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Young Adult Nonfiction

The End: 50 Apocalyptic Visions from Pop Culture That You Should Know about... before It's Too Late

Zest Books
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Freelance writer and editor Laura Barcella has capitalized on the whole 2012 mythos with this compilation of fifty pop-culture items (books, films, music, TV series, art and comic books among them) which have the end of the world as their focus.

The book is organized alphabetically, which makes looking up a title or item easy. All the photographs used to illustrate each entry appear in black and white, lending the pages a subtle coherence. Each entry is composed of the basic information on the work being covered, the creator's inspiration for it, an "Unforgettable Moment" box, Barcella's commentary on the impact of the work, and selected quotes from the work.

Teen readers will likely recognize most of the contemporary items, particularly the films and musical works. Barcella has included *Frankenstein* author Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* (1826), which general readers may not know. This is the key ingredient in Barcella's choices for inclusion: the works range through centuries, not mere decades. There is arguably something in each entry where the reader will learn something new, though the reader may not notice the learning part of the reading experience. Barcella has seamlessly woven this aspect into the text, not an easy task to do well.

Though *The End* is intended for the Young Adult audience, adults who are fond of disasters in their various artistic forms should also enjoy it. Barcella's prose never talks down to her readers, and the humor is gently scattered throughout the text portions. The information is quite thorough, but not footnoted, which—considering it's a pop-culture book—isn't a fault. Because we live in the digital age, readers can conduct web searches on anything in this book and zero in on sources, if that's their choice. Most readers, however, should be content to sit back, relax, and follow Barcella's tour of "The End Of The World As We Know It" (written and performed originally by REM).

J. G. Stinson