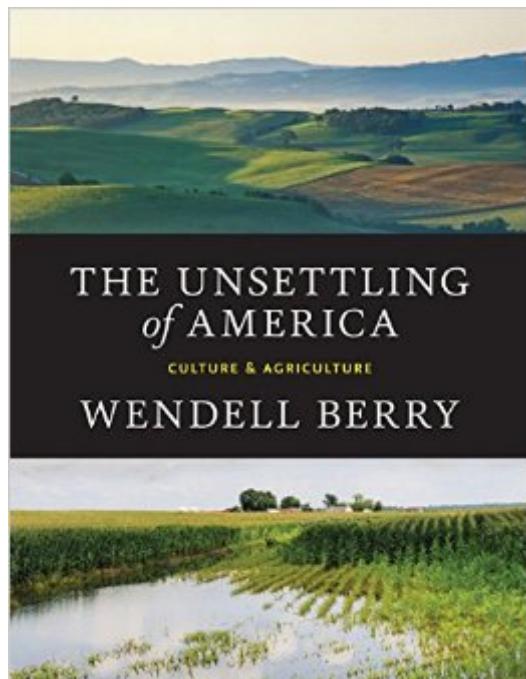


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The Unsettling Of America: Culture & Agriculture



Synopsis

Since its publication by Sierra Club Books in 1977, *The Unsettling of America* has been recognized as a classic of American letters. In it, Wendell Berry argues that good farming is a cultural development and spiritual discipline. Today's agribusiness, however, takes farming out of its cultural context and away from families. As a result, we as a nation are more estranged from the land; from the intimate knowledge, love, and care of it. Sadly, his arguments and observations are more relevant than ever. We continue to suffer loss of community, the devaluation of human work, and the destruction of nature under an economic system dedicated to the mechanistic pursuit of products and profits. Although this book has not had the happy fate of being proved wrong, • Berry writes, there are good people working • to make something comely and enduring of our life on this earth. • Wendell Berry is one of those people, writing and working, as ever, with passion, eloquence, and conviction.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There is a lot of beauty to this book, including the language and his "willingness" to discuss the theological nature of farming. I want to love this book, there are some amazing lines and sections, but it seems so tied to a certain form of "nostalgia" and a fear of change that seems to want the world to be "the way it was when I grew up" that fails to accept the reality of the present and the potential of "some technology". If I grew up on a farm, I too would resent the ideology that says "you can succeed by moving to the city" and those who stay home and farm are "failures" - yet that does not seem like a motivational argument for a realistic farming strategy. Yet, I cannot deny that there is

something deeply prophetic about this book written at a turning point in our society (1977) as he discusses the rise of an ethos of "greed" and a devaluing of "work" especially any form that involves using your hands. Additionally his discussion of valuing the opinions of university agricultural experts over those who have tilled the land for generation after generation speaks volumes of truth as to how we got into the mess we are in. His deeply Christian sentiments ring through chapter after chapter and speak to an earlier ethos of "right and wrong" that come from seeing the fruits of one's labor rather than practicing a "slash and burn" mentality driven by ego and greed among those without a solid moral compass. There is an amazing amount of truth in this book, but I think it lacks even a hint of true optimism that is the only hope for a better future.

Eye opening exposure of a fundamental human weakness for modern man. In the opening the author explains that the book is a criticism so if you're looking for immediate solutions or feel good stuff then don't read it. Here is a paragraph from page 20 that gets at the book's thrust. QUOTE TO END

We are dealing, then, with an absurdity that is not a quirk or an accident, but is fundamental to our character as a people. The split between what we think and what we do is profound. It is not just possible, it is altogether to be expected, that our society would produce conservationists who invest in stripmining companies, just as it must inevitably produce asthmatic executives whose industries pollute the air and vice-presidents of pesticide corporations whose children are dying of cancer. And these people will tell you that this is the way the "real world" works. They will pride themselves on their sacrifices for "our standard of living." They will call themselves "practical men" and "hardheaded realists." And they will have their justifications in abundance from intellectuals, college professors, clergymen, politicians. The viciousness of a mentality that can look complacently upon disease as "part of the cost" would be obvious to any child. But this is the "realism" of millions of modern adults.

I started reading this book with the hope of learning more about the practicalities of small scale vs large scale agriculture. While the book does mention some practical components, it speaks much more to ideologies and values. I was blown away by some of Berry's observations and predictions (written in the 70s) that still ring true if not truer today. This is an incredible book chock full of truths.

What every American needs to understand, but most are too busy to listen

Everyone should read this book! Written a long time ago but still very pertinent unfortunately.

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