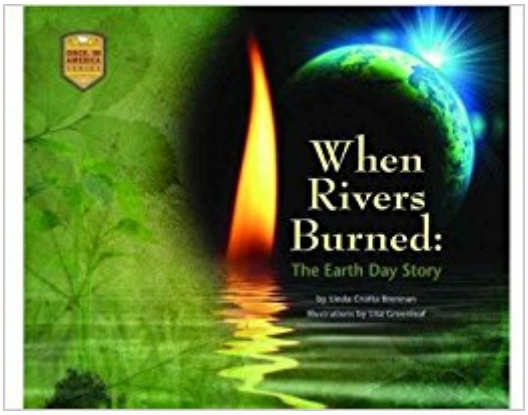
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When Rivers Burned: The Earth Day Story (Once, In America)



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Synopsis

Once, in America... chemicals killed plants and animals. Cars and factories filled the air with toxic fumes. Oil spills destroyed ocean life. The sewage floating along America’s rivers was so thick it sometimes caught fire. The Earth was dying. Senator Gaylord Nelson believed that attitudes about ecology could change if people understood what was happening. He charged student organizer, Denis Hayes, with setting a plan for a national Earth Day in motion. What these men began on April 22, 1970, would change the world for the better.

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Customer Reviews

Once, in AmericaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| chemicals killed plants and animals. Cars and factories filled the air with toxic fumes. Oil spills destroyed ocean life. The sewage floating along AmericaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s rivers was so thick it sometimes caught fire. The Earth was dying. Senator Gaylord Nelson believed that attitudes about ecology could change if people understood what was happening. He charged student organizer, Denis Hayes, with setting a plan for a national Earth Day in motion. What these men began on April 22, 1970, would change the world for the better.

Disclaimer: Linda Brennan is a dear friend.This is a nice, succinct, historical treatment written by someone who lived through it. Her facts gibe with my recollection of the times and the events, although her politics shines through here and there. But since this is a children’s book, she really

can’t get too deep into the weeds there. And I don’t necessarily buy her causation arguments. A happened, B happened, C happened, so therefore D. Having said that, all these things DID happen in and around the time and D did happen, so while I may quibble with the logical connections she proposes, the facts are what they are and she presents them very well. Very entertaining. The layout is also inviting: lots of sidebars with factoids sprinkled in.On a personal note, I can remember going to school in the city and, if I exhaled really hard, I could taste the sulfur in my mouth. Yuck. This book brought back many unpleasant memories and serves as a good overview of the "bad old days."While a children’s book, I think adults will appreciate it just to remind ourselves how far we’ve come.

My husband and I were alive in the days before Earth Day and love that Linda Crotta Brennan has collected so much information to remind us of the improvements in how we treat the earth. We are thinking about going to some of the sites, like the Cuyahoga River, to see how it looks now. We remember this history and have bought When Rivers Burned for our grown children, given away our copy, and boght another so that we can remind ourselves of why we have Earth Day and continue to work for environmental protections.

I am old enough to remember the first Earth Day in 1970. But at the time I was not old enough to understand the issues that made Earth Day necessary. Nor did I know anything about the people who made it happen. Now I do.WHEN RIVERS BURNED is part biography, part environmental thriller. It opens with brief synopses of crucial environmental catastrophes in this country: the unchecked use of DDT, the killer smog in a small industrial town, the flaming Cuyahoga River. It immediately hooks the reader in. I can’t imagine any child not being fascinated by the idea of a river so polluted it was set afire. Period photos are used to good effect to illustrate to young readers who are (thankfully) used to a cleaner world that once, yes, rivers burned and a hand stuck into polluted water came out gloved with black goo. Colorful illustrations are also used to complement the photos.These stories are interspersed with biographies of key players in the Earth Day movement, Gaylord Nelson and Denis Hayes. The author sets their lives in historical context to detail the chronology of how the first Earth Day was born, complete with all its initial setbacks. The book is well-written and Brennan patiently draws all the threads together, revealing what happened to the smog-filled town and silent skies, and extending her coverage to present day oil spills. It is also quite nicely laid out, with a large number of interesting sidebars on everything from a mini-biography of Mahatma Gandhi to the first earth Day ad to lyrics from HAIR. The sidebars help to flesh out the

narrative and give a great feel of what it was like to live in the days of hippies and sit-ins.A highly recommended book for any young reader interested in science, politics, or in the environment. Also recommended for classroom use in teaching about Earth Day.

This is a lovely book with all kinds of illustrations--photographs, drawings, charts, and text boxes. I feel a little superficial talking first thing about how the book looks, but appearances make a book easier to read, particularly a nonfiction book. "When Rivers Burned" was also brought out by a smaller publisher, and its appearance is an example of how nice a product they can turn out.Crotta Brennan does a good job here laying out her material as a narrative. She begins with the pre-Earth Day problems that led to the activism that led to the political action that led to Earth Day. It’s not just an environmental book, it’s a good beginner nonfiction book. I can see this book being recommended to upper elementary students so they can learn what nonfiction should be and how they should read it.

Linda Crotta Brennan has done a fabulous job weaving a story out of the complex political, social, cultural, scientific, and environmental developments leading up to the celebration of the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. This is a wonderful history for mid-and older elementary students, as well as adults. Facts are presented in an entertaining and visually engaging way through clear and compelling text, archival photos, illustrations, and graphic elements. Readers will learn about key politicians, scientists, and organizers involved in the creation, growth, and institutionalization of this national day dedicated to the environment and its preservation.

A fast-paced narrative, lots of visual interest, and an optimistic story arc will inspire or fortify young readers’ (and may reinspire their "teachers’") desire to save the earth. Brennan expertly sidesteps the doom and gloom which has plagued the environmental movement by highlighting the history of a handful of environmental disasters which have largely been resolved. Alongside, she profiles the individuals who created worldwide awareness and activism. The message that small actions will save the planet (and the enemy-- bigger than the polluters and pollutants themselves-- is inaction) is powerful for readers of any age.

Excellent book and really well written. With all the attempts to deregulate and overturn important pollution laws, it’s also a timely book.

Well written. I LOVED this book.

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