

Mountain man



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the article *The Mountain Man and American Anguish*, Patrick McCarthy's primary argument is that the vision of the 'mountain man' or 'trapper' which the public has accepted is either wrong or extremely generalized. He argues that the picture of, "...anarchic freedom, animalism, bravery, instinct (or loss thereof), the return to nature, the search for paradise, sexual potency, staunch individualism, stoicism, and wanderlust, which in actuality is agonized restlessness" is a vision born from movies such as *The Adventures of Kit Carson*, *The Saga of Andy Burnett*, and *Dream West*, among others.

In reality, McCarthy explains, a mountain man, "...is beset by powerlessness and intoxicated by themes relating to dominance and punishment: absence of relatedness, isolation, masochism, misogyny, sadism, self-victimization, and all forms of violence (including emotional--threats, harassment, verbal abuse)." As evidence of his argument, McCarthy cites trends of national sentiment towards the Vietnam War and the Gulf War.

He claims that the macho vision of the mountain man grew from a need for Americans to justify and accept the failings of the Vietnam War, and the use of symbolism and comparisons to the Vietnam War and Vietnam itself are extensive. McCarthy also uses real-life stories to back up his argument, such as the story of Claude Dallas and how the public felt, influenced by television and popular culture, towards him. Another strategy McCarthy uses, and uses heavily, is pure opinion.

Most of his justifications in this article as to why mountain men are not as they are portrayed is his own social examination of Americans' feelings toward societal changes and current events. This is not proof, but more of a <https://assignbuster.com/mountain-man/>

possible explanation explained in convincing fashion. The strongest aspect of McCarthy's article is that, whether he is giving actual proof or just a strong opinion, he backs up his writing extensively and convincingly.

His article left me with no doubt that he truly believes in his argument and that he researched the topic extensively. He gives multiple sources, explanations and examples for each topic, and it is in chronological order, making it easy to follow along. Unfortunately, McCarthy has some rather large setbacks in this piece which leads me to doubt some of his explanations.

He is clearly writing this from a very one-sided, liberal approach, as evidenced by his explanation of President Ronald Reagan as a "lame duck" president and his definition of America's involvement in the Gulf War as, "American Evils." Both are known by Americans to be false due to Reagan being a very productive President and the Gulf War being a noble cause which ended the suffering, rape, and random killing of Kuwaitis at the hands of the Iraqi Army.

Also, McCarthy's persistent insistence that the 'mountain man' theme tied directly to Americans' feelings about the Vietnam War does not leave room to consider other explanations. For example, television works in waves; once the 'mountain man' themed movies come out in abundance, people get tired of them and they take a break from them. Eventually, they become popular again. It is the normal cycle of television, and he does not address this once.