



Pushing the Limits of Nature Featured Author and Book

In our environments or within ourselves, the idea of “natural” is complicated. In your discussions consider how we define nature, and if that definition is fixed or in flux.

T. C. Boyle

- What do you think of T.C. Boyle? Was he as you imagined him?
- Were the rats “naturally” on the islands?
- What is a natural state? Does chance play a role?
- How do you define “native” vs. “invasive”?
- Does it seem possible to engineer nature? Is that an inherently impossible idea?
- If humans are a part of nature, are their actions part of the natural events that shape an ecosystem?
- How do humans fit into the idea of balance in nature?

When the Killing’s Done

T. C. Boyle, fiction. Alma Boyd Takesue is a National Park Service biologist who is spearheading the efforts to save the island's endangered native creatures from invasive species like rats and feral pigs, which, in her view, must be eliminated. Her antagonist, Dave LaJoy, is a dreadlocked local businessman who, along with his lover, the folk singer Anise Reed, is fiercely opposed to the killing of any species whatsoever and will go to any lengths to subvert the plans of Alma and her colleagues.

Their confrontation plays out in a series of escalating scenes in which these characters violently confront one another, and tempt the awesome destructive power of nature itself. Boyle deepens his story by going back in time to relate the harrowing tale of Alma's grandmother Beverly, who was the sole survivor of a 1946 shipwreck in the channel, as well as the tragic story of Anise's mother, Rita, who in the late 1970s lived and worked on a sheep ranch on Santa Cruz Island. In dramatizing this collision between protectors of the environment and animal rights' activists, Boyle is, in his characteristic fashion, examining one of the essential questions of our time: Who has the right of possession of the land, the waters, the very lives of all the creatures who share this planet with us? *When the Killing's Done* will offer no transparent answers, but like *The Tortilla Curtain*, Boyle's classic take on illegal immigration, it will touch you deeply and put you in a position to decide. - *goodreads.com*

- What kind of commentary does the book make regarding the question of “what is natural”? What is a “natural environment”?
- Has our community faced similar issues as those in *When the Killing’s Done*?





- Did you feel that one of the heroes/heroines was right and the other wrong?

