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To the harsh domain of Rockbound -- governed by the sternly righteous and rapacious Uriah Jung -- comes the youthful David Jung to claim his small share of the island. Filled with dreamy optimism and a love for the unspoken promises of the night sky, David tries to find his way in a narrow, unforgiving, and controlled world. His conflicts are both internal and external, locking him in an unceasing struggle for survival; sometimes the sea is his enemy, sometimes his own rude behavior, sometimes his best friend Gershom Born, sometimes his secret love for the island teacher Mary Dauphiny; but always, inevitably, his Jung relatives and their manifold ambitions for money and power.

The balance of life on Rockbound is precarious and thus fiercely guarded by all who inhabit its lonely domain, but just as a sudden change in the direction of the wind can lead to certain peril at sea, so too can the sudden change in the direction of a man's heart lead to a danger altogether unknown.

Enormously evocative of the power, terror, and dramatic beauty of the Atlantic sea, and unrelenting in its portrait of back-breaking labour, cunning bitterness, and family strife, Rockbound is a story of many passions-love, pride, greed, and yearning -- all formed and buffeted on a small island by an unyielding wind and the rocky landscape of the human spirit.

Roockbound won Canada Reads in 2005.

Rockbound Details

Date : Published May 1st 1989 by University of Toronto Press (first published January 1st 1928)

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Author : Frank Parker Day

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From Reader Review Rockbound for online ebook

Christina says

I am not sure that I would recommend this book, but I enjoyed reading it while in Nova Scotia as a kind of study of place. Written in 1928, the language and stereotypes are jolting. There is so much good stuff out there to read without being reminded of how far we have come.

Chantal Saville says

Part of what is wonderful about reading a book is the escapism. You can immerse yourself in the characters and the places of another world. Frank Day Parker's book, *Rockbound*, provides just such an escape. Selected as one of the CBC "Canada Reads" texts for 2005, it has experienced a re-birth. This novel, originally published in 1928, has been brought back and thank goodness that it has.

It is the story of David, an out port fisherman who has gone to Rockbound to claim his share of the family lands from his great-uncle Uriah. As in most 'tales from the sea', Uriah's character is as hard and stubborn as the rock that he stands on. David must fight for his place in this fishing family. You feel, not just read about, the hardships and the difficulties of fishing off the coast of Nova Scotia. You experience the darkness of families and how they can deceive each other and work against one another. Ultimately though, it could have been just another tale of family struggles, set in the fog and cold of a small fishing out port.

What makes this book extraordinary is the language. Parker uses old, regional dialect in all of the dialogue. It provides a level of 'local colour' that could not otherwise have been revealed. You get a strong sense of the world that David, Uriah and the others lived in, far away from others, on a rugged landscape.

You can hear the place that they're in, as you read. The language of the dialogue is as strong as the visuals of fog rolling in, of piles of herring being split and packed in salt, of creaking boats with a little light in the middle of a vast expanse of ocean. If Parker had written the same line in plain English, it would not have had the flavour that this dialogue does. Altogether, it is a beautifully written book that will let you escape to another time and another world

Donna says

My best read so far this year. Day's descriptions drew me right into the story, and every page was a gem, right from beginning to end. Clear and poignant evocation of setting, characters, community, tradition.. Voted as the book all of Canada should read in 2005 by CBC Canada Reads program. I'm not sure that I would agree with that lofty opinion, but loved it all the same. Excellent read. Highly recommended.

QUOTE: "Life was like the sea that began the destruction of an island as soon as it had made it." [p. 134]

Nathaniel Smith says

This was a perfect book to discover on the shelf of my family's place in Maine. Written in 1928, the language is smooth and masterful, and the story is both classic and original at the same time. The tragedies so well known to fishing communities like the fictional Rockbound of Nova Scotia are not glossed over in this book, but the author also acknowledges the culture and great spirit that those communities had as well. This was a thrilling sea yarn, educational treatise on fishing methods, and a tribute to the strong men and women of the southern Nova Scotia coast.

Paula Dembeck says

David Jung, an 18 year old abysmally poor orphan, lands on Rockbound, an isolated island in the Atlantic surrounded by fog, storms and often brutal winter weather. He has nothing but the worn and tattered clothes on his back and a driving determination to make something of himself and have a better life. Uriah Jung, his great Uncle, is the acknowledged king of this small island, but David who has inherited one tenth of it from his dead mother, has come to claim his inheritance. This is the story of how David becomes a man and makes his way in life, despite the hardship that Uriah imposes on him.

Thus begins the story of two families, the Jungs and the Krauses living together on Rockbound in close quarters and fighting one another every step of the way.

A wonderful book, once printed in the late 20s and reissued in 1973. It is now considered a classic of maritime fiction, especially lauded for its detail and authenticity in its descriptions of life on the sea.

Much of the dialogue appears in the "Lunenburg Dutch" spoken along the South Shore of Nova Scotia. These distinctive and rugged speech patterns increase the authenticity of the story, but initially may cause the reader pause. Once you get over that initial difficulty however, the dialogue flows more easily.

A wonderful classic tale.

A 2005 Canada Reads winner.

Al says

Beautifully written period piece, about life on an island in Maritime Canada. Written in 1928, Day does a great job of painting the life through story of a remote fishing community, describing the hard life they lived in a natural style that makes this story easy to read, despite the colloquial dialogue of the time which once you get into its rhythm becomes easy and enjoyable to follow. Best read while listening to The Waterboy's Fisherman's Blues on repeat and enjoying a rum or two at the same time.

Anne says

This book has a fairy tale quality and includes frequent references to both *The Tempest* and *The Canterbury Tales*. It's essentially a fable set in the Maritimes. While it flirts with Realism in its depictions of fishing and light house keeping, it obviously Romanticizes quite a bit. As a Maritimer, better Romanticized than ignored.

Katie Billingham says

A little bit of Nova Scotia.

Heidi Maxwell says

What a wonderful story from Nova Scotia. You cheer for David all through the book. The characters are real and poignant. I highly recommend this book.

Shirley Schwartz says

I love CanLit. It's one of my favourite genres, and I am so proud of our numerous very talented authors in this country. This book is a classic and a fitting winner of the Canada Reads award. The book was written in 1928 by Frank Parker Day, who was born in Nova Scotia. He was schooled in Oxford and in Berlin and came back to North America at the beginning of the Great War. He taught in the States for a while, but came back to Cape Breton to live out the rest of his life. All of Day's experiences with Canadians and the extremely brutal life of Canadian fishermen are honestly and empathically portrayed in this dark and savage novel. Yet even in the darkness and within the unrelenting work of the people who live on Rockbound island, we see human warmth, compassion and even love. The colloquialisms and the speech patterns from this era, which is pre-WWI, are true to form. They do make for some difficulty following conversations between characters, but I found if I took the time, I could easily figure them out. For example sentences like "Nair a one o' de Rockbound Jungs could do dat." are peppered throughout the book. This speech pattern makes the story more realistic than normal sentences and words would. Life on Rockbound is hard. It's a small island in the Atlantic which is isolated for many months of the year either due to bad storms or winter ice. The people on Rockbound are farmers and fishermen and they all pitch in and work very hard in order to keep food on the table and the wolf from the door. Rockbound breeds a strong, resilient people who will meet any challenge head on. The story and the people of Rockbound will remain with me for a long time. This is a well-deserved winner of the Canada Reads prize. I have always loved stories of the sea and of sea tragedies. The true people of the sea are brave, resourceful and very philosophic about life and death. That comes through very strongly in this book.

Spike Sprague says

It was certainly an entertaining read. It took a couple chapters for me to get into it though, almost put it down for good after Chapter one. The dialogue wasn't the easiest to read, and was distracting. Found it

difficult to immerse myself into the situations and dialogue. I didn't care for any of the characters at first, and it wasn't until a third of the way through that I found they became interesting and wanted to follow their story.

I enjoyed the book, it spoke to me as a Maritimer, but it won't be at the top of my recommendations list.

Zen says

I thoroughly enjoyed *Rockbound*-4.5 stars. It was written in 1928 but has a timeless quality as it explores the harsh lives of fishermen on the small fictional island of Rockbound, Nova Scotia. A unique aspect of this book is Day's use of an old east-coast dialect, which makes the dialogue very vivid. For example David says: "I'se a man what stands up fur my rights an' tears away what I kin git from people like ye in de world." Once you get used to reading this, you can really hear the voices of the characters and it seems so realistic.

There are a lot of fishing and boating references, and I couldn't understand them all but that really doesn't take away from the story. There is hard work, romance, a ship wreck, ghost stories and a lighthouse that really has a life of its own. It's an old-fashioned rip-rollicking tale. Highly recommended if you want a glimpse of east-coast life in the past.

Canada Reads winner 2005

Jennifer says

originally published in 1928, 'rockbound' never made much of a splash with book sales, but the novel crops up in CanLit courses across the country. in 2005, the novel was included in Canada Reads - and ended up winning. this was cool because it brought a whole new audience to the book!

set on an island off nova scotia's south shore, the story well depicts the hardships of rural and fishing life, and the challenges of a community almost completely connected as family. the settings are evocative and the characters are interesting. this book is an important part of the canadian canon, and representative of one sort of an Atlantic way of life. but (sorry!), i just didn't find much emotion in the story (for all of the very emotional situations that occurred). it felt a bit simplistic at times, and was too tidy at the end.

i am glad i finally had a chance to read this book. i wish i liked it a lot more than i did (to clarify: i liked it. i didn't love it).

Kereesa says

Rockbound is the story of David, a fisherman in Canada's Nova Scotia, and his journey in becoming one of the people and fishers of Rockbound, a small island off the coast split by competing families who's hierarchies, hatreds, and actions lie at the heart of the people of Rockbound. Love, friendship, and tragedy occur in Parker Day's romantic view of the original Nova Scotian island Ironbound as the fictional character David faces his Goliath, and makes a place for himself on the cold, unforgiving rocks of the island.

Rockbound was another novel we were required to read in my seminar class, and sadly wasn't a favorite of mine nor the majority of the class's. (At least as far as I remember) In many ways, the novel is almost insulting to Canadians, especially from the Nova Scotia area, because of its romanticism about the fishing industry that is and isn't Nova Scotia. While I'm not going to go into a huge discussion about that, I just wanted to point it out in the context of a Maritime perspective on the piece, and how it fits into the accepted or as my seminar prof put it 'centralist' view of the Maritime provinces.

So the novel as a whole is a very slow build-up of characters, people, and the sense of place Day portrays. The story is very everyday as it mostly centers on David interactions with the sea and the fishermen he works with as well as his friendship with Gershome, the lighthouse caretaker. And, I'm not going to lie to you my lovely goodreads friends, I think I fell asleep like fifteen times while reading it. When actual conflict emerges, through the schoolteacher (and obviously educated) Mary's arrival and later love triangle? rectangle?, it's near the end of the novel, and doesn't really make up for the drawn out moments of folksy stories, ideas, and fishing.

I have to give props to Day for actually fleshing out a tragedy worthy of Shakespeare in those last few chapters that was, sadly, my favorite part of *Rockbound*, but on the whole the novel is slow, tedious, and so full of fishing and sailing technicalities it bored me to death.

Thematically, *Rockbound* is sort of biblical in its depiction of temptation, the devil, and the whole David and Goliath idea that Day clearly establishes throughout the novel. It also contemplates both patriarchal and matriarchal societies through the two feuding families, and even the nature of (possibly barbaric) blood feuds. It also considers the role of women, which was much more interesting, and how marriageable Mary and the prostitute Fanny were seen in different ways in relation to the men that pursued them.

All in all, *Rockbound*, much like many of the novels we've read in this class, was thematically and in relation to lit theory a wonder, but otherwise I wouldn't have gone out of my way to read it. Thankfully it wasn't crazily depressing. 2/5

Krista says

“An’ what might ye be wantin?” said the old man, the king of Rockbound.

“I wants fur to be yur sharesman,” answered David.

“Us works here on Rockbound.”

“I knows how to work.”

“Knows how to work an’ brung up on de Outposts!” jeered Uriah. “Us has half a day’s work done ’fore de Outposters rub sleep out o’ dere eyes, ain’t it!”

“I knows how to work,” repeated the boy stubbornly.

“Where’s yur gear an’ clothes at?”

“I’ve got all my gear an’ clothes on me,” said David, grinning down at his buttonless shirt, ragged trousers, and bare, horny feet “but I owns yon dory: I salvaged her from de sea an’ beat de man what tried to steal her from me.”

Uriah’s eyes showed a glint of interest.

Despite being published in 1928, I found *Rockbound* to be a highly interesting read, not as fusty and old-fashioned as classics can sometimes be. In it, the orphan David – determined to claim his rightful 1/10th share of the mile-long island of Rockbound, off the South Shore of Nova Scotia – washes up, keen to prove his worth. Over the next 300 pages and 20 or so years, the boy grows to manhood, ever straining under the island's blood feuds and the constant hectoring of his greedy Great Uncle Uriah; the self-proclaimed king of the realm.

Onto this framework, author Frank Parker Day grafts vivid descriptions of the land and sea; the back-breaking work of fishing and the cleaning of the catch; and the daily routines of the men and women who would choose this life. The most interesting scenes (for me, at least) were when characters would share the local folklore: describing famous haunts; the shenanigans of Johnny Publicover, the local ghost catcher; and even a conversation with the devil himself.

Well, you'se heard how nigh de Sanford ghost was to ruinin' Sanford. He had all de women an' children skeert, an' de men, too, an' dey was dat skeert, dey was goin' to give up dere fish stands an' move to oder parts o' de main or maybe some o' de islands. Why, dat ghost use' to roll beach rocks down de front hallway when de men folks was away, an' naught but women and children huddled roun' de kitchen stove, and snatch gals away from dere fellers on dark roads, an' he were dat audacious he use to whang on de back o' de church at evening meetin'. One night he gits dat bold, he reach in t'rough de back winder wid a brown skinny arm an' put a glass o' rum on de side o' de pulpit when de minister was a-preachin' a sermon on temperance. Warn't dat audacious?

Parker Day also included a fictionalised account of a contemporaneous shipwreck, lost at sea in a sudden hurricane:

The vessel, deep-laden, was travelling at the rate of twenty knots, and a tooth of black bottom rock whipped bottom and keelson from her as cleanly as a boy with a sharp jackknife slits a shaving from a pine stick. Two thousand quintals of split fish and the unwetted salt dropped down upon the yellow sands; out came the spars with a rending crash, and deck and upper hull turned over. Within ten seconds of her striking, every man of the crew was in the sea. Away they went, young Martin still lashed to a bit of bulwark among them, poor scraps of humanity, weighed down with soaked clothing and long boots; a flash of yellow oilskins, hoarse cries that made no sound in the fierce tumult, and they were gone. Some swam a stroke or two, some clung for an instant to trailing rigging or broken dory, but few clung long in that mad breaking sea.

Winner of Canada Reads for 2005, with *Rockbound* Parker Day has memorialised a long gone time and place and I completely enjoyed my time revisiting that world. I note quite a few reviewers say that they couldn't get past the idiosyncratic dialogue and that's why I include samplings of it here; surely that's not incomprehensible to all? I enjoyed every bit of it.
