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American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau (Library Of America)



Synopsis

As America and the world grapple with the consequences of global environmental change, writer and activist Bill McKibben offers this unprecedented, provocative, and timely anthology, gathering the best and most significant American environmental writing from the last two centuries. Classics of the environmental imagination—the essays of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and John Burroughs; Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*; Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*—are set against the inspiring story of an emerging activist movement, as revealed by newly uncovered reports of pioneering campaigns for conservation, passages from landmark legal opinions and legislation, and searing protest speeches. Here are some of America's greatest and most impassioned writers, taking a turn toward nature and recognizing the fragility of our situation on earth and the urgency of the search for a sustainable way of life. Thought-provoking essays on overpopulation, consumerism, energy policy, and the nature of "nature" join ecologists' memoirs and intimate sketches of the habitats of endangered species. The anthology includes a detailed chronology of the environmental movement and American environmental history, as well as an 80-page color portfolio of illustrations.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In his introduction to this superb anthology, McKibben (*The End of Nature*) proposes that "environmental writing is America's most distinctive contribution to the world's literature." The collected pieces amply prove the point. Arranged chronologically, McKibben's

selection of more than 100 writers includes some of the great early conservationists, such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir and John Burroughs, and many other eloquent nature writers, including Donald Culross Peattie, Edwin Way Teale and Henry Beston. The early exponents of national parks and wilderness areas have their say, as do writers who have borne witness to environmental degradation—John Steinbeck and Caroline Henderson on the dust bowl, for example, and Berton Roueché and others who have reported on the effects of toxic pollution. Visionaries like Buckminster Fuller and Amory Lovins are represented, as are a wealth of contemporary activist/writers, among them Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams, Barbara Kingsolver, Michael Pollan, Paul Hawken, and Calvin deWitt, cofounder of the Evangelical Environmental Network. McKibben's trenchant introductions to the pieces sum up each writer's thoughts and form a running commentary on the progress of the conservation movement. The book, being published on Earth Day, can be read as a survey of the literature of American environmentalism, but above all, it should be enjoyed for the sheer beauty of the writing. 80-page color illus, not seen by PW. (Apr. 22 [Earth Day]) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adult/High School — There have been some excellent collections of nature writing published in recent years (The Norton Anthology of Nature Writing is one fine example), but not until now has there been a definitive anthology of American environmental writing. In this superbly edited volume, McKibben draws a clear distinction between the two. The best of the latter often celebrates nature, but also asks searching questions about the impact of human life on the planet. After a poignant foreword by Al Gore, as well as his own illuminating introduction, McKibben begins with the work of a writer, thinker, and activist ahead of his time, Henry David Thoreau, and ends the volume with Rebecca Solnit's essay, "The Thoreau Problem." She notes that many people think of Thoreau only as a man alone observing nature, but the author of "Civil Disobedience," before enjoying his day of huckleberry picking, spent a night in jail rather than pay taxes to a government guilty of ignoring the higher laws of nature. This vast and varied collection, arranged chronologically, includes many seminal names, such as John Muir, Rachel Carson, and Wendell Berry, and some that are less well known or unexpected, like Benton MacKaye, Caroline Henderson, P. T. Barnum, and Philip K. Dick. Most of the selections derive from longer prose works, but there is also a smattering of poems, song lyrics, and cartoons. Although the heft of the volume might scare away some teens, others may realize that they could easily read bits and pieces, and that they would benefit greatly by any amount of time spent in these pages. Numerous photographs, many in full color, are

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If you have a library, and this is not on your shelf, you do not have a library. This is a must have for any library. The excerpts are wonderful, from Muri to Thoreau, this book is packed full of environmental historical writings that just make you think. The organization is great, and the aesthetics are superb. I found nothing lacking about this book. It even includes a silk ribbon bookmark.

There is perhaps no book more influential to my thoughts about our world, our environment, and our contributions $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\tilde{A}$ $\hat{A}$ $\rightarrow\tilde{A}$ $\hat{A}$ • good and bad. One need not read through this giant collection all at once; however, its progression is lovely. I recommend *American Earth* for any classroom studying the sciences, sociology, political science, law or literature. There are so many themes to explore regarding how "environmental" writings have shaped our cultural landscape.

Wonderful book and writings. I recommend for everyone to read this because it opens your mind to different outlooks on the relationship between man and the environment. American Earth changed my life.

Amazing book. With so many different perspectives from various authors, this book covers a lot of interesting information and keeps the reader intrigued.

This is a great compilation of environmental writing. I originally bought this book as a college textbook but enjoyed it so much that I actually gave a copy to my friend as a Christmas gift. It is a very well done book.

great collection of lit about the environment. stays by my toilet and guests really like it.

Excellent book

Perfect condition!

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