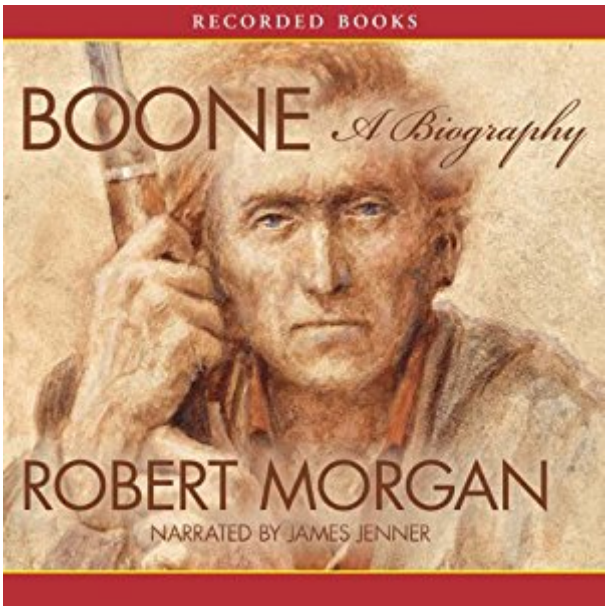
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Boone: A Biography



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Synopsis

The story of Daniel Boone is the story of AmericaÃ¢â ¬â •its ideals, its promise, its romance, and its destiny. Bestselling, critically acclaimed author Robert Morgan reveals the complex character of a frontiersman whose heroic life was far stranger and more fascinating than the myths that surround him. This rich, authoritative biography offers a wholly new perspective on a man who has been an American icon for more than two hundred yearsÃ¢â ¬â •a hero as important to American history as his more political contemporaries George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Extensive endnotes, cultural and historical background material, and maps and illustrations underscore the scope of this distinguished and immensely entertaining work. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

What strikes me as the greatest accomplishment of Robert Morgan in this biography of Daniel Boone is stripping away the myth and describing the person. I read a recent biography of Kit Carson that did the same thing. As such, both authors have done readers a great service.Boone himself was a complex figure. He was a great success as a trapper and explorer. He routinely failed as a businessman and land speculator. He was lucky and he made his own luck. Despite being so well known to Americans, he died in Missouri at 86 and pretty much broke. His story was such that he was mentioned in the works of poets and writers. James Fennimore Cooper based a number of novels on his life and exploits, Natty Bumppo, "la longue carabine," the Pathfinder, Hawkeye [in Last of the Mohicans], and so on.The book does a nice job of relating his family background, his

childhood, and his increasing interest in trapping, hunting, and exploring. He fought in the French and Indian War (serving with Braddock on this ill-starred campaign) and the Revolutionary War. He was instrumental in helping the process of development of American interests in Kentucky. His relationship with Native Americans was complex. He respected them and developed some friendships and was even adopted after his capture at one point. But he also fought against them.His business efforts, designed to provide security for his family, routinely ended in failure. Land that he thought had been given him in Kentucky was lost through court action; he once lost $20,000 as he was going back to Virginia to deposit this and finalize land claims; and so on.And, a stunning realization. . . . He went with a group of explorers and visited the Yellowstone area while he was in his mid 70s! How many 70 year olds would be able to cross half a continent in 1809 and return?This book is a wonderfully balanced view of the life of Boone. For those who want to know the man more than the myth, this is most rewarding. Some nice features: a genealogy at the outset, a brief chronology of Boone's life. More maps would have been useful, to place his travels and life in a broader geographic perspective. Nonetheless, a fine work.

As much as I relished reading this biography of Daniel Boone bsed on its warm reviews, I found it disappointing. Surprisingly, from a novelist/poet, Boone never "comes up off the page" - I never had a sense of Boone the living man versus Boone the legend. Of course the most intriguing parts of Boone's life were spent in the wilderness, alone, with no one to record the events. Working from the written record of Boone's life, we get a more complex look at the whole man - including his mostly unsuccessful life after 1772 - but we don't get a deeper view of the man, of how the days were spent, how the hunts were pursued.To Boone the wilderness seemed infinite, and in helping to settle Kentucky, he had a huge role in the consumption of natural resources - prairie, forest, animal. Morgaqn reminds us throughout that Boone was one the of the first and last men ever to encounter Kentucky in its natural state.In my view, this book would have been better had Morgan approached it more as Allan Eckart approached his narrative of Simon Kenton in "The Frontersman." By comparison to Eckart's work, this comes off flat. Morgan is primarily a novelist/poet, and not compelling as a historian. For example, we get endless lists of the names of men who accompanied Boone on this expedition or that raid - but very few become "characters" in their own light. Eckart, by comparison makes hte Shawnee chief Blue jacket a living character with Kenton.I also found myself balking at Morgan's tendency to speculate on what actual events may have occurred, or at Boone's motivations/character in numerous instances. Right or wrong, effective biography takes the "This is my story and I'm sticking to it" approach. As a non-historian, Morgan seems to go out of his way to

dodge criticism from a "true scholar" on the topic than to create a real, living character.Perhaps the most telling chapter of the book is the last, after Boone is dead. In this chapter, Morgan tells us how the legend of Boone influenced 19th century American Romanticism, including Emerdon, Thoreau and Whitman. My takeaway here is that Morgan is presenting Boone through that looking glass, and never getting back to the man himself.Worth reading for its details on the challenges of frontier life, but if you're after a first-rate yarn with these details, Eckart is a better choice in my opinion. If, on the other hand, it's first-rate history you're after, read real history.

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