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Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life Of Garbage



Synopsis

Eat a take-out meal, buy a pair of shoes, or read a newspaper, and you're soon faced with a bewildering amount of garbage. The United States is the planet's number-one producer of trash. Each American throws out 4.5 pounds daily. But garbage is also a global problem; the Pacific Ocean is today six times more abundant with plastic waste than zooplankton. How did we end up with this much rubbish, and where does it all go? Journalist and filmmaker Heather Rogers answers these questions by taking readers on a grisly, oddly fascinating tour through the underworld of garbage. Said to "read like a thriller" (Library Journal), *Gone Tomorrow* excavates the history of rubbish handling from the 1800s to the present, pinpointing the roots of today's waste-addicted society. With a "lively authorial voice" (New York Press), Rogers draws connections between modern industrial production, consumer culture, and our throwaway lifestyle. She also investigates controversial topics like the politics of recycling and the export of trash to poor countries, while offering a potent argument for change.

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Customer Reviews

In my archaeology class we learned about the importance of the village midden, or garbage pile, in determining the culture and practices of the people inhabiting that village. On that basis, future archaeologists are going to have a heyday trying to figure out our current civilization. *Gone Tomorrow*, the *Hidden Life of Garbage* by Heather Rogers is fascinating and depressing at the same time. There are fascinating tidbits such as the idea that garbage is a relatively recent

invention, that less than 300 years ago it would have been unthinkable to consign so much of our production to the trash heap so soon after it is produced. Before mass production and mass marketing, items were produced to be repaired and reused again and again and slogans such as "use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without" were common. There wasn't anything to throw away as even scraps of cloth became part of a quilt or rug. There are horrifying descriptions of garbage dumps such as Rikers Island: "The rats became so numerous and so large that the department imported dogs in an effort to eliminate the rats... there were more than one hundred dogs on the island, dogs which were never fed by authorities but lived solely on these rats." "Gases... were constantly exploding, erupting through the soil covering and busting into flames. ... When a hot spell would come along in the summer, the ground resembled a sea of small volcanoes, all breathing smoke and flames." Another disturbing idea brought out by Rogers is that the trucks that pick up your garbage and your recyclables may be dumping them into the same landfill because recycling often just isn't economically sustainable. But it's politically impossible to cut back the appearance of recycling.

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