Hop, Skip or Leap? Issues of Accessibility in the Literature of Rachel Carson, Janisse Ray, and Terry Tempest Williams

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Abstract

The last half of the twentieth century was a period when American women finally became able to use their voice to instigate political change. In the field of environmentalism there are notable examples of women successfully doing just that. From Rachel Carson whose seminal text Silent Spring (1962) warned a generation of the wider implications of indiscriminate pesticide use, to contemporary regional writers like Southern activist Janisse Ray and Utahan Terry Tempest Williams, the strategies that they have employed in their writing in order to instigate political change are often risky, bold, and innovative. But they are also democratic, seeking always to move the broader public to activism on behalf of the environment.

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References


Matthiessen, Peter, ed. Courage for the Earth: Writers, Scientists, and Activists Celebrate the Life and Writing of Rachel
playwrights, writes in the lengthened shadow of Silent Spring. Quite a number, in fact, allude to her and her book directly, either taking explicit inspiration from Carson and her work or responding to them. Nature writers who explicitly speak Included are pieces by famous writers and environmentalists E.O. Wilson, Jim Lynch, Sandra Steingraber, Al Gore, John Elder, John Hay, Janisse Ray, Terry Tempest Williams, Freeman House, Robert Michael Pyle, and Carson biographer Linda Lear. The assembled do attest to the multi-faceted success of Rachel Carson, with each writer dwelling on different aspects of her achievement. Rachel Carson was so influential because she was many things. This work will make this obvious to college students and the general public, and may also provide new insights to scholars who already know a great deal about Carson. Peter Matthiessen writes that she was foremost a writer, not a crusader.