



Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature

Linda Lear

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Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, published in 1962, did more than any other single publication to alert the world to the hazards of environmental poisoning and to inspire a powerful social movement that would alter the course of American history. This definitive, long-overdue biography shows how Carson, already a famous nature writer, became a reluctant reformer. It is a compelling portrait of the determined woman behind the publicly shy but brilliant scientist and writer.

Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature Details

Date : Published September 15th 1998 by Holt Paperbacks (first published 1994)

ISBN : 9780805034288

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Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Biography, Environment, Nature, Nonfiction, History, Science, Womens

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From Reader Review Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature for online ebook

Dewayne Stark says

My second bio of Carson and again the letters to Dorothy fill a large parts of the book.

Jack Coleman says

The Biography i read was from Henry holt and co.New York "The Life of the Author of Silent Spring" by Linda Lear. isbn 0-8050 3427-7.

A very moving biography of a great woman writer and scientist,whose life of hardship did not prevent her from saving the ecology from the greed and insensitivity of the established order.

Quote from the book: Albert Schweitzer "Modern man no longer knows how to forestall.He will end up by destroying the earth from which he and other living creatures draw their food."

Katie says

Excellent book on Rachel Carson's life. This book is written in an easy to read manner though there are a lot of names and sometimes the author switches between the first name and the last name which can be confusing.

Richard says

I recently read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and it left me wanting to know more about the author herself and the impact that her book had. (I did something very similar earlier this year with Nellie Bly; I sought out a biography of her after having read *Ten Days in a Mad House*.)

This book mostly provided what I was looking for. It did a very good job of relating the inspiration for *Silent Spring*, the process of researching it and writing it and publishing it, and the aftermath of the book's publication. I wish, however, that the afterword had addressed the influence that Carson's book had over the longer term. The narrative ended shortly after Carson's death, which wasn't very long after *Silent Spring* was published.

The book started rather slowly. At times I felt I was in danger of getting bogged down in it. I think too many pages were devoted to Rachel Carson's first few decades, before she became a famous author. In those years, her life wasn't that interesting. She went to school. She spent time with her mother. She looked at birds. She looked at crabs. She had a few articles published in magazines. She had a job writing government publications. Sometimes I felt that I was reading about every walk that Rachel took and about every meal that she shared with a friend. I'm beginning to understand why there are so few biographies of people who write pamphlets for the government. This biography would have been better, if less thorough, if about 50 pages were trimmed from the first third of the book. But the book does improve by around the seventh

chapter.

I did find it curious that Linda Lear, the author, evaded any discussion of Carson's sexuality. I realize that it's definitely not the most important thing about her, and that the exact nature of Carson's relationship with Dorothy Freeman will likely be forever unknown, but I would have thought that Lear would at least have said something like, "the exact nature of Carson's relationship with Dorothy Freeman will likely be forever unknown." I can tell that Lear at least considered addressing this. The bibliography (and yes, I do read, or at least scan, bibliographies!) lists two books by Lillian Faderman: *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America* and *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women From the Renaissance to the Present*. Whatever understanding Lear gained from those two books does not seem to be reflected in the text.

Rachel Carson is definitely someone to be admired. The litany of medical issues that she endured during her final years, as she was working on *Silent Spring* is just brutal to read about. She had a strong conviction that she was doing something important (and she was!), and she had the strength and determination to keep going and to keep living until she had completed her task. I'm glad I got to know her, both through the book that she wrote and the book that was written about her.

Kim says

I love the book. It is obvious that Linda Lear took a great deal of effort to uncover little known facts. It was like getting to know Rachel Carson-including her childhood, her tough time at Chatham and her time at Wood Hole. I was thrilled to hear that it was one of her senior managers who said, "This won't do-you need to edit this for Atlantic Monthly" and how Rachel would say that the boss was her first literary agent!!

Sarah Boon says

When I first started reading Linda Lear's detailed descriptions of Carson's high school teachers, I thought it was going to be an exceedingly tedious and overly detailed biography. Nothing could be further from the truth. Lear has done excellent and thorough research (much like Carson did for *Silent Spring*, I would imagine) to bring us the life of Carson as a multi-faceted, interesting, and intelligent woman with a wide circle of friends and colleagues and a passion for the environment and writing. I was drawn into the book by the 2nd chapter and could hardly put it down until I finished it.

Angela Joyce says

I was simultaneously inspired and heartbroken while reading this book. What an amazing woman, and what a sexist era she lived in. I think people appreciate her more now. They'd better.

Mary says

Every Nature lover should read this book. What a great activist in a time when women scientists were limited in number as well as limited in power. I admire her strength and ambition. And if you haven't read Silent Spring, read it too. Much of what she wrote is still true today.

stephanie cassidy says

Just brilliant. Endearing and thorough. Would that this woman were able to stay with us for longer than she did. Compassionate, tough, factual and fiercely loving. A hero. A splendid human being.

Liz says

I knew of Rachel Carson before I read this book – rather, I knew that she had written Silent Spring, which I knew was a defining book of the modern ecology movement. But reading Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature introduced me for the first time to Rachel Carson, the woman. And, as always when I am intrigued by a person, I want to read everything by her and about her – hence, the addition of all of Carson's works to my reading list!

Natylie Baldwin says

This book made me want to read Silent Spring more than before, considering just what it took for Ms. Carson to write it -- a long and grueling bout with the cancer that would eventually kill her. There were times when I was surprised by just how ill she was (various infections and other maladies due to a weakened immune system in addition to the cancer and radiation treatments themselves). Yet so many times she rallied again in order to finish the project and to have a little more time with her great nephew whom she had cared for after his mother succumbed several years before to diabetes complications.

Interestingly enough, I first want to read Carson's The Sea Around Us, a book about the ocean -- a love that I share. This book won every award and accolade short of a Pulitzer and established Carson as a top science writer who could convey nature with scientific accuracy and poetic prose.

The only mild criticism I have of this book is that it seemed to get bogged down in too many details that were a bit redundant. But overall it's a very good and thorough biography of a woman whose quiet determination helped initiate an important understanding of ecology and our place in it.

Merilee says

I'd give it 3.5 stars. Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring* and *The Sea Around Us*, was a brilliant scientist and beautiful writer. This book, while extensively documented, gives more than one needs or wants to know of Rachel's every move. The story could have been told in half the 500 pages.

Phillip Rhoades says

I could only recommend this text to the most ardent of biography nuts. While I was pleased to learn more about one of the greats of environmentalism I could have done without so much detail. All the benefits of the biography are outweighed by the density of the text.

Susan says

Linda Lear writes a sensitive and detailed account of Rachel Carson's personal and professional life. I recommend this book for anyone interested in our political and environmental history. "*Silent Spring*" by Rachel Carson brought the attention of the general public to the issues of environmental health.

Tasha says

A brilliant and astonishing biography of a brilliant and astonishing person.
