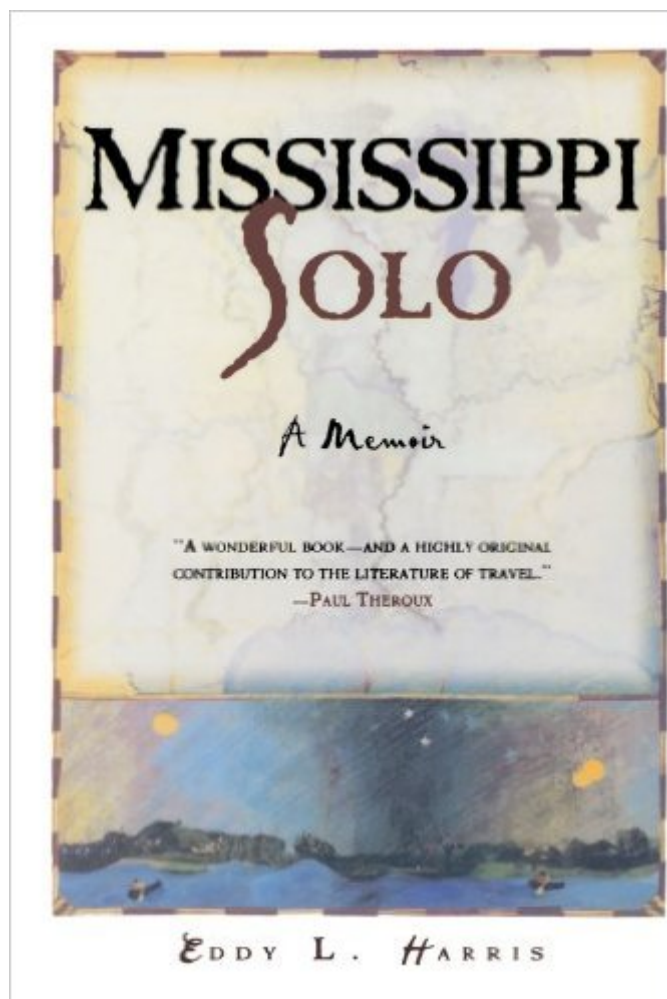


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# Mississippi Solo: A River Quest



## Synopsis

Since the publication of his first book, *Mississippi Solo*, Eddy L. Harris has been praised for his travel writing. In this exciting reissue of his classic travelogue, readers will come to treasure the rich insightful prose that is as textured as the Mississippi River itself. They will be taken by the hand by an adventurer whose lifelong dream is to canoe the length of this mighty river, from Minnesota to New Orleans. The trip's dangers were legion for a Black man traveling alone, paddling from "where there ain't no black folks to where they still don't like us much." Barge waives loom large, wild dogs roam the wooded shores, and, in the Arkansas dusk, two shotgun-toting bigots nearly bring the author's dream to a bloody end. Sustaining him through the hard weeks of paddling were the hundreds of people who reached out to share a small piece of his challenge. *Mississippi Solo* is a big, rollicking, brilliant book, a wonderful piece of American adventure, and an unforgettable story of a man testing his own limits.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I bought a copy of this book after my own canoe trip down the Mississippi. It was fascinating to compare the experiences of Mr. Harris to my own. The writing is perceptive, insightful, and entertaining. His observations of the people he met along the river, and himself, come across as very honest. He doesn't portray himself as a hero or an expert, but as the person he really is. His dedication to completing the journey is tenuous, but his appreciation for the lasting value of the experience is sincere. His perceptions on racial issues were objective and refreshing. Although he had preconceived notions on what he might encounter, (a black man in Nordic northern Minnesota

and later in the Deep South) he judged people based on how they treated him, and the vast majority of people treated him with kindness and respect. His descriptions of the river, towns, weather and scenery are also enjoyable, and the hardships and joys are described with equal eloquence. I was impressed how such a greenhorn of an outdoorsman would have the boldness to tackle such an adventure. My only disappointment with the book is when he skipped some parts of the river. It was his journey to make, however, and he is honest about any shortcuts he took. In short, this is a great book. It is worth reading to experience the journey vicariously and for the writing itself. You won't be disappointed.

I found this book at a used bookstore while looking for travel books to read on vacation. What a great book! I'm fascinated by the water and enjoyed the description of his trip down the Mississippi river, but I enjoyed even more seeing how a person who wasn't an outdoorsman or even an experienced boater took on this adventure. His experience with people along the way made me feel at the end that I would enjoy sharing a campfire with him and most of the people he met. Except for the rednecks with guns that is.

After hearing of Mr. Harris' book on NPR, I thought a travel book down the Mississippi would be fun to read. Mississippi Solo was an enjoyable slice in time and space of a voyage through the heartland of America. Like the song "Proud Mary," Mr. Harris finds that "people on the river are happy to give." His journey lets the reader enjoy the river experience much like Steinbeck shares his adventure in his camper. Mississippi Solo is an enjoyable book for any river rat or river rat want-to-be.

While this book does not cover all of the obstacles of the Mississippi River itself, it does give the reader a fairly good idea of the different types of people along the river. Most will try to help you in some way with your adventure even though there are those occasional few who might wish to do you some harm. Overall, I found this book to be very well written and hard to put down.

I read this after his 2nd book that traveled through Africa. It's allegorical structure and content is remarkable. He borrowed nearly everything and took a chance navigating the "mighty Mississippi". He traveled the entire length encountering all aspects of Americana. From the poor shanties to large cities. From people living near the river to those working on it and those living on it. He encountered nature, people, life, and God on his trip. The latter was evident one Sunday when he'd lost track of

the days. His description rivaled meeting God in person. His described joy at having discovered God's announcement to him was inspirational. By the time he reached New Orleans and poured out his brandy to the river, my arms ached from paddling all the way with him. He writes with such an abundance of love, optimism, sadness, anger, but never hatred. Who needs fiction with Eddy Harris writing about his travels so clearly and so beautifully.

My husband and I are preparing for a trip on the Mississippi River and this was one of the recommended books. I was enchanted -- and not only by the details of Harris' canoe trip. He invites the reader into wonderful moments of self-reflection and while doing so softens the blow of the interior truth the reader will find. I will read this one again.

Eddy Harris' Mississippi Solo is a delight to read. Clocking in at almost exactly 250 pages, the memoir chronicles the author's journey down the Mississippi River alone in a canoe, and the experiences he has with everything he encounters there. I'm not a big fan of what I'd call "Journey" novels. I didn't enjoy *On The Road* too much, and I expected this to be \*that\* type of memoir. I was pleasantly surprised to discover this a smooth-flowing, meandering-but-focused memoir. Harris has a very peculiar way of being able to take a clean slice of life he has experienced and transfer it to the page. When he meets the random people he does on the river, the reader is given quick, insightful information about them. And the overall effect is something identical to what Harris himself faced while on the river. The book dragged in places, but the writing was tight that it pulled the reader through without too much dismay. I read this for an "African American Nature Writing" class, so I was focusing on it and examining passages in depth. Harris stands up taller than his contemporaries, and his prose has some serious muscles behind it. I wouldn't mind reading more from this author in the future.

Recently found this author and glad I did. I enjoyed his book about Harlem much more than I did this one but his writing is still vivid and tight. He is introspective, deep yet easy to read, an American treasure. Why haven't I heard of him before? Highly recommended author.

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