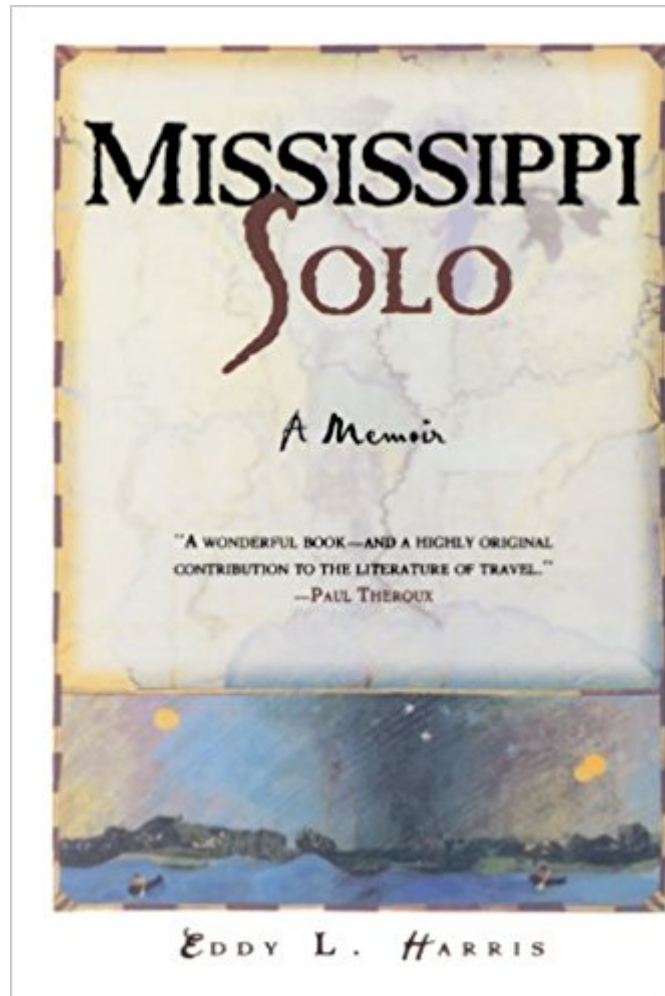




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Mississippi Solo: A River Quest



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

At 30 years old, Eddy Harris leaves his home in St. Louis and sets off into the chilly autumn for Lake Itasca. "I decided to canoe down the Mississippi River and to find out what I was made of," he writes. And *Mississippi Solo* is his stunning testament. Harris, who has authored *Native Stranger*, *South of Haunted Dreams*, and *Still Life in Harlem*, has been widely acclaimed since the first release of *Mississippi Solo* in 1988. It is greatly pleasing to see this important and stimulating first work revived. As the Mississippi grows from its tiny source to a wide and powerful flow, Harris gains confidence as a canoeist, faith in his endeavor, and an understanding of his varying identity as an

African American traveling alone from north to south in the United States. His exact and brilliantly revealing prose shows us how each bend in this mighty river turns itself within the paddler, how person and river are entwined--and who is in charge. With an astute ear for irony, philosophy, and wisdom, as well as truths about the river, Harris takes the reader through locks and lakes on the northern Mississippi to the wild and swift and meandering river south of St. Louis. Songs of joy, troughs of loneliness, terrific storms, birdsong, paranoia, friendly captains, wild dogs, and ghosts of slaves fill his pages. Then we face off with two hunters, two shotguns, and Harris's single pistol... and still the river leads him on to New Orleans. Like the river he travels, Harris cuts through to the core of himself and his country. Triumphant! --Byron Ricks

Growing up in St. Louis, Harris felt drawn to the Mississippi River and wanted to be part of it. At the age of 30 he decided it was time to challenge the river and himself by canoeing its length, Lake Itasca to New Orleans. With very little preparation or conditioning, he set out in the fall in a borrowed canoe. In addition to expected hazards of weather, traffic and navigation, the voyage held another one: Harris, who is black, encountered gun-toting rednecks downstream (he carried a revolver). But most people were friendly and encouraging; Harris learned how to handle the canoe in the wake of tugs and successfully tested himself to the limits of physical and mental endurance. Readers who enjoyed Jonathan Raban's *Old Glory* will want to read this exuberant account of a geographically similar solo voyage. Harris is a talented writer; may he continue his adventures. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

While reading the first 20 - 30 pages I found myself growing more and more angry about how reckless Eddy Harris was in pursuing this incredible adventure. He had little experience in a canoe and didn't even have one until shortly before his journey began. And the canoe he ended up using was borrowed. Further, he had absolutely no idea of the kinds of obstacles (e.g., beaver dams) he would encounter along the way. I too like challenging trips (mine are on a bicycle), but I always think ahead and am not reckless in what I do. During his journey, I think Eddy realized how reckless he had been at the start, and modified his behavior somewhat. Regardless of canoeing skills and questionable judgment, Eddy is an excellent writer. His descriptions of the Mississippi and the things he saw around and on it, including the people he met along the way, made me feel like I was there with him.

Folks have already done very well reviewing other aspects of this book. I'll take another tack. I was

struck and really touched by the advice Eddy L. Harris received from his 'Uncle' Robert, his former trumpet teacher and longtime friend, before embarking on the journey. Anyone who has a friend so good, so true, and so wise, well, their life has already been worth living. Plus, the author met Emily at Bemidji when the wind and water took his canoe from him. She is surely among the kindest souls who have ever lived. She watched out for him like a mother hen so that his life was preserved, saved him from what he did not know, coached him up to speed, carried him and his canoe a very long way in her truck to calmer water where his life and his journey was still possible. Many others helped him and cheered him on, but these two are absolutely profound. Eddy L. Harris is a blessed man.

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.

Read this book in anticipation of a family driving trip along the Mississippi from the Wisconsin border down to St. Louis. Not only provided interesting background on the geography and interesting stops along the river, but was a wonderful piece of literature that gave insight on the river and the people along it through one man's eyes. Not sure I would have been so brave as to make the journey. Great book, highly recommended.

Beautifully written book. Mr Riley chronicles his solo trip down the Mississippi river and the people and events he experienced. I gave it to my 18 year old grandson who was talking about canoeing the Mississippi and read it myself as my grandson took his own Mississippi solo. I appreciated the beautiful descriptions of the river, people and landscape by Mr Riley. It gave me a new appreciation of the beauty of our country and its peoples.

It's an amazing book... honest, funny, profound, inspiring, and beautifully written. Journey down the Mississippi with Eddy L. Harris. You won't regret it!

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.

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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