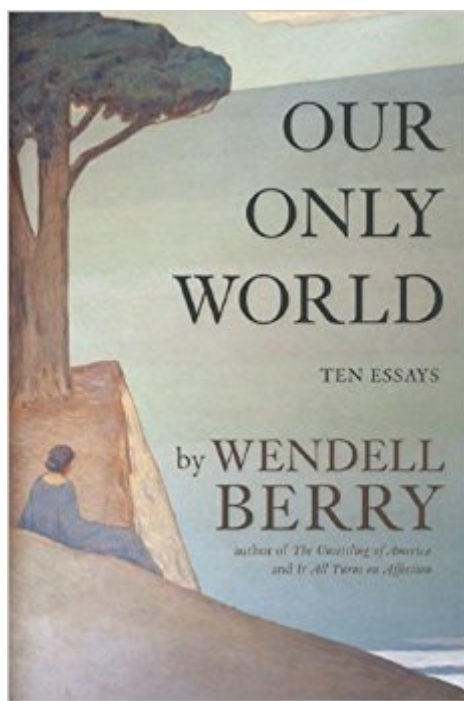


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Our Only World: Ten Essays



Synopsis

Since the Second World War ended, America has performed like a gyroscope losing its balance, wobbling this way and that, unable to settle into itself and its own great promise. Wendell Berry has been a voice for that promise, a voice for reason and hope and urgent concern. As the United States prepares to leave its long war in Afghanistan, it now must contemplate the necessity of sending troops back to Iraq, recalling General Colin Powell's advice to President Bush: "If you break it, you own it," as the world's hot spots threaten to spread over the globe with the ferocity of a war of holy terror and desperation. The planet's environmental problems respect no national boundaries. From soil erosion and population displacement to climate change and failed energy policies, American governing classes are paid by corporations to pretend that debate is the only democratic necessity and that solutions are capable of withstanding endless delay. Late Capitalism goes about its business of finishing off the planet. And we citizens are left with a shell of what was once proudly described as The American Dream. In this new collection of eleven essays, Berry confronts head-on the necessity of clear thinking and direct action. Never one to ignore the present challenge, he understands that only clearly stated questions support the understanding their answers require. For more than fifty years we've had no better spokesman and no more eloquent advocate for the planet, for our families, and for the future of our children and ourselves.

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Customer Reviews

I've read all of Mr. Berry's essays, from his very first up to and including this collection. I believe these are some of the best he has ever written. They are mature, thoughtful, and wise. His writing

style is deliberate, and his essays here are sometimes lengthy but never boring. They pull you in and require participation on your part, not just a skimming over or a diversionary read. Whoever wrote the official summary for the book shown on 's title page (and elsewhere), did a very poor job. It doesn't accurately reflect the content of the book and the intelligence, passion, and compassion in his work. Reading some of these won't make you feel good, and that's not Mr. Berry's purpose. But I guarantee they will make you feel, and for an essayist, that's a worthy accomplishment. I wish Wendell Berry was more widely read than he is. He's an American treasure, a true patriot, and smart as hell. One final note: I enjoyed the physical size of the hardcover. It's smaller than his latest collections of poetry, and easy to grasp and read. The font is clear, the line spacing on the pages perfect, so buy this, borrow it, or whatever- just get ahold of a copy and enjoy Wendell at his best.

Wendell Berry never fails. You can open to any random page and be drawn in by his clear logic and real world examples. "There can be no balance between freedom and secret police, freedom and universal suspicion, freedom and tyranny. There is only choice." Be ready for many more.

For most if not all of his adult life, writer Wendell Berry (born 1934) has been remarkably consistent in his belief and his worldview that the industrialization of America had created a kind of violence upon the land, communities, and the people. In more than 50 works of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction, he's adhered to that belief, which is informed by his Christian faith. Industrialization includes everything from an agriculture dependent upon fossil fuels and chemicals and mining practices that scour the landscape to the destruction of forests. He sees both major political parties have having facilitated this, and indeed often with the collusion of environmental groups. And he sees corporate capitalism as having wreaked destruction upon the political, social, and economic landscapes as well as the physical landscape. In "Our Only World: Ten Essays," Berry continues his discussion of that violence and destruction, along with a focus on examples of where he sees people are making a difference. The title is something of a misnomer; the 10 essays are actually 10 articles, speeches and essays. But they are simultaneously vintage Berry and contemporary Berry. And he has much to say, and much that needs to be listened to and heeded. The two longest essays in the book are the fullest discussions of his philosophy and belief. "A Forest Conversation" discusses historical forestry and logging practices but focuses on a family in Pennsylvania that has undertaken sustainable forestry for decades. "Our Deserted Country" focuses on agriculture, and considers how industrialized agriculture has changed local communities, the land, our attitudes about the land, and

even our attitudes about the value of people. "Caught in the Middle" tackles two social issues that Berry sees as connected to what industrialization has wrought: abortion and homosexual marriage. He generally opposes the first and supports the second, but he laments that both have become so politicized that the middle ground has essentially been destroyed. Even if you disagree with him on these issues, his gentle and thoughtful arguments will at least make you consider just how well your own beliefs are thought out. And his arguments are well worth reading. "Our Only World" is not a long book but it is a worthwhile one. Much of what he says resonates with common sense, and much of what he says about industrialization is, I would say, on the mark. The question, as he well knows, is what do we do about it.

In this collection of ten essays, Berry once again etches out a pathway towards good work, living, and neighborliness that are both a cause for reflection and a source of hope for a better world.

Was able to pick up a copy at a local bookstore as I wasn't able to fulfill as promised. I devoured the ten essays in one day as they are compelling and thought provoking. Wendell Berry is a KY & USA & Global voice!

As always Wendell Berry is thinking outside the lines and coming up with ideas that we all would be well advised to ponder. His description of the importance of knowing the land is one example. It's not good enough to just know and study forests, one should study and walk through and really get to know a forest in all its variety and mini ecosystems. Each forest is unique in its layout and parts, we can only understand that through truly being in it over many years. "This is why it is important for good foresters both to stay put and to have local successors. The US Forest Service makes a practice of moving people around.... Troy's idea, on the contrary, is to stay in place himself, and to hire local people for life." Several times we have been privileged to hear Wendell Berry speak at The Prairie Festival at The Land Institute. Wes Jackson and Wendell are kindred spirits. "But I want to suggest that the kind of science practiced at The Land Institute is itself a great and necessary resource. It is by definition a local science, carried on conscientiously in the contexts of the local ecosystem and the local human community. Whatever is developed in that place will require local adaptation, and the careful employment of many minds in other places. This science, moreover, is carried on with respect for local nature and local humanity." After laying out the problems he sees in how we currently live in the world Wendell suggests: "Or maybe we could give up saving the world and start to live savingly in it."

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