

Bio Terror Bible

EXPOSING THE COMING BIO-TERROR PANDEMIC

BIOTERRORBIBLE.COM: [Starting in 1939](#), there have been [21 books](#), both fiction and non-fiction, dealing with the topics of bio-terror and pandemics. Although these books have been sporadic over the last 50+ years, they have intensified over the last 10.

Title: Earth Abides

Date: 2012

Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Abstract: Earth Abides is a 1949 [post-apocalyptic science fiction](#) novel by American writer [George R. Stewart](#). It tells the story of the fall of civilization from deadly disease and its rebirth. Beginning in the [United States](#) in the 1940s, it deals with Isherwood "Ish" Williams, Emma, and the community they founded. The survivors live off the remains of the old world, while learning to adapt to the new. Along the way they are forced to make tough decisions and choose what kind of civilization they will rebuild.

Earth Abides won the inaugural [International Fantasy Award](#) in 1951. It was included in [Locus Magazine's](#) list of best All Time Science Fiction in 1987 and 1998 and was a nominee to be entered into the [Prometheus Hall Of Fame](#). In November 1950, it was adapted for the [CBS](#) radio program [Escape](#) as a two-part drama starring [John Dehner](#).

The book earned much praise from [James Sallis](#), writing in 2003 in the [Boston Globe](#):

This is a book, mind you, that I'd place not only among the greatest science fiction but among our very best novels. Each time I read it, I'm profoundly affected, affected in a way only the greatest art — [Ulysses](#), [Matisse](#) or [Beethoven](#) symphonies, say — affects me. Epic in sweep, centering on the person of Isherwood Williams, Earth Abides proves a kind of antihistory, relating the story of humankind backwards, from ever-more-abstract civilization to stone-age primitivism. Everything passes — everything. Writers' reputations. The ripe experience of a book in which we find ourselves immersed. Star systems, worlds, states, individual lives. Humankind. Few of us get to read our own eulogies, but here is mankind's. Making Earth Abides a novel for which words like elegiac and transcendent come easily to mind, a novel bearing, in critic [Adam-Troy Castro](#)'s words, "a great dark beauty."

Plot Introduction

Earth Abides begins in the United States during the 1940s, set largely in the [Berkeley, California](#) area, within sight of the [San Francisco – Oakland Bay Bridge](#). Most of the Earth's population has perished from a virulent airborne disease. Isherwood "Ish" Williams, who had been temporarily living in a solitary California mountain cabin, is one of the survivors of the [pandemic](#). He emerges from his scientific studies in the mountains to find his entire world barren of people. Isherwood explores the empty world and then settles down with a handful of survivors to begin the process of restoring the human race and civilization.

Plot Summary

"Part I: World Without End"

While working on his graduate studies in biology in the mountains, Ish is bitten by a [rattlesnake](#). As he heals from the bite, he gets sick with a disease that looks like [measles](#). He recovers and makes his way back to civilization, only to discover that most people died from the same disease. He goes to his home in Berkeley. As he travels, he observes the world in the light of [ecology](#), watching it adapt to the loss of humans. In the city near his home Ish meets few human survivors — a man drinking himself to death, a couple who seem to have lost their sanity, and a teenage girl who flees from him as someone dangerous. He comes across a dog, friendly and eager to join him. The dog, now named Princess, swiftly adopts Ish as her new master and sticks by him for much of the book. Wondering if his observations are typical of humanity in general, he sets out on a cross country tour, traveling all the way to New York City and back, scavenging for food and fuel. As he travels, he finds small pockets of survivors, but he doubts that they will survive the loss of civilization.

He returns to his home in California, and finds a woman, Emma (Em), living nearby. They agree to consider themselves married and have children. They are joined by other survivors. Over time the electricity fails and the comforts of civilization recede. As the children grow, Ish tries to instill basic academics, teaching reading, arithmetic and geography.

"Quick Years"

During this period of time, Ish and Em meet many other people such as Ezra, George, and many others. This section goes all the way to the end of Year 21. The community, within this time period, started to call the years by events that happened in the Year. Many children were born in these years and within them was Joey, Ish's favorite son. Joey is Ish's favorite son because not only is Joey very similar to Ish, but Ish believes that Joey is the key to the future.

"Part II: The Year 22"

Chapters 1-5

Twenty-two years later, the community flourishes. The younger generation adapts easily to the more primitive world. They come to have a better grasp of the natural world than the adults, and when running water fails, the younger generation comes to the rescue, knowing where flowing streams may be found. The children see no need for structured academics and Ish isn't a natural teacher. Only one child, his son Joey, seems to be able to grasp and use academic skills. Ish increasingly sees Joey as the future leader and brains of the community.

Ish turns his attention from ecology to his newly forming society. One thing that he notices is that the children are becoming very [superstitious](#). One day Ish asks for his [hammer](#), an antique miner's tool found in the mountains, which he habitually carries around, and finds the children are afraid to touch it. It is a symbol for them of the old times. The long-dead Americans are now like gods—and Ish is too.

Ish becomes disturbed at his community's lack of ambition to learn and work. He tries to motivate them so often with speeches that the kids think this is simply his line, safe to be ignored. In an attempt to motivate them, Ish mentions the idea of a cross country exploration, and his son Robert and another boy Richard start out in a [jeep](#).

Chapters 6-11

Robert and Richard return from their trip. They explored east across the country until they met impassable roads near [Toledo, Ohio](#). They reported meeting two societies in their travels, including an unwelcoming religious group in Los Angeles and an agrarian society, likely of American Indians, living in Pueblo ruins near [Albuquerque, New Mexico](#). They brought back a man named Charlie, who

gives Ish a bad feeling. Soon it is obvious that Charlie is after Evie, a girl the community regards as outside the acceptable gene pool—she has an adult body and the mind of a small child. Ish confronts Charlie and is intimidated; he feels alone and lost about what to do. Em takes control, calling a meeting of the adults. Ish isn't alone—they are a tribe. Under Em's insistence, the tribe's four adults vote on Charlie's fate. Em insists that they cannot wait until harm is done, that they have responsibility to protect their children. They unanimously vote to execute him.

The incident with Charlie makes Ish reflect that he is really not a nation builder, but he keeps trying. He begins practical lessons, such as planting [corn](#). Then, [typhoid fever](#) erupts among them, perhaps carried by Charlie. Joey dies of typhoid, and this devastates Ish. With Joey gone, Ish decides teaching academic topics will be a fruitless effort. He worries what will become of his people when [ammunition](#) and [matches](#) are gone. He decides instead to teach his people to survive. He begins by inspiring the children to build [bows and arrows](#).

"Quick Years"

The years flow by. Ish's lessons begin to take — and the community begins to grow corn and make and play with bows and arrows. Ish presides at meetings, his hammer a [symbol of his status](#). He is given respect, but his ideas are ignored by the younger men. The Tribe merges with another nearby group. The "Americans" (those born before the Great Disaster) die off, until only Ezra and Ish are left, two old men. After Ezra dies, Ish becomes a sort of god, the last American, to whom the young men go to demand answers.

"Part III: The Last American"

Ish spends most of his elderly life in a fog, unaware of the world. Superstition has set in; the tribe has reverted to a primitive lifestyle, hunting with dogs (the descendants of Ish's first dog) and bow and arrow. Occasionally the fog in his mind lifts. During one such time, he finds himself aware of his great-grandson Jack, who stands before him. Jack shows him that the bow and arrow have become more reliable than the [gun](#), whose [cartridges](#) don't always work. The children of the world are taking the toys of their youth and improving them on their own. During his last lucid moments, Ish realizes that the former civilization is now totally gone. But he also wonders if the new world is that much worse off than the old world, and finds himself hoping that the new world will not rebuild civilization and its mistakes.

Characters

Isherwood Williams (Ish) is a [graduate student](#) at Berkeley, studying the [ecology](#) of an area in the mountains, somewhere in California. As an ecologist, one who studies the relationships of living things to one another and to their [environment](#), he is an ideal person to understand just what happens to the world when humans are abruptly removed from the picture. Isherwood thinks of himself as a loner—not the kind of person to become a leader of people—but that is precisely what happens to him. After he survives the Great Disaster, he spends some time observing the world without humans. Beyond initial shock, he doesn't seem to miss them too much. He comes to be a leader, mainly because he is the only surviving [intellectual](#) in his area. He realizes his weaknesses with people, however, and comes to rely on the talents of those around him, especially his wife Em.

Emma (Em) is a woman who Isherwood meets in his hometown. The author may have been taking a chance with this character, who is [African-American](#),^[5] while Isherwood is white; when the book was written, [interracial marriages](#) were heavily discouraged in American society. Isherwood does marry her, and race isn't important to the couple's relationship. Rather, the couple become partners in their marriage and in their leadership of the community. Em becomes the community's mother, letting it grow as it will, but stepping in to help when no one else is filling the leadership role. She is the one who rallies the community when an outsider, Charlie, threatens it. It is she who brings up the idea that the community cannot wait until their children are harmed, that the value of protecting the children

trumps the value of justice. She is the one who showed no fear when the community was stricken by [typhoid fever](#). She was the adult while others panicked, and Ish thought of her as the "Mother of Nations".

Princess is a [beagle](#) that "adopts" Ish. She plays a role in introducing Ish to Em, and helping him to overcome his fears. Her descendants also play an important part in the development of the tribe.

Ezra met Emma and Ish while traveling. They liked him, but feared the complications of a [love triangle](#), so they encouraged him to leave. He returned with Molly and Jean, his [wives](#). Ish values Ezra as a good judge of people, saying "Ezra knew people, Ezra liked people."

Molly is the older of Ezra's two wives, about 35 when Ish and Em meet her.

Jean is "a younger woman," and one of Ezra's two wives.

Evie is a "half grown girl" who Ezra found living "in squalor and solitude." She appears to have little mind left, if she ever had one, and everyone cares for her. The tribe has a rule, that as the children grow no one will marry her—she wouldn't understand, and her mental condition could possibly be hereditary.

George and Maurine are an older couple found by Ezra while traveling. George is a carpenter. George could be said to be "dull" and Maurine as "stupid". George becomes the fix-it man for the Tribe.

Joey is the son of Ish and Em. Of all the children in the Tribe, he is the only one that truly understands the academic skills that Ish tries to teach — geometry, reading, geography. He dies during the typhoid fever outbreak.

Jack is Ish's great-grandson. Jack is confident and possibly a leader. Ish sees something of Joey in him. As Ish dies, he gives Jack his hammer.

Major Themes

Biological Controls on Population

On the title page Stewart immediately starts with the theme, quoting [Ecclesiastes](#) 1:4 — "Men go and come, but earth abides." For the first half of *Earth Abides*, George R. Stewart concentrates on a major theme for the book, that humans have no privileged place in nature and are not immune to nature's built-in [population controls](#). The main character, an ecologist, states it plainly, "When anything gets too numerous it's likely to get hit by some plague".

On the first page Stewart tells readers how contagion could bring the end very quickly for mankind: "If a killing type of virus strain should suddenly arise by [mutation](#)...it could, because of the rapid transportation in which we indulge nowadays, be carried to the far corners of the earth and cause the deaths of millions of people." W.M. Stanley, in *Chemical and Engineering News*, December 22, 1947.

Within a few pages he makes it clear that basic biology applies to humans too: "Some zoologists have even suggested a biological law: that the number of individuals in a species never remains constant, but always rises and falls—the higher the animal and the slower its breeding-rate, the longer its period of fluctuation[...]As for man, there is littler reason to think that he can in the long run escape the fate of other creatures, and if there is a biological law of flux and reflux, his situation is now a highly perilous one....Biologically, man has for too long a time been rolling an uninterrupted run of sevens."

Population size subjects world to artificial selection

Reviewer [Noel Perrin](#) has pointed out that George R. Stewart had written two books before this, in which the main character was not a person, but "a natural force." In [Storm](#) the main character is weather, and in [Fire](#), a [forest fire](#) takes center stage.

In the same way, Stewart centers the first half of [Earth Abides](#) on the forces of [natural selection](#). Perrin said: The original goal, I suspect, was simply to imagine as accurately as possible what would happen to the land mass of North America if human activity abruptly ceased. First, Stewart swept the country more or less clean of humanity, using a plague as a broom...An immense series of changes now begins.

In freeing the landscape from humans, half of the book is devoted to looking at how the world would change in their absence. Stewart chose to make his main human character an [ecologist](#), and sends him on a cross country tour, to see what the world is like without people. As animals and plants no longer have humans taking care of them or controlling them, they are free to breed uncontrolled and to prey upon one another. The main character sees that some have been under humans so long that they are helpless in the face of change, while others are still able to adapt and survive. Stewart shows that humans have routinely influenced the lives of almost every plant and animal around them. Numbers allow human-diversity, shape customs

Another theme of the book is what happens to human skills as the population decreases. Reviewer [Lionel Shriver](#) points out this theme in an article about literature which features human extinction: But as Stewart tracks three post-plague generations, he vividly demonstrates that advanced civilisation depends on numbers. Reduce the race to the size of a small town and how many residents will remember how to make [plastic](#)? The last Americans plunder [canned goods](#) (with little respect for [sell-by dates](#)), and [literacy](#) atrophies; electrical and water systems break down. At length, the community reverts to its hunter-gatherer forebears.

Loss of Reading

Stewart uses the second half of his book to show that, if humans are reduced to low numbers, it will be difficult for them to continue civilization as we know it. Reading becomes a casualty. The society is so small that the death of one member—a little boy named Joey—seems likely to determine for many generations to come whether the emerging society will or won't be literate...As Ish thinks of it, each new baby is a candle lit against the dark.

And like a candle, a child living in primitive conditions can easily be snuffed by the environment.

In the struggle to survive, [natural selection](#) culls humans whose culture isn't survival oriented; if skills and customs don't work in the new situation, these die out, or those holding them do. Children adapt naturally to the new situation, and immediately useful customs and skills are more interesting to them than reading and writing. The information in [libraries](#) is useless within a generation.

Social Customs

One custom that Stewart predicts could die out is [racism](#). When there are fewer partners to choose from, mankind will not be able to afford to be too choosy in picking one's partner.

Another issue he brings up is how law and order will function, when the lawmakers, courts and enforcers are all gone. Even laws won't be immune to the pressure to survive. One of the characters in the book point out, "What laws?" when they have to determine the fate of an outsider. Stewart shows how people may come to worry about potential harm rather than justice when dealing with outsiders.

Biblical Theme: Replenishing the Earth

Having explored the [depopulated](#) Earth, Stewart shifts his thematic focus in part 2 and 3, from the biological theme of population crash to a biblical theme of populating the world.

A 1949 book review says that *Earth Abides* parallels two biblical stories that shows mankind spreading out and populating the world: ...the dual themes are as old as [Genesis](#)...Not a [flood](#) but a swift and deadly new disease wipes out all but a few of the human race. Ish (for "Isherwood") is the Noah of this "Great Disaster." As material civilization begins to crumble, Ish gradually devolves into a kind of Adam who, inevitably, finds his Eve, Em (For "Emma"), a level-headed lady with Negro blood, and nature takes its time-worn course. Em is hailed by Ish as "The Mother of Nations."

Stewart, who specialized in meanings of names, chose names in [Hebrew](#) that have appropriate meanings for the biblical theme; this couple who restart the human tribe are symbolically man and mother. In Stewart's day, most Hebrew dictionaries stated that Ish means "man" (although a more accurate English equivalent is "participant"), and Em means "mother". Both terms figure prominently in the biblical story of Adam and Eve: Ish in Genesis 2:23, and Em in Genesis 3:20.

In addition to the [Hebraic](#) names in *Earth Abides*, the story also has a symbol in common with biblical tradition—the snake. Ish encounters a rattlesnake; before this event he is part of a larger civilization. After it bites him, his world changes, just as the snake changes Adam's world in the Genesis story. Adam loses paradise, and Ish finds civilization dead.

Aside from the biblical origin of Ish, there is another tale of the fall of civilization that George R. Stewart could have taken account of, the story of [Ishi](#), the last of his tribe, who lived at Berkeley, where Stewart later taught. Ish is very similar to [Ishi](#), and it also means "man", in the language of a man whose whole tribe was dead. Ishi's story parallels the Genesis and *Earth Abides* stories, telling of one who has to adapt to a changed world ([Wikipedia, 2012](#)).