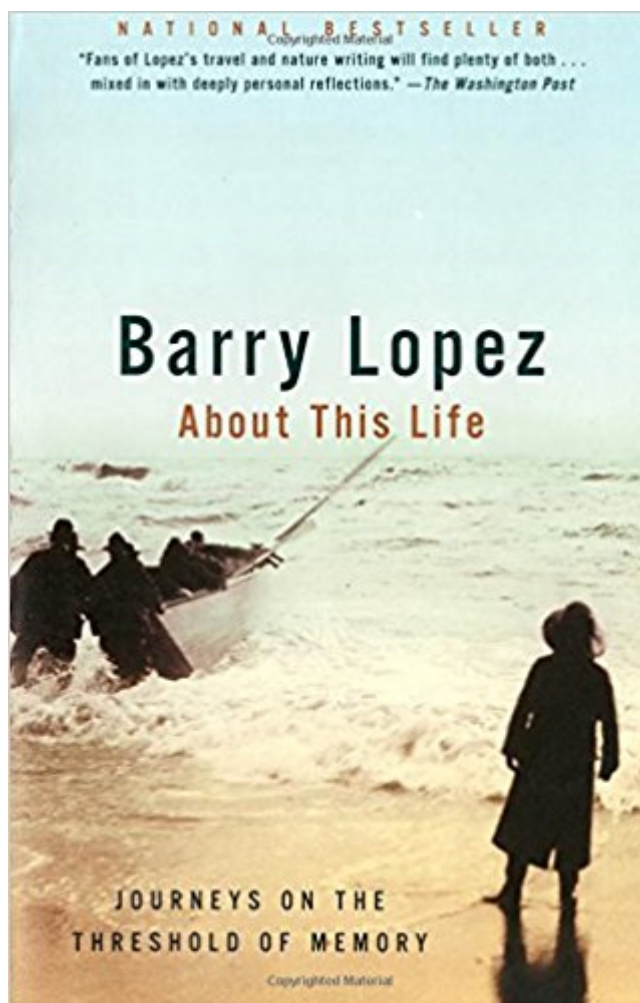


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About This Life: Journeys On The Threshold Of Memory



Synopsis

The acclaimed National Book Award winner gives us a collection of spellbinding new essays that, read together, form a jigsaw-puzzle portrait of an extraordinary man. With the publication of his best-selling *Of Wolves and Men*, and with the astonishing originality of *Arctic Dreams*, Barry Lopez established himself as that rare writer whose every book is an event, for both critics and his devoted readership. Now, in *About This Life*, he takes us on a literal and figurative journey across the terrain of autobiography, assembling essays of great wisdom and insight. Here is far-flung travel (the beauty of remote Hokkaido Island, the over-explored Galápagos, enigmatic Bonaire); a naturalist's contention (Why does our society inevitably strip political power from people with intimate knowledge of the land small-scale farmers, Native Americans, Eskimos, cowboys?); and pure adventure (a dizzying series of around-the-world journeys with air freight everything from penguins to pianos). And here, too, are seven exquisite memory pieces hauntingly lyrical yet unsentimental recollections that represent Lopez's most personal work to date, and which will be read as classics of the personal essay for years to come. In writing about nature and people from around the world, by exploring the questions of our age, and, above all, by sharing a new openness about himself, Barry Lopez gives us a book that is at once vastly erudite yet intimate: a magically written and provocative work by a major American writer at the top of his form.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Read. Find out what you truly believe. Get away from the familiar." This advice, given to a father

whose daughter wants to learn to write, is the organizing principle behind Barry Lopez's latest collection of essays and also the central theme behind his life as a writer. Author of 12 acclaimed books of nature writing, including the National Book Award-winning *Arctic Dreams*, Lopez is one of our most eloquent masters of the nearly lost art of paying attention. In this volume, a travelogue of journeys both inward and outward, he brings the same careful scrutiny to bear on the mystery of his own life and its interactions with the natural world. Lopez has always been interested in tearing down artificial divides between nature and culture, landscape and identity, and nowhere does he do so more powerfully than in *About This Life*. These essays cover ground from the remote (in the group of travel essays entitled "Out of Country") to the familiar ("Indwelling"), the personal to the archetypal ("Remembrance" and "An Opening Quartet"). Whether he's joyriding around the world with air cargo, performing burials for animals found dead by the side of the road, or lamenting the commodification of the American landscape, Lopez writes with a surgeon's precision, a musician's ear, and a painter's eye for beauty found in unexpected places. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Contemplating forces physical and metaphysical within the natural landscape, veteran author and National Book Award-winner Lopez (*Arctic Dreams*, etc.) here taps personal and collective memory to create an intimate history of man and place. In these 13 essays, most of which have appeared in periodicals like *Harper's* (where Lopez is a contributing editor) and the *Georgia Review*, he reveals a mind that is energetically curious, repeatedly making a 10-hour round-trip to kiln-fire pottery in a tradition that catches his interest, or taking a marathon trip involving 40 consecutive air-freight flights in order to explore worldwide exporting and importing. But, on the latter trip, he stops for a sunrise walk in Seoul to see "things that could not be purchased," and, in another essay, quietly meditates on the power of hands. This dichotomy reflects the world traveler who is nevertheless rooted to a particular piece of land in western Oregon, someone whose mind encompasses the grand and the truly particular. To really understand a specific geography, he notes, takes time. Lopez has the kind of intimacy, of immersion, that makes the most ordinary encounter extraordinary. He deciphers nature's enigmatic intimations, as when he compares two proximate but distinct environments, saying: "The shock to the senses comes from a different shape to the silence, a difference in the very quality of light, in the weight of the air." For Lopez, the world's topography is memory made manifest; it stimulates Lopez's own recall and that, in turn, forces us to really think. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

One of my most favorite writers. I wish I had half this talent.

This is reading to awaken and open one's mind to see, feel, and hear what we are surrounded by as we live our days. These memories amazingly draw the reader into provoking journeys of the senses that caused me to reflect not only about nature, but even the assembly of the Boeing 747 and its connection to the world's air freight. The author's insights about the world around us has stimulated my senses for years, and the second reads give me the same sensations that I experienced the first time I picked up any of Mr. Lopez's books. Barry Lopez remains among the top 10 of my favorite authors.

Barry Lopez reminds one a bit of Oliver Sacks in terms of his ability to draw global conclusions about the human experience from the subjects of his investigation. And like the better non-fiction writers today, he brings the story-telling skill of a fine novelist to the art of narrative non-fiction. The introduction is an exceptionally fine piece of writing. Highly, highly recommended.

Very insightful look into the mind of Barry Lopez and why he writes. He paints beautiful word pictures. He seems very honest in his self revelations.

good book, on time, as promised

Thoughtful, if I had to choose one word to sum up Lopez's writing, would be my selection. He doesn't merely present a series of images and situations; he traces the significance of his moments to their wider impact on the world. Keep repeating beauty and purpose; never forget their importance.

Nicely written, as is all his stuff.

Best book I have read in 10 years.

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