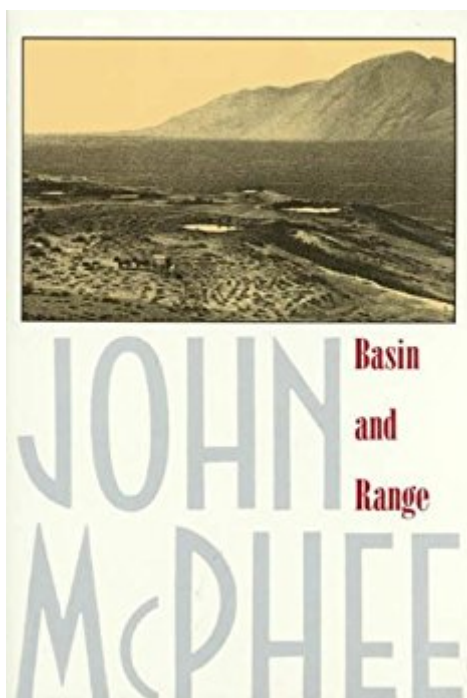


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# Basin And Range



## Synopsis

The first of John McPhee's works in his series on geology and geologists, *Basin and Range* is a book of journeys through ancient terrains, always in juxtaposition with travels in the modern world—a history of vanished landscapes, enhanced by the histories of people who bring them to light. The title refers to the physiographic province of the United States that reaches from eastern Utah to eastern California, a silent world of austere beauty, of hundreds of discrete high mountain ranges that are green with junipers and often white with snow. The terrain becomes the setting for a lyrical evocation of the science of geology, with important digressions into the plate-tectonics revolution and the history of the geologic time scale.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm a huge fan of John McPhee and have been reading his articles from the 1950's. When this book first came out, or rather the serialized articles in "The New Yorker", I was a resident of NYC and could not get into it, too much detail. However, I recently got the book and read it having lived in the Basin and Range country for the last 35 years. Of course, it is just as detailed but the details are

now relevant to me and a few can be skimmed w/o losing the flow or substance of the book. The book is now an historic artifact because at the time of its writing the concept of continental drift was fairly novel, had just reached wide acceptance, and explained many of the so-called anomalies in Geography. McPhee does a great job of presenting the evolution of geologic theory in bring the reader up to the point where he describes what's going on in the Basin and Range area of Utah and Nevada. It's a shame that McPhee is pretty much retired at this point but, at his age, and given his catalogue of great books on fascinating subjects, who can blame him.

I don't have any good reasons not to read this. Having some formal training in geology (never put to use in practical terms), I had a desire to pursue the lessons in this book. Probably not a prerequisite, though. The author's relentless attempt to peel back the layers of the 'big picture' makes the ride a pleasure. He keeps you in the driver's seat. Enjoy.

I have read about a half dozen of John McPhee's books and would rate all others a 5. Overall Basin and Range is well researched and well written but somewhere in the middle his use of the geologic period names became so prolific it became a fog for me. I don't have the instant memory recall he seems to have and wading through this section was frustrating and led to my skimming most of it. Fortunately he did bring it all back together in the end and the net result was positive and informative. If you like this type of look at geology and especially if you are a west coaster I strongly recommend his book "Assembling California."

great book

Geology put into terms and explained in such a clear and entertaining manner! For all those folks who have gone on a vacation and wondered at the rock formations or admired the mountain views, the books by John McPhee are a must!

All of John McPhee's book are great reads. They get the reader an understanding how the geology and the history of your country are intertwined. It also gives the reader some insight in the importance of saving some of our lands and resources.

Having dabbled in geology for nearly 30 years, I recently renewed my interest following a trip to Yellowstone, where I picked up a number of books in the gift shops. I came across some new terms

and decided do some studying. One of the things I realized I needed to bone up on was the formation of the basin and range, which led me to this book. It is a fairly slim volume with no illustrations if you discount the cover and frontispiece. This limits the effective descriptions in the book because it is helpful to have a picture of what formations the author is describing. But the main problem is the book's verbosity. It is written in a florid, heavy-on-the-hyperbole style that makes it hard to follow the jumpy premise of following I-80 from the Palisades in New Jersey across country to California, with most of the "action" taking place in southern Nevada. I won't say that I didn't glean some new knowledge, but it was a slow read, wading through the over-the-top prose to find a nugget here and there. I had ordered three of McPhee's books when I bought this one, so I'll give them a try, but I can't say I'd recommend this one for any student of geology looking for a handle on the formation of the basin and range country of the West.

The book was a good read and a little jumpy around the place, not upsetting too me that much, and took a while to get used to it. Even so, it was interesting to me as a geologist and as an Ozzie with the help of good ol' Google Earth, I could do a virtual geological road trip through the West to the places mentioned [pity the Street Views could not show road cuts up closer for boundaries!]. This book was recommended in a Earth Science blog through facebook, believe it or not [<https://www.pinterest.com/earthstory/>]. Some criticisms, I liked the style, even if it took a while. I cannot get around the editing about HORST blocks written as HORSE blocks at some stage, it threw me off at first, pardon the pun. Also I think some geological theories on plate tectonics and continental drift were not explained well or maybe even wrongly to a small extent, or maybe just too over simplified. It does cover a wide area... In any case, at the moment I am reading the next book in the series and enjoying it as much as the Basin and Range. The reviews/descriptions of the first two books in the series have not grabbed my attention as yet. I hope John McPhee could do a few on Australia if he has Time...

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