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**Review: *The Green Reader:  
Essays toward a Sustainable Society***

**Edited by Andrew Dobson**

Reviewed by [Jeroen H.N. Broeders](#)  
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Dobson, Andrew, editor. THE GREEN READER: ESSAYS TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1991. 280 pp. US \$11.95 Paper ISBN: 1-56279-010-2. Recycled, acid-free paper.

THE GREEN READER: ESSAYS TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY is an anthology of excerpts from well-known "Green" books and articles. I began reading it with scepticism, not convinced such a collection of previously published material was necessary. Ultimately, however, my mistrust proved unjustified.

The editor, Andrew Dobson, a teacher at the University of Keele in the United Kingdom, presents an overview of what you might call 'Green Thinking.' The book includes pieces from such seminal works as SILENT SPRING, LIMITS TO GROWTH and SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL. In addition, it contains excerpts from articles and books by lesser reknown, but probably more fundamental authors such as the American economist Herman Daly, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, and Garrett 'Tragedy of the Commons' Hardin. With such varied selections, Dobson has successfully represented a wide-range of environmentalist thought.

When compiling the THE GREEN READER, Dobson no doubt faced the problem of structure. His solution was to group the various pieces thematically (i.e., The Green Critique, The Green Society, Green Economics, Green Political Strategies, and Green Philosophy). Unfortunately, the result seems awkward, due to the interdisciplinary and all-embracing nature of many of the contributions. In the end, there is too much overlap between the different themes.

This is only a minor point of criticism, however, and it is easily compensated by the quality of each piece's introduction where Dobson points out its relevance to and context within the overall collection. Quite frankly, the introductions alone are sufficient reason to buy the book.

To whom could this book be useful? It is of no use whatsoever to

someone already well-versed in classic environmental works. However, it could be very useful to newcomers in the area such as college students, or environmental activists who haven't read all the relevant books completely. THE GREEN READER'S pieces are mostly well chosen and give a good overview of the various authors' ideas and opinions.

Personally, I believe THE GREEN READER would be especially useful for the whole breed of so-called 'single-issue environmentalists.' It would stimulate debate about specific environmental issues in a much wider context. Certainly one needn't agree with the political views of authors like the late Petra Kelly, or with the ideas of James Lovelock, to conclude that Andrew Dobson's book provides food for thought.

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