

## This Land Is Our Land: The Struggle for a New Commonwealth

**Jedediah Purdy**

Princeton University Press (Sep 17, 2019)

Hardcover \$22.95 (192pp)

978-0-691-19564-3

Jedediah Purdy's reflective essay collection *This Land Is Our Land* highlights the struggle Americans face when it comes to caring for the land and the environment.

Purdy observes that "Land is perennially the thing we share that holds us apart" and suggests that land ownership comes with wielding power over others. That is just one of the key themes articulated in this concise, thought-provoking volume.

The book concentrates on the American West's public lands and the coal mines of Appalachia—areas symbolic of a much larger story that intertwines politics and the environment. The first chapter discusses the "war" waged over federal land in Utah as well as the "war" on coal, pointing out that both demonstrate not just polarized perspectives, but how American landscapes and identities are shaped.

Following chapters delve into the effect of mining and mountaintop removal on the Appalachian region, as well as the impact of coal on climate change. The third chapter is a distinct departure: personal reflection on the 2016 presidential election. The next entry returns to environmental issues more specifically, acknowledging the roles that individuals, corporations, and the government play in the protection or peril of the environment. It observes that human infrastructure weighs the planet down and contributes to the ecological crisis, and works toward a brief and lucid entry on history of the environmental justice movement from the 1970s to the proposed "Green New Deal."

These thoughtful essays raise important issues that span the geographical and political landscape, resulting in a broad, historical perspective on environmentalism with an activist's view of the work yet to be done. Strong and disturbing, the text declares that "the world that may be coming to destroy us is also the world we have made."

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (September / October 2019)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*