



Small Wonder: Essays

By Barbara Kingsolver



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In her new essay collection, the beloved author of *High Tide in Tucson* brings to us, out of one of history's darker moments, an extended love song to the world we still have.

Whether she is contemplating the Grand Canyon, her vegetable garden, motherhood, genetic engineering, or the future of a nation founded on the best of all human impulses, these essays are grounded in the author's belief that our largest problems have grown from the earth's remotest corners as well as our own backyards, and that answers may lie in both those places.

Sometimes grave, occasionally hilarious, and ultimately persuasive, *Small Wonder* is a hopeful examination of the people we seem to be, and what we might yet make of ourselves.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Readers familiar with Barbara Kingsolver will find that *Small Wonder*, a collection of 23 essays, shows the same sensitivity and thoughtfulness, the same rich knowledge of and love for the natural world, as her spellbinding novels. In "Knowing Our Place," she describes the two places in which she writes: a tin-roof cabin in Appalachia and her home in the Tucson desert. In "Setting Free the Crabs," she uses her daughter's decision not to take home a beautiful (and occupied) red conch shell from a Mexican beach to illustrate our own need to give up our sense of ownership of the earth, to resist "the hunger to possess all things bright and beautiful." Many of these pieces, like the lovely title essay, were written (or rewritten) in response to the events of September 11, which threw into relief the growing social and economic inequities that are so little remarked on in the American media. These are political essays, although Kingsolver is not a natural rhetorician; her prose is too supple and inclusive. She is more inclined to follow the turns of her mind, like water in a curving stream bed, than to hammer home a point or two. But she has a rare gift for apt allusion (from sources as wide-ranging as Robert Frost to Beanie Babies) and for the elegant use of facts and figures. And she is highly quotable. It is easy to imagine the speechwriters and activists of the next 10 years dipping into *Small Wonder* for inspiration and the perfect phrase. --Regina Marler

From Publishers Weekly

This book of essays by Kingsolver (The Poisonwood Bible, etc.) is like a visit from a cherished old friend. Conversation ranges from what Kingsolver ate on a trip to Japan to wonder over a news story about a she-bear who suckled a lost child to how it feels to be an American idealist living in a post-September 11 world. She tackles some sticky issues, among them the question of who is entitled to wave the American flag and why, and some possible reasons why our nation has been targeted for terror by angry fundamentalists and what we can do to ease our anxiety over the new reality while respecting the rest of planet Earth's inhabitants. Kingsolver has strong opinions, but has a gift for explaining what she thinks and how she arrived at her conclusions in a way that gives readers plenty of room to disagree comfortably. But Kingsolver's essays also reward her readers in other ways. As she puts it herself in "What Good Is a Story": "We are nothing if we can't respect our readers." Respect for the intelligence of her audience is apparent everywhere in this outstanding collection. Illus.

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From Library Journal

Don't be misled by the foreword and opening subject in novelist and essayist Kingsolver's new collection: this work is not all about our continuing anguish over September 11. Some of the essays do concern themselves with that fateful day and her reactions to it, but most are pieces on varied subjects written since her 1995 collection *High Tide in Tucson*. Some have been published before, like the three little gems Kingsolver co-wrote with her husband, Steven Hopp. The topics range from television to the homeless, Columbine to problems of writing about sex, poetry to the meaning of the flag. Throughout, Kingsolver seamlessly combines the personal and the political. Thus, an essay about her daughter Lily's chickens comments on world agriculture; watching a hummingbird build its nest becomes a springboard for informed and impassioned thinking about evolution and genetic engineering. Recommended for most collections in both academic and public libraries. Mary Paumier Jones, Westminster P.L., CO

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Marie Daugherty:

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