

*How To Shit In The Woods: An environmentally sound approach to a lost art*

Shit: unique in simultaneously being a bodily waste-product and a well-used saying. Both of these uses are discussed in detail in Kathleen Meyer's unique book on all things crappy.

We Brits are well-known for our toilet humour, but, according to Meyer, we by no means have a monopoly on it; her book is an American take on an age-old source of humour for us all. It begins by reaching back to the infancy of the English language so as to obtain the most accurate possible definition of the word itself - a good place to start a book - before the writer moves on to tell the story of Mr Crapper, inventor of the flushing toilet. Whilst this is very interesting, the reader may at this stage begin to wonder what the point of all this is. Whatever the reasons, it does neatly segway into the main body of the book and poses the million dollar question: how does one actually 'go' without a flushing toilet to hand?

This, we are told, is actually far harder than might be suspected. Unlike our forebears of yesteryear, the modern forest-dweller has to take into account environmental concerns; water sources must not be contaminated, nor must the offending material be left to rot or even buried without prior consideration, the consequences of which could be dire. With the problem as she sees it now laid out for the reader, the author then moves on to present the solution(s) in the guise of devices built to either contain or neutralise that pesky poo. Importantly, though, the book is not just an endless list of products; the wacky devices are interspersed with genuinely funny anecdotes about people who have tried to 'go' in the wilderness with varying degrees of success.

In the end, then, this book is a little paradoxical. Whilst it certainly 'does what it says on the tin', its initial humour and genuinely interesting facts soon give way to what must be described as a cross between an academic paper and a shopping list. Whilst I personally found this style a little awkward to get along with - I put this down to cultural differences - ultimately the text *is* well researched, written and compiled. So, if you are interested in environmental issues and like a laugh with you academia, *How To Shit In The Woods* could well be for you.

6 sausages out of 10

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