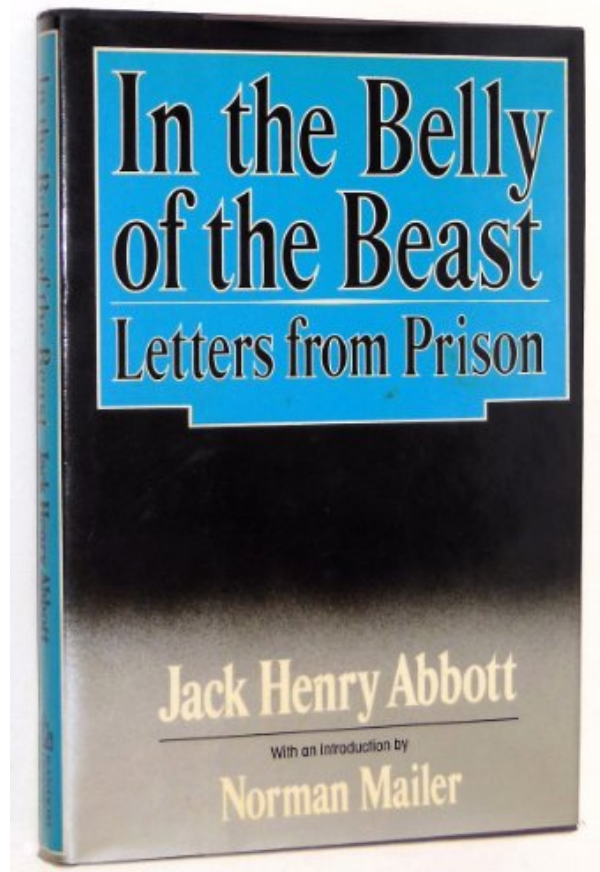
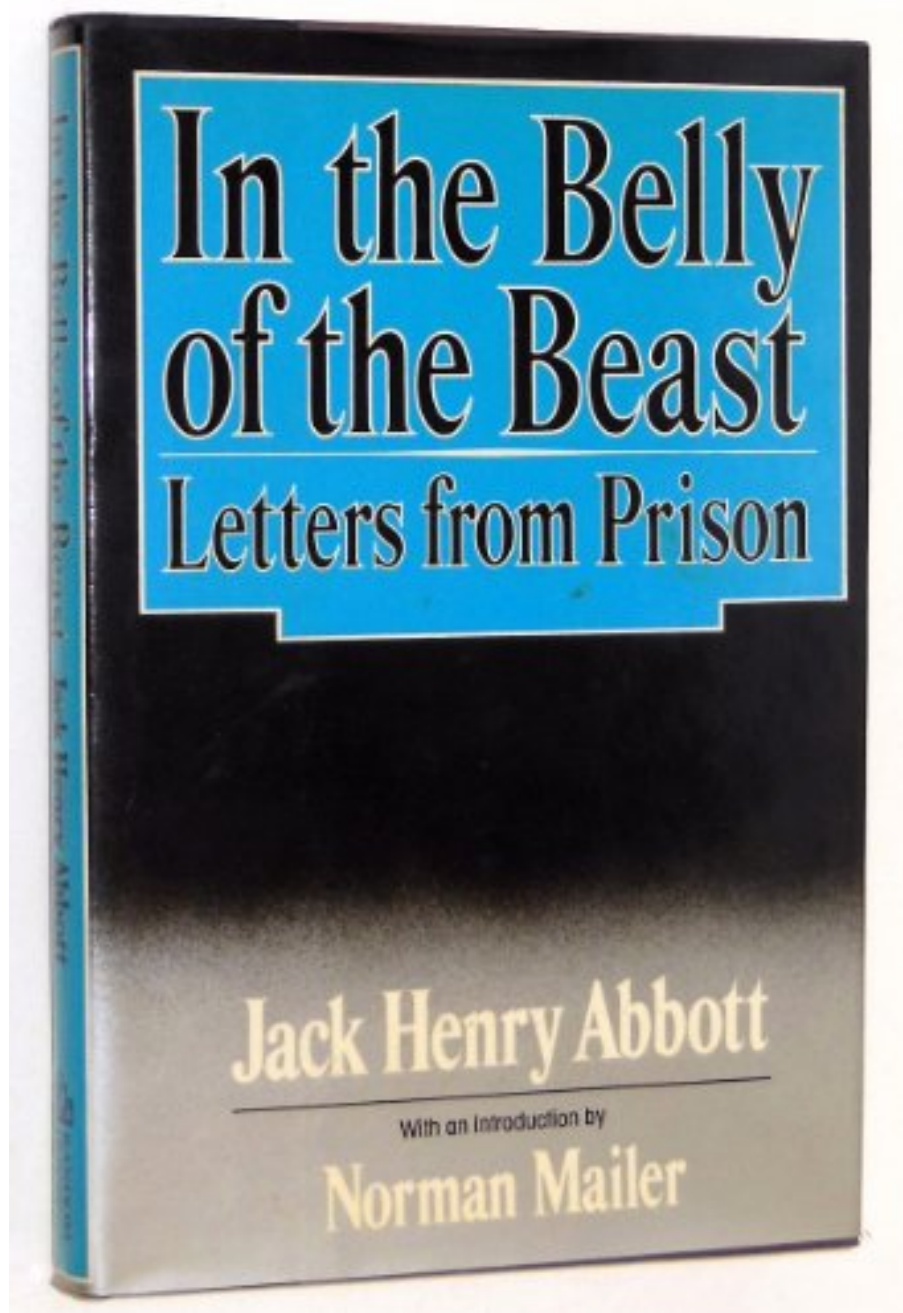


IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST BY JACK HENRY ABBOTT



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A visionary book in the repertoire of prison literature. This is a 37 year old man's account of 25 years behind bars.

- Sales Rank: #1297848 in Books
- Published on: 1981-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Binding: Hardcover
- 166 pages

Most helpful customer reviews

55 of 59 people found the following review helpful.

Can't rank it two and a half stars, so.....

By Malipayon Puti

I spent twelve and a half years in prison, but I have to agree with the correction professionals who have commented previously. The book is interesting in terms of describing what life behind the walls is like, but at some point, you have to take some responsibility for what you have done and where you are at, and Jack never seems to do that.

I read this book during my first year of incarceration and was truly stunned. Heck, I even put him up on a dais. Jack is the MAN! Jack is the MAN! Then, as the years passed (whilst staring at the tops of trees over the prison walls), my perspective moved to something less black and white.

My birth parents abandoned me. I hated the peeps that adopted me. I was smoking coke. I was doing steroids. I hit DYS and schools kicked me out. I was hanging out with the wrong people.

But it wasn't their fault.

I made the decisions that ended me up in prison for the best years of my life (23 to 36 - woot, where did my hairline go??). I decided to smoke base and shoot roids and rebel against that o soooooo terrible system. I made the decision to stick guns in peoples faces and rob them.

Ya dig your grave and, durn it, you have to eventually lie in it.

Prison wasn't nice. I saw men OD, hang themselves, and die right in front of me from multiple knife wounds. I was in riots and brutal fights. I witnessed it all, and it definitely left a whole lot of scars.

But it was me that brought me there. Not the drugs. Not the social inequality. Just my own decisions.

Actions and consequences, Jack, actions and consequences.

And please don't read his second book - it's pathetic.

A good book for describing the day to day life of prison and the attitudes that develop from it (I still don't like cops and have to sit at the far end of the restaurant so no one is behind me). But the whole "It's not my fault - it's the system" theme runs thin rather quickly.

Recommend A Day in the Life (I lived three houses down from Alex Solz prior to the feds catching up with me) or The Hothouse over this.

Finally (and another example of the carry over prison scarring issues), I have heard that Jack turned informant after his return to the Big House (before hanging himself).

Babbling..... shutting up now - just read it.

11 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Take it For What It's Worth

By S. Pactor

Truly, the story of Jack Abbott is one of those late twentieth century chestnuts that will endure in literature and film long after people have actually forgotten the man and this book. Abbott is a symbol for the excesses of New York style limosine liberalism. Wealthy author becomes pen pals with convicted felon, publishes book of felon's letters, felon becomes cause celebre, author gets felon out of prison, felon kills someone while out, felon goes back to prison.

The main thing I'd like to address is the idea of Abbott as a "hardened criminal" as he is referred to repeatedly in the other reviews.

Nowadays, folks in the know don't call people "hardened criminals". The modern term is "career offender". I find both terms interesting. For the first term, I would like to ask the question: What is the difference between a "hardened" criminal and a "Non-hardened" criminal? Well, a hardened criminal has been to prison. Also: When does a regular offender become a "career" offender? Not to belabor the point, but once a prisoner becomes "hardened" or a "career offender", the odds are that he or she will spend the rest of their lives behind bars.

People who have not been convicted of a felony like to judge those who do. Judging others makes us feel better about ourselves. It's harder to empathize with the stigmatized than with normals.

I think it is important to point out that the juvenile justice system in which Abbott came of age was, by modern standard, barbaric. Abbott was obviously institutionalized from a very early age, and he stayed that way. How can we blame Abbott for internalizing the message that society sent him from the time he was twelve?

Abbott should be celebrated, if only because he struggled against the label society gave him. That he failed in his struggle speaks not to any weakness of character on his part, it just means that he's a normal person who doesn't always succeed.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By Amazon Customer

Very interesting

See all 63 customer reviews...

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