bigger avenues of message expression and important to reach many people about a particular event or cause.

Sometimes actual cash is required for things and it is not enough to get free goods by any method. Hoffman outlines strategies for outwitting the welfare and unemployment systems on a repeated basis but when those venues are not enough Hoffman shares the assertive techniques of panhandling as an option of increasing income. There are also stores in larger cities, which sell bags of foreign coins very cheap. Hoffman recommends finding the coins that match the sizes of Amerikan coins, which can then be used in pay phones and other coin-operated machines.

One of the most important elements of counterculture life is the procurement and selling of drugs. Hoffman does not promote the use of heroin or cocaine but offers street-wise advice on buying marijuana and LSD. There are also explicit instructions on growing and harvesting marijuana inside a home and outside in the fields where it can be easily disguised by the adjacent placement of sunflowers.

Other free items available in Amerikan society include pets through the ASPCA, posters, maps, and postage. In order to thwart the post office, simply neglect to put a stamp on the letter and use the intended delivery address as the return address. Without the necessary postage, the letter will be returned to the return address on the envelope, which in this case is the intended delivery address.

Survive! Analysis

The most obvious observation upon reading Hoffman's suggestions is that they are no longer valid in the 21st century. The advent of security technology has pre-empted Hoffman's strategies for outwitting bureaucracy and his recommendations seem very naive and primitive. During the thirty-five years since the book was written, advancements have been made in all the bureaucratic establishments which Hoffman tried to manipulate and abuse, making any compromise in their systems essentially impossible today. Probably the most dramatic instance, which would surprise Hoffman, if he were alive today, is the security in the airlines industry after the 9/11 attacks on America. Hoffman's recommendations to hide knives in shoes and pretend that a boarding pass has been lost are ludicrous especially to anyone who has managed to pass through the security checkpoint at any airport.

Although Hoffman's ideas are outdated and ridiculous by today's measure, it is important to recognize their revolutionary tone for 1970. The audacity that someone would actually take such measures against society was outrageous enough, but the fact that Hoffman wrote them down and published them was an extraordinary feat in mainstream America. For the first time ever, counter-cultural information had risen from the underground newspapers for the benefit of anyone who wanted to become more aware of this lifestyle.

Hoffman found it difficult to find a publisher for the book, not so much for its content, but for its title, which just begged to create problems and complications, should it be released in bookstores across the country. Ultimately Hoffman was able to find an independent publisher and he made publishing history with incredible sales results. Most of the books were purchased in larger cities, especially New York and there were other parts of the country, which would not carry the book at all. Hoffman achieved his goal of taking on the publishing industry, another establishment abhorred for its bureaucracy, and winning in his objective of getting the power of information to the people.

Ironically Hoffman wrote the introduction of the book while in jail awaiting trial for his participation in the Chicago Seven incident. Hoffman considered jail to be the equivalent of graduate school in the achievement of an education in survival in Amerika (America), the greatest prison of all. The techniques outlined in the book were outlined to break down the symbolic prison walls of the institutions that hold the common and underprivileged man.

From a historical perspective, the book was written shortly after the time when Hoffman led the effort protesting America's participation in the Vietnam War in Chicago in 1968. Hoffman's was just one of many anti-war groups to surround the Convention Center in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention that summer. It was becoming clear that Lyndon Johnson's vice-president, Hubert Humphrey, who supported the Vietnam War, would become the party's candidate for president.

An overwhelming number of police officers, army troops, and others, fended off the relatively small number of protestors while the streets of Chicago became like war zones. Chicago's mayor at the time, Richard M. Daley, gave orders that the demonstrators were to be controlled at any cost, which resulted in beatings, shootings and tear gas incidents. Humphrey lost the election that year to Richard Nixon who had no tolerance for rebellion of any sort and who ordered the prosecution of organizers of the Chicago incident. Abbie Hoffman with his friend, Jerry Rubin, founders of the Yippie Party (Youth International Party) were two of those arrested. Others came from organizations such as Students for a Democratic Society, the Black Panther Party and the National Mobilization to End the War.

The government's ridiculous charges were prime material for Hoffman and Rubin, who delighted in pulling stunts showcasing the stupidity and inefficiency of the government. The defendants were ultimately found guilty of inciting riot but the convictions were overturned and only a few had to spend a short time in jail, Hoffman being one of them. Hoffman draws on socialist theories in implementing his own initiatives such as when he advocates the siphoning of gas from Cadillacs for use in any car, and quotes Karl Marx. "To each according to his need, from each according to his ability." Hoffman is amused in this incidence from a philosophical standpoint and also notes how the law of gravity can also affect economics, literally and symbolically, by the simple connection of a rubber tube and two gas tanks of varying levels.

Hoffman is very clear about where to steal and from whom. It is fine to take from any formal establishment despite its size but never ok to steal from others like you. For example, the author suggests utilizing communes as a source of residence from time to time but warns against abusing or taking advantage of those who operate them who are, after all, brothers and sisters in the counterculture who are struggling just like Hoffman.

There are instances where Hoffman borders on abusing his own principles leveled against established industries such as the printing and advocacy of advertising, one of the most mercenary functions in the country. It is not clear whether or not Hoffman advertises rebellious events or uses the medium for other topics. He does mention advertising as an important revenue for an underground newspaper but it seems out of place in his arsenal of tools because of its being so close to mainstream America and its outright mission to generate money.

Fight!

Fight! Summary

Throughout his life Hoffman advocates peaceful protests and provides information on appropriate tactics in this section as well as some more aggressive techniques for times when self-defense comes to the fore. To Hoffman, information is the most vital tool for people, not only to manage their lives better, but also to use as a weapon in specific initiatives.

The development of a printing workshop allows the ultimate freedom of expression and distribution for underground movements. Hoffman provides not only the strategic view of such establishments but also specifics on paper stock, ink, layout, and graphics. Hoffman advocates integrating an underground paper into high schools and military units for ultimate effectiveness.

Guerilla broadcasting is another burgeoning weapon in the non-violent weapons arsenal. Hoffman recommends enlisting the help of anyone with electronic experience in order to save costs on building radio and TV organizations. If no one with this skill is available, Hoffman provides instructions and graphics for do-it-yourself help. The goal is to create underground radio and TV stations on a dedicated frequency, becoming the voice of the movement for those who want more immediacy than the underground newspaper can provide.

Unfortunately violence becomes a part of any revolution and Hoffman provides survival tactics for those who plan to demonstrate. Again, Hoffman reminds the reader of the importance of drama or theater to draw attention to the point of the protest. The location of the demonstration must also have meaning for the cause, in order for the initiative to be effective. Whatever the motivation or location, the author warns that demonstrators will most probably be attacked by the pigs.

Most attacks at protests include clubbing, dragging, gassing, shoving, and sometimes buckshot, so Hoffman suggests tight clothing that covers all the skin. This will minimize the damage done to skin and the loss of clothing during rough treatment. Shoes should be sneakers or boots and men are urged to wear jock straps or protective cups.

Helmets should be painted black (Hoffman's fashion consultants suggest anarchy black as the perfect color) for the least conspicuous head attire. Types of helmets range from construction gear to the most expensive motorcycle helmets, which provide the best protection in riot situations. Gas masks are another critical piece of riot gear and can be purchased at army and navy stores for a relatively small price. In lieu of an official mask, a protestor may wear ski goggles or a face visor over the eyes and a surgical mask over the nose and mouth. This combination is not quite as effective as the official gas mask but will work in an emergency. Hoffman provides a chart listing the gases, which could possibly be used in riot situations and outlines their effects, protection against them and

first aid measures, which are necessary. Ancillary equipment, which can be helpful during demonstrations, are walkie-talkies, signs stapled to stakes, and first aid kits.

Hoffman cites America's brutality during the riots during the Chicago demonstrations in the summer of 1968 as the turning point of America's young people's views of law enforcement and government in this country. The unnecessary force and brutality waged against the protestors raised the antennae of young people in the areas of economic and racial inequality. The resulting rage has taken shape in tactics, which are more violent than the former peace protests.

Hoffman calls this new rage trashing, which falls somewhere between rioting and guerilla warfare. Young people rely on their agility and strength to destroy symbols of inequality and try to outwit the pigs that have weapons and force on their side. Typical examples of trashing include throwing rocks through the plate glass windows of stores, spray-painting slogans on walls, propelling rocks with homemade slingshots, throwing boomerangs, spraying tear gas and mace, and placing boards with upright nails under the tires of police cars. Equally effective techniques in closer confrontations include actually obtaining police uniforms and gear from official supply houses. Some of the items available via catalog order include billy clubs, police uniforms, riot helmets, mace, handcuffs and other devices. If in a very personal confrontation, Hoffman suggests being prepared ahead of time by studying the proper way to fight with a knife and the use of martial arts. Step-by-step instructions and diagrams help to illustrate the most important parts of this hand-to-hand fighting.

As general trashing guidelines, Hoffman recommends always going with a buddy or group and having some sort of strategy in place, before beginning. The ultimate goal should always be to do as much property damage as possible without getting injured or arrested. Selection of the buildings to be trashed is important for their symbolism such as banks, large corporations and government buildings. Hoffman urges anyone with a desire to trash, to develop a strategy and practice and always bear in mind that trashing is a form of war.

Some of the most effective weapons during trashing events are stink bombs, smoke bombs, pipe bombs and Molotov cocktails, all of which Hoffman explains in detail, complete with illustrations for construction. Naturally, injuries are expected during these conflicts and Hoffman provides some basic first aid techniques. Taking care of others in the group becomes vital because medical attention is not provided appropriately for rioters. Also, there is the issue of avoiding going to a hospital if at all possible to avoid the need to identify yourself. Of course there are certain situations when professional medical attention is required such as gunshot wounds and serious wounds to the head.

Most other injuries can be managed on the street by remaining calm and trying to keep the injured person calm. Hoffman advises anyone with pre-existing medical conditions to wear metal tags around the neck identifying the condition in the event that the person is rendered unconscious. Hoffman also lists medical organizations which are sympathetic to protestors and who have medical personnel willing to work at demonstrations.

In addition to medical help, there are also legal organizations, which are sympathetic to protestors, which Hoffman lists in the book. Hoffman also suggests writing the phone number of one of the organizations or one of their attorneys on an arm before proceeding into a demonstration situation. If a person is arrested it is best to remain calm and comply so as to avoid the almost certain beating, which will occur with resisting.

During this time in Amerika, draft-dodging became important to young men of fighting age. Hoffman gives specific information about beating the draft by any means possible, including the listing of any and all physical ailments, real or imagined. Any legitimate condition listed on the deferment form accompanied by a letter from your doctor is the ultimate goal.

If the physical route to dodging the draft does not work, the next method is achieving Conscientious Objector (CO) status or a psychiatric deferment. CO is hard to prove especially in wartime but being judged mentally incompetent is relatively easy once a person can convince someone in authority that he is unstable and is willing to spend a little time in a psychiatric hospital just to prove it.

If these attempts at avoidance don't work and a person is about to receive a military physical, he simply needs to indicate that he has had every disease listed on the form and talk about how he can't wait to get a gun to start shooting officers. If all these tactics do not work, the last resort available is to seek asylum in foreign countries. The safest places to avoid detection are those countries behind the Iron Curtain and with which Amerika has mutual offense treaties such as Korea and Cuba. The next choice for asylum are countries which are unfriendly to Amerika, but the risk of that status changing at some point which could result in return to Amerika and a military fate.

Sweden is another country that offers asylum to Amerikan draft-dodgers and passports are not even necessary, as Swedish law demands that visitors be allowed into the country. Canada is probably the easiest country to which a dodger can escape because of its proximity to Amerika. Visitors must pass a test in order to stay but the requirements are relatively easy and Hoffman even suggests the best border crossing locations and times of day, which will be most advantageous for an exile into the country. Hoffman does counsel anyone considering a move to another country to be prepared for culture shock and a struggle to find work. Some return to Amerika and eventually turn themselves in, and some join the counterculture movement and wage war of a different sort.

Hoffman again returns to the topic of shoplifting and provides some more general guidelines requiring a little practice and a lot of daring. According to Hoffman, it is important to look like the average customer of the store that has been targeted. Dress in the same type of clothes marked for theft so as not to draw attention. More expensive stores are recommended because they have fewer security personnel and the salespeople feel awkward about accusing a potential thief. Hoffman rationalizes that many sales clerks are thieves themselves and have no problem looking the other way when witnessing a shoplifter. According to Hoffman the prime times for shoplifting

expeditions are dark, rainy days, during the Christmas shopping season when most people are likely to be wearing a long coat and the stores are so crowded that shoplifting will not be easily detected by clerks.

It is also important to scope out the store in advance to locate the placement of security cameras and mirrors. Hoffman notes that there are always blind spots for cameras and mirrors when special displays are created or other changes are made in the store's displays and layouts. Cameras and mirrors are very rarely adjusted to accommodate these changes making them almost obsolete.

Never take more than one or two items at a time in the event that shoplifting techniques fail and apprehension occurs. It is always easy to pull the ruse of being distracted and forgetting to pay. Normally the worst thing that will happen is that the store security grills an offender for a while and the person is then asked to leave and not return.

Again Hoffman mentions the techniques of sewing huge pockets on the inside of a coat so that goods can be deposited relatively effortlessly. Another technique is to carry wrapping paper and tape into the dressing room and just wrap up the items and leave the dressing room with no questions asked. Of course, briefcases and shopping bags are prime containers for holding merchandise, which can be carried out of the store with no problems.

Stealing on the job is one of the easiest maneuvers available and, according to Hoffman, encouraged as a form of supplement to incomes which are much too low, especially for those in service occupations. The first thing to consider is personal appearance, which must exhibit the qualities of cleanliness and honor so that a person will not be considered among the suspects when items begin to disappear. Mailroom employees have a nice situation because they can simply mail any items they want in packages addressed for delivery outside the company. If things go awry it is easy to blame the situation on the confusion of a particular shipping rush.

Cashiers and salespeople can discreetly pocket bills during work, or charge a dollar more than the price marked on an item. In most cases, the customer will not notice the dollar's difference and the difference will not show up in the cash register. Collecting at the end of the day is easy, simply by putting a penny to the side of the register for every dollar to be drawn out of the register later on. This eliminates the need to constantly dip into the drawer and draw attention to behaviors and actions.

One of the most lucrative positions is to work in a service capacity for a wealthy person who will probably never miss many items. Phoning in orders for merchandise to be delivered to the house and then loading up the merchandise and disappearing long before the employer realizes what has happened is another technique for efficient theft in a situation like this.

Hoffman also provides details on altering credit cards by removing the ink on the embossed numbers and then flattening out those numbers with a warm iron. A razor blade can then be used to completely remove any residue from this melting process.

The card will be completely smooth and can be imprinted with new numbers with the use of an addressograph plate pressed into the soft plastic with the warm iron.

Hoffman has a particular fondness for pranks, which he affectionately calls "Monkey Warfare" for people who do not like to use real weapons. One technique calls for the use of a syringe or turkey baster filled with an epoxy glue solution to which is added some rubbing alcohol. The solution can then be applied to locks, telephones, parking meters and any other items commonly used in public.

Hoffman also advocates punching extra holes in computer cards, which will foul up the system as well as the company's information on you. If access to a computer room is available, pass a magnet back and forth across the reels of tape to erase all the data they hold. Hoffman especially urges the practice of this activity at any IBM plant.

Another annoying prank is the deposit of a dead fish into a safe deposit box rented under a false name. There is no way for the bank to trace the indiscretion and the box cannot be opened without the permission of the owner so the deposit is guaranteed to create quite a problem. If for some reason a person is caught in this circumstance a simple explanation of the sentimental value of the fish being bequeathed by a dead relative dictates its safekeeping in a safe deposit box.

Toying with another public institution, the telephone or electricity company is another interesting prank. Simply enlist a multitude of people to access services at the same time, which will put an extreme burden on the appointed utility and cause customer complaints for days. Political pranks rank high on the list of Monkey Warfare and Hoffman suggests calling high government officials and asking, "How many kids did you kill today," or "What kind of liquor do Congressmen drink?" Hoffman lists the phone numbers of ten high government officials including Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew.

Of course no book on revolution would be complete without some discussion on guns and Hoffman provides the distinctions between the two basic types of handgun, the revolver and the automatic, as well as the benefits of rifles and shotguns. Grenade launchers are also covered in this section and Hoffman strongly suggests sufficient training on all weapons and urges the reader to become acquainted with the gun laws in his or her area.

Finally Hoffman addresses the possibility of counterculture activities, which can lead to going underground to avoid prosecution for various crimes. Hoffman warns fellow subversives to notify friends if the FBI begins to ask questions about any other group members. If a person is forced to go underground to avoid the federal government it is possible to access good friends who are not that well known by the authorities.

It is important to develop a physical disguise and move to a location where the scrutiny will not be as intense in the community. Sometimes it is the smallest thing, which can trip up the best attempts to live underground such as being picked up for some minor offense where fingerprints give away an identity. That is why it is crucial that anyone



attempting a low profile drives carefully and not commit any petty crimes because the chances for a cover being blown will escalate.

Anyone living underground is probably relatively safe until that person's name appears on the FBI's "10 Most Wanted List" which is normally a signal that a manhunt is underway with confidence of capture based on some solid clues. If this happens Hoffman suggests going further underground and curtailing any radical behavior until the situation cools. While living underground a person will get lonely, especially in the initial adjustment phase but Hoffman warns the reader not to give in to the temptation of trying to establish contact and to especially stay away from using the telephone. If phone use is critical, be sure to use a pay phone and disguise the voice as much as possible. Viewing spy movies will provide some other tips on secret behavior, which should come in handy during the time spent underground.

One of the best things to be accomplished while living underground is to continue providing information on your cause to people in the outside world. Make arrangements with a trusted friend to deliver communications via notes, tape recordings and video recordings in which a person's face may be masked but the message comes through loud and clear: The person is still alive, still in good spirits, and still fighting for the cause.

Fight! Analysis

Hoffman exhibits a sense of humor throughout the book aside from his derogatory names for America and American institutions and organizations. The conversational style of the book allows Hoffman to speak directly to the reader which allows for the introduction of humor such as the sarcastic comment that "our fashion consultants suggest anarchy black" when advising the reader to paint battle helmets black. Hoffman is very intelligent and makes use of sarcasm and smart humor throughout.

The writing style is a bit disjointed almost as if Hoffman wrote in a fevered state all in one sitting and without the benefit of any outline of his thoughts. Some sections are well substantiated and others are afforded only a few lines leading to erratic style and thoughts. The book could have used some judicious editing as well as some topics are repeated such as the information on shoplifting. While the book details methods and sources for revolutionary equipment, it lacks any real sense of passion and presumably the reader has a significant interest to have selected the book negating the requirement to stir any senses for any cause.

The Monkey Warfare pranks are in stark contrast to the information on street warfare requiring firearms and gas masks. It is as if Hoffman would go to any length to create a disturbance or generate attention. While the iteration of sometimes juvenile-sounding pranks could be tiresome it is important to remember that Hoffman lived his young adulthood during the time of the 1960's and 1970's when revolution of any sort was relatively new to America.

The wholesome period of the 1950's positioned America as compliant and unquestioning and in stark contrast to the next two decades to follow. Hoffman considered himself as taking on the mantle of the Founding Fathers of the country who were considered revolutionaries in their own time and what Hoffman attempted to do was try to re-gain America for the common people. It is interesting to wonder about what Hoffman would have thought about the information technology and security procedures today, which make all his ideas and suggestions obsolete. In fact, it is the publication of this book that initiated some of the security procedures in place today by some American institutions.

No doubt Hoffman would be both intrigued and appalled at the Internet for its ability to retrieve information but also for its capabilities to easily disseminate it. Hoffman's movement would have been unstoppable with electronic communications and no doubt Hoffman would have utilized the medium to its utmost while also warning colleagues of its imminent dangers.

Liberate!

Liberate! Summary and Analysis

This section is simply pages of listings of organizations and venues accessible for free or cheap living in the cities of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Some areas covered include medical care, legal aid, food, housing, theaters and restaurants.

Characters

Bert Cohen

The title page of *Steal This Book* lists Cohen as "accessory after the fact." He was the person who did the book's graphic design, giving it the look of an "underground newspaper" of the type published for little money by revolutionaries in the 1960s.

Lisa Fithian

Fithian wrote the foreword to the 2002 edition of the book. A long-time community activist, she is a member of the Direct Action Network and is involved in political issues. She has recently been in the news for her part in organizing protestors at the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, an act she shares in common with Hoffman's activities to mobilize the Yippie movement at the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention. In 2001 she was arrested and held for several days while preparing to protest at the G-20 summit in Ottawa, Canada. After being detained for two days, she was released for lack of evidence.

Al Giordano

Giordano is an activist who worked with Abbie Hoffman. He wrote "Still a Steal," the introduction to the 2001 edition of *Steal This Book*. Giordano worked with Hoffman on social and environmental causes from 1980, when he was twenty, to the time of Hoffman's death in 1989. During the 1990s, he worked as a journalist for the *Boston Phoenix*. As a result of investigations into Latin American drug policies, he began a Web site dedicated to reporting on the United States' war against drugs. For several years Giordano was a defendant in a libel suit brought against him by the Bank of Mexico in response to an article about major narcotics trafficking on the property of the bank's owner.

Izak Haber

On the book's title page, Haber is listed as "coconspirator," a term used in law to imply that someone is guilty of working with another guilty party. In fact, it was Haber who first approached Hoffman with the idea of *Steal This Book*. Much of the material he presented to Hoffman as his research was actually copied verbatim from other published sources. After five weeks of working together, Hoffman fired him, paying him a small amount for the twenty pages of original material he had produced. Haber later published an article in *Rolling Stone* saying his research had been stolen by Hoffman.

Abbie Hoffman

At the time when he wrote *Steal This Book*, Abbie Hoffman was internationally famous as a leader of a 1960s youth movement. He was active in various organizations that existed to oppose the Vietnam War and came to media prominence as one of the most visible protesters involved in organizing antiwar demonstrations during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. The convention became a violent spectacle of demonstrators facing off against the police, National Guard, and Army. After it was over, Hoffman and other demonstration leaders were charged in federal court with having encouraged demonstrators to cross state lines to go to Chicago and for encouraging resistance when police wanted to move protesters away from the convention hall. The trial of the Chicago Seven became a media circus, in part due to Hoffman's irreverent attitude. In the end, five defendants were found guilty, but the convictions were later overturned. A few of the defendants, however, including Hoffman, did spend a few weeks in jail in 1971 for contempt of court. Hoffman wrote the introduction for *Steal This Book* while in jail.

Hoffman assembled the tips that he offers in *Steal This Book* from a variety of sources. Most of them are from anecdotal evidence given to him from people he met while working for various protest movements. Others were mailed to him in response to advertisements he placed in underground newspapers across the country. In most cases, Hoffman researched the tips he had been given to assure that the suggested techniques would work and that the services and organizations recommended in the book were legitimate.

Throughout the book, Hoffman gives a running commentary on the "survival techniques" about which he writes, telling readers which techniques work well, which do not, and which he is not familiar enough to judge. He is as honest as he can be about the usefulness of each technique and is not at all hesitant to point out myths and misconceptions when he finds them. Although this book is a collaborative effort, Hoffman's is the only name on the cover. Because of this, he takes responsibility for the usefulness of the information it contains. As a result, the information about organizing protest movements and publicizing rallies, which were his areas of expertise, tend to be more fully detailed than segments about such matters as collecting multiple welfare checks or shoplifting.

One area that appears to have been developed imaginatively is the subject of bomb-making. Hoffman never was involved in violent confrontation against the authorities, and no one ever accused him of being involved in violent struggles. Still, the information about building bombs and using guns against the police is richly detailed. The information and techniques outlined in these sections may or may not have come from people who had true experience, but the chance that Hoffman himself verified these experiences is small. To this extent, *Steal This Book* is not the survival guide it claims to be, but is instead an idealized version of a radical lifestyle.

Anita Hoffman

Abbie Hoffman's second wife was his constant companion at the time that *Steal This Book* was written, working with him on many of his social activities in the late 1970s until he dropped out of public life in 1973. She was instrumental in the writing and research of this book, and is the woman in many of the book's photographs. Although Hoffman only mentions Anita in the book's introduction, the tips contained in the book reflect the lifestyle they lived together throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Themes

Class Conflict

One basic premise behind the ideas expressed in *Steal This Book* is that there is a war between different classes of American society. It is this war that justifies the use of criminal measures. Hoffman recognizes moral social responsibilities. As he says in the book's introduction, "Our moral dictionary says no heisting from each other. To steal from a brother or sister is evil. To *not* steal from the institutions that are the pillars of the Pig Empire is equally immoral."

With the phrase "Pig Empire," he refers to those who have economic power. In defining them as the enemy and claiming the right to use any means to combat the enemy, Hoffman permits all sorts of antisocial behaviors. Stealing is a natural way to weaken an economically powerful enemy, and the book advises many methods to take advantage of international business conglomerates such as the telephone and airline industries. But the book does not discriminate among different levels of economic ownership; small shopkeepers are targeted as often as large corporations, having been defined in the class struggle as "them" versus "us."

In addition to advocating stealing from economic entities, the book also gives advice about destroying property without personal gain in the section titled "Trashing," which leads into advice on hand-to-hand combat against the police and using explosives and firearms. Since the privileged classes have the benefit of police protection, and the police have superior weapons and training, Hoffman suggests using any means available, no matter how violent. All of the book's destructive techniques are discussed in terms of the struggle against those with wealth.

Freedom

The identifying characteristic of the target audience of this book is a desire for freedom from social constraints. In the late 1960s and early 1970s rallying cry "freedom" was popular. In the name of freedom, people—usually young people, who had not yet invested much into the social order—dropped out of society, living off what they could gather from handouts and sharing, and stealing when they could. In the drive for economic independence, many young people practiced the tips Hoffman offers in his book long before these tips were gathered together and published. To those who wanted to escape from the "slavery" of the social order, this book offered a promise of freedom.

The tips in the book offer financial freedom by showing readers places they can stay and eat for nothing or close to nothing. There are long lists of social service institutions, especially in the section titled "Liberate!" which focuses on four American cities as case studies. Hoffman covers the basic essentials of survival and other necessities—such as

entertainment and education—that can be obtained at no cost. Overall, the book is designed to make life easier for people who desire to be free from the economic mainstream, who do not want to pledge their minds and hearts to employers just to gather enough money to live comfortable lives.

Safety

This book represents an honest acknowledgement that the young people of the sixties were bound to participate in the illegal activities that are mentioned. Rather than assuming they would follow the law or that they deserved to suffer whatever fate might befall them if they did not, Hoffman compiled a guide for those who chose to follow the illegal path, with the hope of guiding them safely through the dangers of outlaw life. The book was shocking to readers and reviewers of the establishment, who saw its primary purpose as being to encourage illegal activities. But a good case can be made that it is meant to look after the safety of young American citizens who would be engaging in illegal activities anyway.

The safety tips in *Steal This Book* include honest explanations of different types of venereal diseases and places readers can go for treatment; tips about which recreational drugs are harmful and to what degrees; self-defense tips; first-aid tips for those hurt in fights and demonstrations; and nutrition advice for those preparing food on a budget. Because most of the practices described in the book were socially shunned at best and illegal at worst, information about them was difficult to come by in 1971, and therefore the safety of the thousands of youths who had dropped out of society was left at risk.

Style

Zeitgeist

The German term *zeitgeist* means "the spirit of the time." It is often possible to relate the time in which an author was working to the moral and intellectual trends that prevailed when she or he was writing. For instance, the wealth and hedonism of the jazz age are important clues to understanding *The Great Gatsby*. In the case of *Steal This Book*, it would be almost impossible to separate the zeitgeist of 1960s America from Hoffman's writing style. The book is disorganized, repeating some advice and straying off its stated mission at what appears to be the author's whim. For instance, the section on "knife fighting" has little to do with the political subject of fighting off police oppression, assuming that no police anywhere use knives to attack criminal suspects; it is more likely a subject Hoffman had experienced and felt like including in this guide, despite the irrelevance. Because the spirit of the time gravitated toward freedom and rebellion, the book is free to drift toward the sort of irrelevancies that would be considered distractions if included in books written for a different audience.

Tone

Almost as important as the advice given in *Steal This Book* is the tone that Hoffman takes throughout the work. It is his tone that conveys his attitude. Though the practicality of many of his tips might be questioned, what is clear is that he takes a consistent attitude throughout. This book offered some useful tips and many ideas that were not even realistic when it was first published. Over time, many of the corporate interests Hoffman encourages readers to "rip off" have refined their security measures in order to avoid being victimized by the kinds of malicious crimes he describes. Still, this is a useful document because it conveys through its tone a way of looking at the world that was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s.

The book's tone is set by the use of the word "pig." Though the word later came to be used mainly as an insult toward police, Hoffman uses it here to describe anyone who is greedy, lazy, and small-minded. His assumption is that these are the attributes shared by those in power, making anyone who is part of the economic system a "pig," and thereby a fair victim of robbery, "trashing," and violence. The word is frequently used to refer to members of the police force, but that is because they are the members of the establishment with which readers would most likely come into contact if they followed the book's guidelines. In general though, the police, corporate employees, politicians, and business owners are all workers for what Hoffman refers to as the "Pig Empire."

Historical Context

Opposition to War

The organized resistance to the Vietnam War in the 1960s grew directly out of the civil rights movement of the 1950s. Up until the 1950s, America was still a segregated country, in spite of the fact slavery had formally ended in 1865. Southern states had laws, informally referred to as "Jim Crow" laws, that refused blacks equal access to the same public services that whites used, including transportation, housing, and schools. In 1957 the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization of black churches and ministers, was formed under the leadership of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. to organize protests against racism. The organization welcomed the participation of northern whites, usually college-aged students who volunteered to fight injustice, risking their lives by attending marches and voter registration drives with southern blacks.

Starting in 1965, the SCLC changed its focus to fighting poverty in the North. White participants, including Abbie Hoffman, felt themselves being forced out by the group's new agenda. With the skills they had learned organizing protests, they focused on the growing dissatisfaction over the war in Vietnam.

The struggle between North Vietnam and South Vietnam had gone on mostly unnoticed by Americans since 1949. Americans had given financial and tactical aid to South Vietnam, fearful that a victory by the communist government of the North would lead to a spread of communism all across the continent. President John F. Kennedy sent the first U.S. troops into the region in 1961; in 1964 President Lyndon Johnson used a report of North Vietnamese ships attacking an American ship to have Congress pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, allowing the president to escalate the war. By the end of 1965, 200,000 American soldiers were committed to the region. Years passed and American warplanes bombed Vietnamese villages, American soldiers died in battle, and an increasing number of American citizens quit believing that the abstract idea of stopping communism was a sensible explanation for the destruction. On college campuses, outrage against the war expanded to a distrust and hatred of the government in general. The outrage of the nation's young people was channeled into political action by activists like Hoffman who had participated in the civil rights movement.

The Chicago Seven Trial

In 1968 various antiwar organizations called their members to attend the Democratic National Convention in Chicago to show their opposition to President Johnson, a Democrat, and to Hubert Humphrey, his vice president. Humphrey supported the war and was expected to be the Democratic presidential nominee. The protesters were opposed by overwhelming resistance from the government. Standing up against 5,000

protestors were 12,000 police, 6,000 army troops, and 5,000 National Guardsmen. From August 25 to 29, the streets near the convention center were scenes of violence, as the police, under orders from Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, attacked unarmed protesters with clubs, tear gas, and guns. The protesters' chant that "The whole world is watching!" turned out to be true. Watching on television, Americans were in general more sympathetic to the bloodied protestors than the police and their strong-arm tactics. A government report commissioned later to investigate what happened in Chicago coined the term "police riot."

After Richard Nixon was elected on a law-and-order ticket, the Justice Department went about prosecuting the organizers who had encouraged people to come to Chicago to attend the protest. They were charged with conspiring to cross state lines to commit a felony, even though several of the defendants had never met one another or talked to each other before arriving in Chicago. Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin had been the founders of the Youth International Party, or Yippie which focused on promoting change through raising public awareness with shocking and humorous stunts, such as backing their own nominee for the presidency—a pig from a local farm. Others came from the Black Panther Party, the Students for a Democratic Society, and the National Mobilization to End the War.

Throughout the trial in autumn 1969, Hoffman and Rubin brought media attention to what they saw as the ridiculousness of the government's charges. They arrived in court in costumes, dressed as revolutionary war soldiers and as Chicago police officers, and addressed Judge Julius Hoffman as "Julie." These antics made Hoffman a hero to those who saw the whole trial as a political farce.

In the end, the defendants were found guilty of inciting a riot, with all convictions overturned on appeal. Hoffman was one of the defendants who had to spend a few weeks in jail for contempt of court. It was during this relatively light sentence that he wrote the introduction to *Steal This Book*, a fact that he alludes to in the book's opening pages.

Steal This Book carried the Yippie attitude of resistance into the 1970s, even as the antiestablishment fervor was fading. Throughout the decades, it has been considered with almost mythical reverence by those who support the cultural revolution of the sixties, even though the advice it gives is seldom practiced.

Critical Overview

Hoffman had trouble finding a publisher for *Steal This Book*. He insisted the three-word phrase, which had appeared in small print on the back jacket of his earlier book *Woodstock Nation*, must be the title, even though some publishers would have been glad to print it in spite of its advice for illegal activity, if only it did not tell consumers to steal from *them*. In all, over thirty publishers rejected it before Hoffman paid to have it published by Grove Press. Even then, many bookstores refused to carry the book, and major distribution chains refused to handle it. Libraries refused to put it on their shelves. In several cases where people committing crimes were found to have *Steal This Book* among their possessions, prosecutors tried to indict Hoffman as a criminal conspirator.

After a glowing review by Dotson Rader in the *New York Times Book Review*, sales of the book began to pick up. According to Jack Hoffman, Abbie Hoffman's brother, Rader's review was that the book was most useful when perceived as a way of getting to know its author. In his book *Run Run Run: The Lives of Abbie Hoffman*, Jack Hoffman quotes Rader's position as saying, "It reads as if Hoffman decided it was time to sit down and advise his children on what to avoid and what was worth having in America. He says that if you want to be free, then America might kill you. You must know certain things if you are to survive." Presenting the book as a source of insight into America's most famous and interesting hippie made the book itself interesting and famous. Hoffman toured the country, appearing on local talk shows to stir up interest.

It was not long after the publication of *Steal This Book* that the public began to turn against Hoffman. Rumors circulated that he was living a luxurious lifestyle from the book's proceeds, living in a penthouse apartment and socializing with celebrities. Most of the money from the book in fact was donated to the Black Panthers Defense Fund. Though the rumors were unfounded, they cast a pall of hypocrisy over the project. In 1973 Hoffman was arrested for selling cocaine and he went underground to avoid a jail sentence. The arrest seemed to confirm the rumors of an extravagant lifestyle and living in hiding, he was unable to support his book.

Since its publication, *Steal This Book* has continuously stayed in print. No reviewers have recommended the advice it gives and except for Rader, none has seriously thought of it as way of understanding its complex author. Still, it captures the antiestablishment mood of the 1960s, an era that, even by the time of the book's publication in 1971, was fading into nostalgia.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of creative writing and literature at College of Lake County. In this essay, Kelly considers whether Steal This Book is still relevant for readers in the twenty-first century.

Abbie Hoffman's best-known piece of writing, *Steal This Book*, has one of the most recognized and often copied titles in publishing history. Newspaper articles and books about Hoffman often use some variation on this phrase, such as *Steal This Dream* and *Live This Book*. A 2000 film about Hoffman's life was called *Steal This Movie*, leading many into the mistaken assumption that it was an adaptation of this random crazy-quilt of a book. Hoffman himself, knowing how much of a catchphrase the title had become, cannibalized his own work when he titled his 1987 book about America's anti-drug hysteria *Steal This Urine Test*.

The title is familiar all over the world, but like Thomas Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again* and Ernest Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*, it may have more power as a slogan than as an entry point into the book itself. Some critics would have no problem if the book were never read again; it was never written "well," by anybody's standards, and a good case can be made that once the novelty has worn off, the book has outlived any minimal value it had. Others hold onto it, though, as a magic totem that keeps the spirit of its time alive, and they fear its loss would represent yet another blow against free thought and individualism. To them, this is a work that purposely set out to defy all of the rules, and so it would be foolish to judge it by any other book's standards.

The problem with treating *Steal This Book* as a sacred object and declaring it off limits to criticism is that, though it makes the book less vulnerable, it also renders it less interesting. To say this book sets its own standards is the same thing as saying that we cannot talk about it as a book, and with that kind of restriction people are bound to wander away from it. What is needed is to find a standard by which to measure the book and talk about it.

One of Hoffman's stated goals was to parody the kinds of travel books that commonly show people how to take in an exotic land on a budget. As such, his last section, titled "Liberate," was just right for its time. It gives specific names, addresses, prices, and preferred menu items. Best of all, the world to which it introduced its readers was one of soup kitchens, public libraries, and throwaways, all of the things urban dwellers usually do not notice in their environment and that tourists, far from being directed toward them, are usually advised to avoid. As a satire of the establishment, the book was highly successful, showing the positive side of things the social mainstream feared and disdained, such as poverty and crime. Adding advice about system abuse and drugs to the travel tips, one can see that the book's agenda was to shine a positive light onto anything the straight society tried to suppress. Any objections on moral grounds, then, just fed the satire, making it grow stronger even after the book was already finished.

The problem with reading it like this is that the book becomes a throwaway, as dated and as doomed to obsolescence as the travel guides it parodies. Frankly, there is no big market for travel books ten years old or older: their prices are out of date, they talk about places that have gone out of business, and they almost always have been replaced by newer models with more relevant information. So it is with *Steal This Book*. Not only are most of the great bargains gone, but also faded from the American culture is that need to point out the establishment's hypocrisy. We live in an ironic age, in which the order of the day, from entertainment to advertising to political rhetoric, is to point out one's own internal contradictions with a wink. True, a good case can be made that the current level of irony might never have been reached without Abbie Hoffman, but being a creator of it does not excuse him from its effects. There is something a little too naive about pointing out that the mainstream culture is hypocritical, as if only the talented few can see it. We are all aware of the hypocrisy. These days, satire needs to be more subtle than portraying the enemy as violent and clueless. For some, this kind of obviousness might be considered a reminder of simpler times, when satire moved at an easier pace. Accepting the book in that spirit, though, puts Abbie Hoffman's revolutionary tribute to youth culture in the same category of nostalgia as silent movies and radio dramas. It is not really satire; if it is about a world from which the reader is comfortably removed, it then becomes camp.

Another way to look at *Steal This Book* today would be to forget about the humor, which depended on the circumstances of the sixties and seventies, and to concentrate on its value as a guide to orchestrating a successful urban revolution. True, America is less interested in revolution today than it was then, but the general lack of interest does not in itself make Hoffman's advice any less practical. Bombs are still bombs, demonstrations are still public displays of opposition and when the bombing and demonstrations are done, medical and legal aid is still required. Some of his advice has lost its relevance over time—for instance, it is now cheaper and easier for a struggling radical group to post its ideas on a Web site than to print an underground newspaper—but the staleness of those cases is offset by his masterful sense of how to draw media attention even to a small event. Even today's Web sites lack the insight into social protest that Hoffman had, if only because protest today is such a rare occasion, while for him it was an everyday event.

Unfortunately, revolution is serious business, and the book's satirical element works against this. It would be nice to say that satire and revolution, when mixed together, yield a well-rounded, healthy worldview that is smart enough to distrust and yet sincere enough to fight for a cause. The actual result of the merger though can be frightening. The chapters of *Steal This Book* that deal with guns and street fighting, for instance, fall somewhere in the middle of the book's possible uses. They are too much a product of Hoffman's romantic imagination to be useful as battle training, but also seem counterproductive to social revolution certain to attract the sort of violent response from the government that spells the end for any gang of protesters, however well armed. On the other hand, this is a violent world, and it is hard to take advice about fighting with weapons as a joke, especially as a joke on the dominant culture. Perhaps at the time Hoffman actually believed that guns and knives could be used to overthrow the government, though the knife fighting passages of the book make it pretty clear that he,

at least some of the time, used the idea of revolution to play out some 1950s street gang fantasy from his youth. As sound as the book's advice for protestors is, it blurs the line of reality with its glib treatment of weapons. Groups that took up arms against the government did not fare well even before the world became vigilant against terrorist attacks, and they seem particularly delusional now.

Of all of the tips passed along in *Steal This Book*, perhaps the most telling is the one about getting free buffalo from the government. In that one small episode, Hoffman captured the whole essence of the book and the significance it will have for coming generations. Hoffman advised readers to write to the Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 20420, claiming that the government had some program to give away buffalo to anyone who wrote and agreed to pay their buffalo's freight charge. As a tip, it was not a very practical one; the program had already been discontinued by the time the book was written. A true guide book would have dropped it right there. It was included in the book anyway, as a sort of advertisement for Hoffman and his methods. "So many people have written them recently demanding their Free Buffalo," he wrote, "that they called a press conference to publicly attack the Yippies for creating chaos in the government." Presumably, no matter how many letters the Department of the Interior received asking for free buffaloes, the government was never really in danger of falling into chaos. Telling it this way though, poses a minor bureaucratic situation as a major battle between the government and the Yippies, with the government backing down, defeated by its own rules, reduced to babbling and to publicly acknowledging the power of the Yippies' information sharing.

Hoffman goes on to tell his readers, "Don't take any buffalo s— from these petty bureaucrats, demand the real thing. Demand your Free Buffalo." He could not have picked a better symbol for his own book. The word "buffalo" was once a slang term for intimidation or deception. Currently, the most common association with the word is of the animal that once roamed the plains until government- sponsored massacres pushed them near extinction. Now it is the Yippies who are nearly extinct, and readers are still left to wonder just how much Abbie Hoffman was trying to buffalo them.

The book's relevance comes down to this: a little bit of a reminder of a dying breed, a little bit of a riddle about the mind of the man who wrote it, and a little bit of the rebellious attitude that we all suppress. It is up to each reader to decide if these add up to something they feel is worth reading, but one thing that seems pretty clear is that there is enough here to make the book worth it for some people, and there will be for a long time to come.

Critical Essay #2

Ozersky is a critic and historian. In this essay, Ozersky looks at Steal This Book as a product of the late 1960s and its author, Abbie Hoffman, as a romantic icon of the time.

Students coming to *Steal This Book* for the first time may find themselves a little perplexed. The current edition of the book begins with three separate introductions, each testifying to Abbie Hoffman's inspirational courage as a revolutionary. *Steal This Book* is said to be "his most widely read" and "his most notorious." In Hoffman's introduction, he speaks of *Steal This Book* as "a manual of survival in the prison that is Amerika." What follows is a breezy guide to shoplifting, freeloading, and milking the system, peppered with cartoons. There are sections on building bombs, guerrilla broadcasting, and street fighting, but these are short and not particularly useful. (Hoffman's advises would-be knife fighters to "work out with the jabbing method in front of a mirror and in a few days you'll get it down pretty well.")

More puzzling still is Hoffman's general tone. Despite his subversive rhetoric, Hoffman sounds like nothing so much as a boastful, mouthy teenager, the kid who wears an anarchist symbol on his denim jacket and bores everybody with his selfserving rhetoric. It's impossible to imagine anybody taking this person seriously as a record store cashier, let alone a revolutionary leader. And yet Hoffman's reputation has only grown since his death in 1989. *Steal This Movie*, a major Hollywood release, came out in 2000.

But understanding Abbie Hoffman, his book and the man himself is difficult without a solid understanding of the 1960s and his role in them. Despite the fact that he is associated with the baby boom (it was Hoffman who coined the phrase "Woodstock Nation") and figured so prominently in many of the signal events of the counterculture, Hoffman was not a baby boomer himself. Abbie Hoffman was born in 1936, which means that he became conscious of public life in the years immediately after World War II. Those years were ones marked by an unusual brew of anxiety, conformity, and a generalized feeling of moral superiority in America that rankled many. In fact, the conservatism of the Truman and Eisenhower years was highly exceptional, a result of having won the greatest war ever fought and the worst depression in American history simultaneously. Many adults felt that America had the high moral ground in the struggle against Soviet communism, and the moral imperatives of the 1960s, such as civil rights and women's liberation, were not yet on the horizon.

As a result, to many young people of Hoffman's generation, America seemed smug and oppressive, its citizens brainwashed by material goods and government propaganda. They dismissed all dissent as "pink" and were satisfied with women, minorities, and the poor kept low. Hoffman's generation was born too late to know the privations of the depression, so America's glee at things like row houses, new cars, and the security of suburbs and corporate jobs seemed merely greedy to them. And it so happened that when the great causes of the early 1960s came along, they were just coming into their early adulthood.

Some, like Tom Hayden of the University of Michigan, applied all the seriousness of cold war civics to creating a "new left," which would oppose the political status quo from a radical but serious-minded and deeply moralistic perspective. At the same time, an apolitical "counterculture" was being formed in places like San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. This movement could hardly have been less political. Although given over to sloganeering and a sometimes-justified paranoia about "the straight world," most hippies sought pleasure in their own lives and had little use for political debate and organization.

Abbie Hoffman was among the first to become well known for fusing both camps, and that is what *Steal This Book* is all about. Hoffman came to prominence in 1968, when he and several other antiwar activists came upon the idea of organizing an outrageous "festival of life" at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Calling themselves the Youth International Party or "Yippies," they proposed to substitute outrage, street theater, and "cultural revolution" for the tiresome programs offered by the New Left. Hoffman was the most visible of the provocateurs who clowned for the cameras in Lincoln Park, and when Mayor Richard Daley unleashed an army of policemen to attack the protesters, Hoffman was cast into the national spotlight.

It was a place that suited him well. As *Steal This Book* suggests, Hoffman had no real political program and little in the way even of political rhetoric. What he was good at was playing the gadfly, spouting incendiary rhetoric, and mugging for the camera. (He tried to seize the stage at Woodstock for a Yippie rant, but the crowd booed loudly and guitarist Pete Townshend of The Who knocked him off the stage by bashing his head with a guitar. The "Woodstock Nation" cheered loudly, many going so far as to call it Townshend's greatest solo.) Hoffman was not easily gotten rid of, however, and he became a major media star in those years. In 1969, Hoffman and several other Yippies, along with Black Panther leader Bobby Seale, were defendants in a much-publicized trial of the Chicago Seven. With Hoffman's newfound celebrity to emulate, many New Left activists took to the streets, doing whatever was necessary to get media exposure. "The whole world is watching" was their motto, and the spectacle so repelled most Americans that the New Left was extinguished as soon as the spectacle grew tiresome, which it soon did. Hoffman kept publishing books and his name remained one to conjure with, but he was a walking anachronism after the early 1970s and disappeared from public view for most of the decade.

Steal This Book was published in 1970, at the very acme of Hoffman's fame. *Steal This Book* isn't really about how to steal food, build a sterno bomb, or start a commune. It's about how to be Abbie Hoffman. Not the real Abbie Hoffman, of course, but the mythologized Abbie Hoffman, the clown prince of the New Left, the archetypal radical insurgent. Hoffman's entire public career consisted of the creation of this myth, and in fact *Steal This Book* was one of the crowning achievements in that career.

Notice that Hoffman seldom talks about himself in *Steal This Book*. And yet, on nearly every page, his presence is the primary message. Hoffman's other books are written with a similar strategy, but where they relied on political rhetoric and grand sociological themes ("We are the Woodstock Nation"), here Hoffman presents his would-be

emulators with an encyclopedia guide for outwitting "Amerika." Seen from without, this is just a faulty manual for petty criminals, written by an incompetent. But from within, *Steal This Book* is a celebration of the trickster myth, with Abbie Hoffman as the B'rer Rabbit / Bugs Bunny hero who constantly outwits those bigger than him. By making the techniques seem so easily heroic ("Communicating to masses of people . . . is very important. It drives the MAN berserk and gives hope to comrades in the struggle"), Hoffman invites his readers to identify with his own fantasy of rebellion. Thus, practicing with a knife in a mirror isn't just fantasizing; it actually trains you to become an effective knife fighter.

There is surely something laughable in the transparency of all this. But it doesn't take away from *Steal This Book's* value as the romantic literature of a distant time and place. As a manual for insurgents, *Steal This Book* isn't worth the paper it's written on; but as a document of a unique episode in American history, it can hardly be surpassed.

Critical Essay #3

Semansky is an instructor of literature and writes on literature and culture for various publications. In this essay, Semansky considers the idea of counterculture in Hoffman's book.

Abbie Hoffman's how-to guide for beating the system, *Steal This Book*, embodies many of the values of the 1960s counterculture, a counterculture that has survived into the twenty-first century, albeit greatly transformed. However, many of the actions that Hoffman advocates in the book, actions that have helped to define the counterculture itself, are no longer possible because of legal and cultural changes in the last thirty years. An exploration of some of these actions will give readers a sense of how much America has changed during this time.

An activist who protested Americans' selfishness and acquisitiveness, Hoffman sought to shape the counterculture movement while providing its sympathizers with the tools to survive. One of Hoffman's recommendations for how to survive in America was to hitchhike. By hitchhiking people could share rides and they did not contribute to polluting the country's air or to furthering America's dependence on foreign oil. Hitchhiking costs nothing and in the 1960s and early 1970s, was legal in most states. It also carried with it a certain allure linked to the image of the free spirit, someone not bogged down by the demands of work, family, and home ownership. During the 1950s, Beat writers like Jack Kerouac in novels such as *On the Road* helped to popularize hitchhiking with romantic descriptions of road life. During the 1960s and much of the 1970s, it was common to see hitchhikers along highways, thumb up and heading for their next adventure. In the twenty-first century, however, hitchhiking is highly regulated, if not illegal, in most states and on almost every interstate highway, and hitchhiker sightings are decreasing. In the last twenty-some years, the image of the hitchhiker has changed from that of a carefree hippie looking for a free ride to that of a deranged killer looking for his next victim. This change, in part, is a result of the media's demonization of hitchhiking and of the increasing fear many Americans have of strangers, a fear fed by popular culture's representation of hitchhikers in movies and on television as psychotic killers.

The change in attitude towards hitchhikers also reflects the public's suspicion of anyone they perceive as trying to obtain something for free. The image of the hippie as a benign and spaced-out freeloader was already well formed in the public imagination by the end of the 1970s. However, during the Reagan administration of the 1980s, the hippie became a joke, a symbol of national shame, product of a troubled era with impossible ideals based on the sharing, rather than the hoarding, of resources.

If hitchhiking has fallen out of practice because the political climate of the country has changed, then trying to "get one over" on corporate America has changed because of increasing corporate vigilance and technological change. Many of Hoffman's recommendations on how to extract free services such as telephone calls are now untenable. For example, spinning two pennies counterclockwise into the nickel slot of a

pay phone to mimic the action of two nickels does not work because local calls are no longer ten cents, and because the mechanism for pay phones has been digitized. Likewise, shoplifting, a practice to which Hoffman dedicates a number of pages, is now considerably more difficult due to the proliferation of surveillance cameras and store use of electronic data tags.

The American public's attitude towards corporations has also changed. In 2002, almost half of all Americans own stock either directly or through their pension funds. Cheating the telephone company or shoplifting from a major department store then is not simply stealing from the rich, but also stealing from oneself. America is more corporate now than it was in 1970, and more Americans, whether they like it or not, are part of the corporate fabric of the country. The link between large corporations and the average citizen has been made abundantly clear in the last two years, when millions of people saw their retirement funds collapse after the bubble in Internet stocks burst, and multi-billion dollar corporations such as World Com and Enron went bankrupt.

Many of Hoffman's recommendations on how to fight the government and corporations, though arguably more important now than ever before as corporations continue to expand, are also becoming increasingly untenable. Protesters can still print underground newspapers and start up low-powered pirate radio stations, as he recommends, but the advent of the Internet has made these strategies relatively insignificant. Anyone with a gripe and an Internet connection can now put up a Web site for less money than it would cost to print a broadsheet. The primary task that faces protesters trying to get their word out via the world wide web is marketing. With literally billions of websites online and tens of thousands of new ones being created each day, attracting the attention of already message-saturated readers is a formidable task.

The advice that does remain relevant today is Hoffman's description of how to plan and stage a street demonstration. His suggestions on how to secure permits and how to dress for a demonstration and prepare for possible responses from authorities are still useful, and many of them were implemented during demonstrations in Seattle against the policies of the World Trade Organization in 1999. However, Hoffman's recommendations for using flash guns, tear gas, mace, and Molotov cocktails, while foolhardy in 1970, are almost suicidal today, as law enforcement officials are ready to pounce on the perpetrators of any act of public violence in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Indeed, September 11 has radically changed the shape of America's counterculture, which is literally built on the freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment. Arguing that the United States is at war with terrorists, the current administration is developing a system, the Total Information Awareness (TIA) program, that would collect data from private companies and public agencies on every living American, making it easier for the government to profile and track the actions of its citizens, and it claims to identify foreign terrorists. Similarly, the Federal Bureau of Investigation compiled a massive file on Hoffman during his life, tracking his activities as an environmental activist and free speech advocate. This file, most of which has been

released under the Freedom of Information Act, is available on the World Wide Web, as is the complete text of Hoffman's book.

Although much of the information in *Steal This Book* is outdated, its spirit of protest against the status quo remains strong; so strong in fact, that most libraries do not carry copies of the book (selling 250,000 copies in its first six months), even though it was a bestseller when it was first published and remains a classic of counterculture literature. Many of the bookstores that do carry it keep the book locked behind a glass case, so that enterprising "shoppers" do not heed the title's command. The book's many tips on how to survive a culture that is more focused on individual rather than community gain were sent in to Hoffman after the publication of his book *Woodstock Nation*. *Steal This Book* was written while he was in Cook County Jail awaiting charges stemming from his protests at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. As such, *Steal This Book* is as much an encyclopedia as it is a how-to book, and Hoffman's voice is the voice of a generation determined to change business as usual.

Adaptations

The 2000 motion picture *Steal This Movie* is not an adaptation of this book, as is commonly assumed; actually it is a biography of Hoffman. It was directed by Robert Greenwald and stars Vincent D'Onofrio, Janeane Garofalo, and Jeanne Tripplehorn. It is available from Trimark Home Video.

Topics for Further Study

Interview people at your school and in your community about tips that can be used to gain free goods and services legally and compile a list.

Find a Web site run by organizers of political demonstrations, and see if the tips they give for self-protection are different than the ones Hoffman gave in the 1970s. Research and explain how modern demonstrations are different than those in the 1960s and 1970s.

Prepare a tape of an hour-long broadcast your class would make if you started your own underground radio station.

Hold a mock trial for someone arrested using the tips for stealing suggested in this book. Have the prosecution make the case for social order and the defense make the case, as Hoffman puts it in the book's introduction, that "corporate feudalism [is] the only robbery worthy of being called 'crime,' for it is committed against the people as a whole."

Compare and Contrast

1971: Angered at the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, many American citizens feel the need to resist the prevailing social order, sometimes violently.

Today: Frightened by the prospect of terrorist attacks, many citizens look to the American government for protection.

1971: One of the longest periods of economic growth in the country's history makes it possible for young people to take financial security for granted, turning their backs on the morally unsatisfying pursuit of money.

Today: The unstable economy makes money harder to come by, which in turn makes it harder to survive off sharing or handouts.

1971: *Steal This Book* takes a position that large, faceless corporations are inhumane and deserve to be robbed.

Today: Advances in transportation and telecommunication have made corporations multinational and therefore even more impersonal. Nineteensixties- like protests are aimed against the G- 20 Conference and the World Trade Organization, groups that coordinate world-dominating corporations.

1971: Abbie Hoffman writes a guidebook so that readers who are not part of the hippie movement but are interested in participating, can benefit from the informal tips usually passed from one person to another by word of mouth.

Today: Informal tips like these can generally be found on the Internet.

1971: There are two major world superpowers: America, with a capitalist economy that supports private ownership, and the Soviet Union, with a communist economy that is based on government ownership.

Today: Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, the American form of capitalism is the main economic influence in the world.

What Do I Read Next?

The Autobiography of Abbie Hoffman was originally published in 1980 under the title *Soon to Be a Major Motion Picture*. It captures the story of his public and private life from his birth through the time he lived as an outlaw. The current edition, published in 2000 by Four Walls Eight Windows, has new pictures that were not in the original publication.

In *Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel* (1992), Marty Jeter, who knew him from covering Yippie events for an underground newspaper, tells the story of Hoffman's life. Jeter's work is sympathetic and thorough with frequent references to Hoffman's own writings.

The Whole Earth Catalog, edited by Stewart Brand and Peter Warshall, did what Hoffman attempted to do, but in a nonviolent and anticonfrontational way: it offered the wisdom of the alternative lifestyle to readers who wished to participate. First published in 1968, it has been frequently updated, including *The Millennium Whole Earth Catalog*, published by HarperCollins in 1995.

While Hoffman was living underground to avoid arrest for his 1973 cocaine charge, he exchanged letters with his wife Anita. They published their correspondences in 1976 as *To America with Love: Letters from the Underground*. Covered in the book are such matters as Hoffman's fear of being killed by the government, his work on his autobiography, and his growing love for another woman, Joanna Lawrenson.

Tom Hayden, a codefendant with Hoffman in the infamous Chicago Seven trial, went on to become a state senator in California. He gave his version of the 1960s in his book *Reunion* (1989), published by Crowell-Collier Press.

Edward H. Romney is a political conservative who has been financially independent since 1969. His political views are the opposite of Hoffman's, but the advice he gives in *Living Well on Practically Nothing* is similar to that in *Steal This Book*. A revised version of Romney's book was published in 2001 by Paladin Press.

Further Study

Becker, Theodore L., and Anthony L. Donaldson, *Live This Book: Abbie Hoffman's Philosophy for a Free and Green America*, The Noble Press, Inc., 1991.

This is one of the few sources that seriously considers the philosophical and spiritual bases for Hoffman's brand of media manipulation. Written after his death, the book takes into account his whole life, including his post-sixties political organizing under an assumed name.

Farber, David, *Chicago '68*, University of Chicago Press, 1995.

The events in Chicago of 1968 were important in American history and in understanding the full significance of Abbie Hoffman's place in it. This book is a scholarly explanation of the dynamic forces involved, including a detailed explanation of Hoffman's Yippie philosophy.

Isserman, Maurice, and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

The authors take a balanced, scholarly look at the political turmoil of the decade, careful to avoid common mistakes of romanticizing the hippie movement or unfairly blaming it for society's ills.

Sloman, Larry, *Steal This Dream: Abbie Hoffman and the Counterculture Revolution in America*, Doubleday, 1998.

This oral history compiles hundreds of interviews from people who knew Hoffman and presents their impressions of him in their own words.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Nonfiction Classics for Students (NCfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □ For Students □ Literature line, NCfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NCfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NCfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NCfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NCfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NCfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Nonfiction Classics for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Nonfiction Classics for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Nonfiction Classics for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NCfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Nonfiction Classics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NCfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

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When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NCfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Nonfiction Classics for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NCfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Nonfiction Classics for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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