



# MARGARET ATWOOD

BOOKER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR OF *THE BLIND ASSASSIN* AND *DRYX AND CRAKE*

## WILDERNESS TIPS

◆ STORIES ◆

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## *Wilderness Tips*

Margaret Atwood

Anchor (1991)

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

Tags: Contemporary, Adult

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In each of these tales Margaret Atwood deftly illuminates the single instant that shapes a whole life: in a few brief pages we watch as characters progress from the vulnerabilities of adolescence through the passions of youth into the precarious complexities of middle age. By superimposing the past on the present, Atwood paints interior landscapes shaped by time, regret, and life's lost chances, endowing even the banal with a sense of mystery. Richly layered and disturbing, poignant at times and scathingly witty at others, the stories in *Wilderness Tips* take us into the strange and secret places of the heart and inform the familiar world in which we live with truths that cut to the bone. Margaret Atwood is the author of over twenty-five books, including fiction, poetry, and essays. Among her most recent works are the bestselling novels *Alias Grace* and *The Robber Bride* and the collections *Wilderness Tips* and *Good Bones and Simple Murders*. She lives in Toronto. From the Trade Paperback edition.

## INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM FOR *Wilderness Tips*

“Atwood is as audacious as ever ... There is something irresistible about this combination of mordant humour and unswerving truth.”

–*Winnipeg Free Press*

“[Atwood possesses] a truly remarkable array of powers.... The wilderness of *Wilderness Tips* is the one we all live in – whether or not we admit it.”

–*Books in Canada*

“These are stories that speak to all who do not close their ears, and their minds, to the late twentieth-century reality.

–*Star-Phoenix* (Saskatoon)

“Virtuoso wit and unmistakable style ... Atwood the poet is alive in these stories.”

–*Chicago Tribune*

“The reader has the sense that Atwood has complete access to her people’s emotional histories, complete understanding of their hearts and imaginations.”

–*Publishers Weekly*

“[Atwood has the] ability to place her finger firmly on the pulse of what is contemporary.”

–*Hamilton Spectator*

“*Wilderness Tips* is a grimly comic, often scathing natural history of urban anxiety and middle age.”

–*London Free Press*

“Almost every one of the ten stories in this collection superimposes the past upon the present in a unsettling, often startling manner, which conjures up a sense of the mysterious in even the most banal relationships.”

–*New York Times Book Review*

## BOOKS BY MARGARET ATWOOD

### FICTION

- The Edible Woman* (1969)  
*Surfacing* (1972)  
*Lady Oracle* (1976)  
*Dancing Girls* (1977)  
*Life Before Man* (1979)  
*Bodily Harm* (1981)  
*Murder in the Dark* (1983)  
*Bluebeard's Egg* (1983)  
*The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)  
*Cat's Eye* (1988)  
*Wilderness Tips* (1991)  
*Good Bones* (1992)  
*The Robber Bride* (1993)  
*Alias Grace* (1996)  
*The Blind Assassin* (2000)  
*Good Bones and Simple Murders* (2001)  
*Oryx and Crake* (2003)  
*The Penelopiad* (2005)  
*The Tent* (2006)  
*Moral Disorder* (2006)

### FOR CHILDREN

- Up in the Tree* (1978)  
*Anna's Pet* (with Joyce Barkhouse) (1980)  
*For the Birds* (1990)  
*Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut* (1995)  
*Rude Ramsay and the Roaring Radishes* (2003)  
*Bashful Bob and Doleful Dorinda* (2004)

### NON-FICTION

- Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972)  
*Days of the Rebels 1815–1840* (1977)  
*Second Words* (1982)  
*Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (1996)

*Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (2002)  
*Moving Targets: Writing with Intent 1982–2004* (2004)

POETRY

*Double Persephone* (1961)  
*The Circle Game* (1966)  
*The Animals in That Country* (1968)  
*The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970)  
*Procedures for Underground* (1970)  
*Power Politics* (1971)  
*You Are Happy* (1974)  
*Selected Poems* (1976)  
*Two-Headed Poems* (1978)  
*True Stories* (1981)  
*Interlunar* (1984)  
*Selected Poems II: Poems Selected and New 1976–1986* (1986)  
*Morning in the Burned House* (1995)

M a r g a r e t  
A t w o o d



W i l d e r n e s s T i p s



EMBLEM EDITIONS  
Published by McClelland & Stewart

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First cloth edition published in Canada by McClelland & Stewart in 1991

Trade paperback edition first published 1999

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**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Atwood, Margaret, 1939 –  
Wilderness Tips

eISBN: 978-1-55199-498-7

I. Title.

PS8501.T86W5 C813'.54 C91-094364-8

PR9199.3.A87W5

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program and that of the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Media Development Corporation's Ontario Book Initiative. We further acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council for our publishing program.

The content and characters in this book are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons or happenings is coincidental.

The factual material about the Franklin Expedition and exhumation of John Torrington in "The Age of Lead" is from *Frozen in Time*, by Owen Beattie and John Geiger, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1987. There was a television program on the subject; the one in this story is imagined.

SERIES EDITOR: ELLEN SELIGMAN

EMBLEM EDITIONS

McClelland & Stewart Ltd.

75 Sherbourne Street

Toronto, Ontario

M5A 2P9

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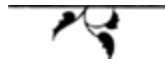
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## True Trash



The waitresses are basking in the sun like a herd of skinned seals, their pinky-brown bodies shining with oil. They have their bathing suits on because it's the afternoon. In the early dawn and the dusk they sometimes go skinny-dipping, which makes this itchy crouching in the mosquito-infested bushes across from their small private dock a great deal more worthwhile.

Donny has the binoculars, which are not his own but Monty's. Monty's dad gave them to him for bird-watching but Monty isn't interested in birds. He's found a better use for the binoculars: he rents them out to the other boys, five minutes maximum, a nickel a look or else a chocolate bar from the tuck shop, though he prefers the money. He doesn't eat the chocolate bars; he resells them, black market, for twice their original price; but the total supply on the island is limited, so he can get away with it.

Donny has already seen everything worth seeing, but he lingers on with the binoculars anyway, despite the hoarse whispers and the proddings from those next in line. He wants to get his money's worth.

"Would you look at that," he says, in what he hopes is a tantalizing voice. "Slobber, slobber." There's a stick poking into his stomach, right on a fresh mosquito bite, but he can't move it without taking one hand off the binoculars. He knows about flank attacks.

"Lessee," says Ritchie, tugging at his elbow.

"Piss off," says Donny. He shifts the binoculars, taking in a slippery bared haunch, a red-polka-dotted breast, a long falling strand of bleach-blonde hair: Ronette the tartiest, Ronette the most forbidden. When there are lectures from the masters at St. Jude's during the winter about the dangers of consorting with the town girls, it's those like Ronette they have in mind: the ones who stand in line at the town's only movie theatre, chewing gum and wearing their boyfriends' leather jackets, their ruminating