



Reading the Rocks: The Autobiography of the Earth

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To many of us, the Earth's crust is a relic of ancient, unknowable history. But to a geologist, stones are richly illustrated narratives, telling gothic tales of cataclysm and reincarnation. For more than four billion years, in beach sand, granite, and garnet schists, the planet has kept a rich and idiosyncratic journal of its past. Fulbright Scholar Marcia Bjornerud takes the reader along on an eye-opening tour of Deep Time, explaining in elegant prose what we see and feel beneath our feet. Both scientist and storyteller, Bjornerud uses anecdotes and metaphors to remind us that our home is a living thing with lessons to teach. Containing a glossary and detailed timescale, as well as vivid descriptions and historic accounts, *Reading the Rocks* is literally a history of the world, for all friends of the Earth.

Reading the Rocks: The Autobiography of the Earth Details

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Author : Marcia Bjornerud

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From Reader Review Reading the Rocks: The Autobiography of the Earth for online ebook

Alyssa W says

Interesting, but not my cup of tea. While the subject is interesting - what we can infer about the history of the earth from its geology - the writing is dry and seems to suffer from an overactive thesaurus. I hate when large, esoteric words are used when they can be easily substituted with "normal" ones. Witnessing this pontification moves my review from a 3 to a 2. It really put a damper on the book.

Peter Tillman says

3.5 stars.

ScienceTeacher321 says

I enjoyed her mix of scientific and narrative writing; this is often a difficult combination for writers/scientists. She does it very well!

Marie says

fascinating, and very readable

Nicholas A Fry says

While this book is sold as some sort of geology book, the heart of the work reaches for a sort of ecological teleology. It's a love your mother book, heavy on metaphor and analogies. Reaching back to the employment of metaphors, this was an awful use of them. Nonfiction is something I'm plainly used to reading. This was often intangible, difficult to follow, and unnecessarily convoluted by analogies with little cohesion. Throughout the read, the often lengthy metaphors or analogies in passing would drop their heads into streams of scientific thought, blowing the point out of the water. By the time I was finished, I'd forgotten this was a geology book and I would've rather read something else.

Mary Brown says

What an amazing book for the person who wants to go deeper into geology...why rocks look like they do...how continents formed and are still morphing...how concepts of evolution and cycles of geologic phases relate to all of life. Enjoyed author's pithy writing style and basic analogies to explain scientific concepts. Be

a dream to take a class from Marcia B. This book should be in every high school and college library.

Lynne says

Though this book seems a bit like a textbook, the author, a structural geologist, narrates a story here with even a bit of humor interspersed with facts. I learned a lot about the way people interpret information from rocks, the atmosphere, ice cores, the deep ocean. Earth is very much an active, changing system. For the most part the systems function well by correcting themselves when necessary. The regeneration of the earth's crust through volcanism and subduction is continuous. The huge ocean currents function to regulate temperature; they could be affected by fast-melting glaciers reducing the salinity of the ocean. A very delicate temperature and moisture range is required for the growth of plants. How all of these systems work together is the focus of this book.

Courtney says

Having taken Geology in college as my chosen science, I was naturally drawn to this book and also glad for that background knowledge. Reading the Rocks goes deep (for a non-scientist) in a number of areas, which I enjoyed, but it was not wise to delve in just before bed as I often did. The author's writing style is cleverly floral, and I found myself looking up words every so often. One thing I didn't expect but gained from this book was a renewed appreciation for the incredibly small odds that Earth would create an atmosphere suitable for sparking life and that it continues to reset/rebalance in a way that might wipe out some species but always sustains existence as a whole.

Darkvine says

A geology book that reads like a good novel.

The story of Earth keeps you entertained until the last page.

Recommended as an introduction to geology, or to show anybody that geology needn't be a dull long word salad to laymen.

(I read a Dutch translation myself.)

Adam says

Reading the Rocks is a perfect book for me, since its two themes, geology and humanity's atrocities against the planet, are both things that fascinate me more than most things. And as a pop geology book, Bjornerud makes a contribution worth reading alongside books that are perhaps better written or give more information, like Richard Fortey's Earth, or Bill Bryson's A Short History of Nearly Everything. She does give information that is still new and fascinating after reading those two books.

However, the latter issue, which seems to be the major theme of the book and her personal preoccupation, is given very little treatment in the book. It is simply stated that we should change our attitude towards the Earth, that we should be less presumptuous and more respectful, and that we should consider our actions

more before we take them. She offers no analysis of what humans have done so far, nor does she give any suggestions for the reader about what they can do. She treats the whole of humanity as one individual, with particular attitudes towards the environment and an overarching consciousness and cohesive decision-making process, and then acts as though this unified human consciousness is her audience. This all ignores the fact that human actions collectively are determined as a result of natural social selection and emergence, not of conscious group decisions. And thus the problems we face will not be solved by mere attitude change. The social forces that are destroying our planet operate at a much deeper level than our personal ideologies and attitudes.

P.S. - This afternoon I went to a Q&A session with the author, who made it clear that the things I found fault with above. She apparently wanted to avoid being preachy or proselytizing, and instead merely present the evidence and her sentiment and let the reader judge for itself.

It is overall worth reading for its science value, but it is not particularly deep.

Converse says

When the author focuses on geology, I liked it very much. Good attempt to find homely metaphors for geological processes. When she start on how we're running everything into the ground, I got bored

Megan says

First of all, it's not really an AUTObiography, is it? Also, lots of mixed metaphors. Other than that, a little too preachy. Finally, a few good passages about geology.

Mason says

A good intro to earth sciences. Despite the title, this book is only partly about rocks. The reason I got it was to get an introduction to geology, and it gave me a little of that, but not as much as I was looking for.

But it does an admirable job of overview not only geology, but also covers the evolution of life, the origins of the solar system, and other far-flung subjects--all in 200 pages.

The sections on subjects I already knew well were still interesting, but I'm not sure how well the geology I learned in the book will stick, since those parts sometimes read more like a laundry list of facts than like a flowing narrative.

Bill Mutch says

This gal can really write. Among books in the genre "Science Not For Dummies." it's a standout. I had no background in geological earth science to speak of so I found the material rather dense (sorry, we're talking

rocks here) but Prof. Bjornerud explains her terms and uses parallels from common experience to help the reader relate. There's a glossary worth using. I've started reading this again. It's worth it, and I expect by the second time through I'll have learned enough to take on other works about this subject that's so often pushed aside in our scientific schooling. After returning a copy to the library, I've bought two, one for myself and one as a gift. Budget well spent.

Becky Loader says

Ah, Mother Earth, you have such a history! Why do we humans treat you so cruelly?
