

[DOWNLOAD] Meeting the Tree of Life: A Teacher's Path

## Meeting the Tree of Life: A Teacher's Path

*John Tallmadge*

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**John Tallmadge : Meeting the Tree of Life: A Teacher's Path** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Meeting the Tree of Life: A Teacher's Path:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A great book for teachers and students alike...By VACultureJunkieI read this book for the first time when I was in my last semester of graduate work at Kansas State University. I was about to graduate with an M.A. in English that I had no idea how I was going to use. Tallmadge's autobiographical tale of his struggles with nature, self, career, and others encapsulates perfectly the agonizing dilemma that strikes any teacher with the slightest amount of idealism still in their blood. He wants to be true to himself, to, as Joseph Campbell put it, "follow [his] bliss." But he keeps getting derailed: first by the army, and then by a succession of teaching jobs that seem intent on crushing the budding idealism out of his teaching methodology. While the book is at times a bit overly idealistic and starry-eyed, you can't help but admire the enthusiasm and passion with which Tallmadge tries to instill his passion for nature in his students. He's the kind of teacher that any lover of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, or modern writers like Terry Tempest Williams, Leslie Marmon Silko, or the like would immediately take to. He wants his students to understand their connection, not only with the land, but with each other, as a community of learners as well as a community of human beings. And then, at the end, when everything seems to fall apart, he finds solace in the simplest of items: a jack pine cone. I'd say more about that, but I don't want to ruin the moment of revelation that comes at the end. Sufficed to say that "Meeting the Tree of Life" will leave you with a greater appreciation as well as understanding of the complex relationships that exist within nature as well as within the human soul. Like this review

the book can be a little overly flowery at times, but the understanding that comes with reading this book makes those moments of saccharine sweetness almost pleasant. Give this book a try and I'm pretty sure you won't be disappointed.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Wilderness adventure in the nature writing traditionBy A CustomerOn-Line Review by Leo Goldman, Natural Resources Defense Council.: In one way, this book is in the tradition of the author's admired nature writers -- such folk as Emerson, Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold. But the framework is an autobiography, beginning with brief mention of his childhood in suburbs, which he describes almost as if they were crowded cities, and from which he began to escape at age 15 to backpacking and climbing. A college student during the Vietnam War, he later sought in wilderness "authenticity" and "a model for just and sustainable human societies" -- which he did not see in the world he and his friends had grown up in. He begins the detailed story with a difficult High Sierra climb -- between his military service (having volunteered for a program of Russian studies and intelligence work in order to avoid Vietnam itself) and graduate school. As he seeks for understanding of his motivations and feelings, he speaks first of challenge, thrill, danger, and athletic pleasure, but eventually realizes that he has become a naturalist, appreciating nature in all its complexity, not just the physical challenges and dramatic views. We follow his wilderness explorations, first in the mountains of the southwest during his first three years as a professor in Utah, then his disappointment in leaving the mountains for his next job, in Minnesota. There, however, he develops an appreciation of the wilderness of the flat country, mostly in canoe trips. Certainly an offbeat English professor, he had his students read nature writing, then accompany him on difficult treks to mountains and lakes, and return to write about their experiences. This approach was not appreciated by his colleagues, who apparently preferred traditional methods of teaching literature and writing. He ends this volume with the shock of being denied tenure -- but finds new awareness in the metaphor of a pine cone that releases its new life only in fire.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. It's a Wonderful Life!By capt\_tomTallmadge uses the events of his own life to illustrate mankind's connection to the environment and the necessity of wilderness. Writing in the spirit of his admired predecessors, Thoreau, John Muir, Edward Abbey, and Aldo Leopold; Tallmadge attempts to find his own unique voice in the enlightenment of his experience. At times he may get a little too "intimate with the rock", but he leaves the reader an optimistic feeling of the joy of discovery and knowledge.

Book by Tallmadge, John

From BooklistTallmadge was a child of the late sixties with a Yale doctorate in comparative literature under his arm and an empathy for nature in his soul. As a young idealist, he sought the authenticity, power, and possibility of the wilderness by following the intellectual and physical trails blazed by Henry Thoreau and John Muir. His memoir is an attempt to discover another, more private, inner landscape. The result is a graceful, erudite compendium of natural history, travel, literary interpretation, and personal adventure as Tallmadge recounts the years after he left the army at age 26, until he became a dedicated English professor at age 40. In an imagistic style reminiscent of Annie Dillard, he takes us along on his hikes to the High Sierra, Katahdin, and the Deeps and Canyonlands where, like some knight-errant, he proves himself over and over. If his teaching tenure is denied, Tallmadge realizes he has learned nature's lessons: just as water overcomes through nonresistance and the jack pine needs fire to release its seeds, man endures through spirit and faith. Patricia Hassler English professor John Tallmadge combines the study of nature writers such as Thoreau, John Muir, Edward Abbey, and Aldo Leopold with wilderness trips (many with his students) to experience the natural beauty and ruggedness that inspired the philosophy, social and political theories, and aesthetics of the writers under consideration. Tallmadge describes the trips precisely with a naturalist's eye and honestly discusses the hardships of the trail. He ties the trips to nature writing in a thoughtful and poetic manner as he covers various terrains. He includes mountain settings in the Sierras on the John Muir trail, Mount Katahdin in Maine, and the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming; the desert surrounding Arches National Park and the Great Basin in Utah; and the prairies of Minnesota and Ohio. Our relationship to the land shapes our thoughts and thereby our lives, Tallmadge argues. Mountains are dramatic as they "stood forth in gigantic characters, and marks of violence seemed to be everywhere. It was hard to escape a sense of tragedy." The struggle of desert plants to survive "might lie in a willingness to grow from within, to turn their creativity upon themselves instead of attacking their environment, as human beings do." The generative power and rootedness of the prairie might be viewed as a contrast to the upheavals of the mountains as the "strength and richness that grew over time with the humble practice of staying in one place." Meeting the Tree of Life appeals to teachers, students, and nature enthusiasts. Its descriptions enable readers to relive the experience of places they have visited and immerse them in unfamiliar terrain. It serves as an inviting introduction to nature writing and includes a helpful bibliography. -- From Independent Publisher