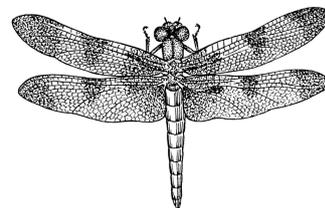


# IB Environmental Systems & Societies



Welcome to IB ESS class! To get you into the mood of the class you will need to read one of the books listed below. There are a variety from which to choose and a brief summary is included.

We do not have these books in our own library but there are a few that I was able to find pdf versions. You can purchase used books through various companies or use an online source. The pdf versions are available on an e-mail that will be sent to you.

## Summer Reading Assignment

1. Choose a book that *interests you* from the list.
2. Read the book over the summer (give yourself time to read and reflect)
3. Write a one and a half to two page paper (4 paragraph) summarizing what you you have read.
  - Paragraph 1: Introduce the book (author and title) and summarize its subject matter
  - Paragraphs 2 and 3: Describe two interesting facts or things you have learned (one paragraph for each). In each paragraph, include a telling quote from the book and supporting details, with parenthetical citations (i.e. page numbers).
  - Paragraph 4: Describe your biggest “a-ha” moment, telling about something that you read that surprised, shocked, or amazed you. Talk about why you might or might not recommend this book to someone else.
  - Include an MLA citation of the book.
  - When you save the document, put your name somewhere in the file name.
4. I am interested in hearing your voice, so do not worry about being too fancy.
5. **Due by Wednesday, August 20th** to me by e-mail: [echristenbury@aisv.it](mailto:echristenbury@aisv.it)

## Book Choices

### Eating Animals

by Jonathan Safran Foer

### The World is Blue

by Sylvia A. Earle

### The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind

by William Kamkwamba

### Voices from Chernobyl

by Svetlana Alexievich

### The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History

by Elizabeth Kolbert

### The Future of Life

by Edward O. Wilson

### The Wild Muir

by Lee Stetson

### Cadillac Desert

by Mark Reisner

### We are the Weather Makers

by Tim Flannery & Sally Walker

### Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth

by William Bryant Logan

### Cradle to Cradle

by Michael Braungart

### Our Stolen Future

by Theo Colborn

### Desert Solitaire

by Edward Abbey

## Brief Summaries of Books (summaries from Amazon.com)

### Eating Animals by Jonathan Safran Foer

Like many young Americans, Jonathan Safran Foer spent much of his teenage and college years oscillating between enthusiastic carnivore and occasional vegetarian. As he became a husband, and then a father, the moral dimensions of eating became increasingly important to him. Faced with the prospect of being unable to explain why we eat some animals and not others, Foer set out to explore the origins of many eating traditions and the fictions involved with creating them.

Traveling to the darkest corners of our dining habits, Foer raises the unspoken question behind every fish we eat, every chicken we fry, and every burger we grill. Part memoir and part investigative report, *Eating Animals* is a book that, in the words of the *Los Angeles Times*, places Jonathan Safran Foer "at the table with our greatest philosophers."

### The World is Blue by Sylvia A. Earle

A *Silent Spring* for our era, this eloquent, urgent, fascinating book reveals how just 50 years of swift and dangerous oceanic change threatens the very existence of life on Earth. Legendary marine scientist Sylvia Earle portrays a planet teetering on the brink of irreversible environmental crisis.

In recent decades we've learned more about the ocean than in all previous human history combined. But, even as our knowledge has exploded, so too has our power to upset the delicate balance of this complex organism. Modern overexploitation has driven many species to the verge of extinction, from tiny but indispensable biota to magnificent creatures like tuna, swordfish, and great whales. Since the mid-20th century about half our coral reefs have died or suffered sharp decline; hundreds of oxygen-deprived "dead zones" blight our coastal waters; and toxic pollutants afflict every level of the food chain.

Fortunately, there is reason for hope, but what we do—or fail to do—in the next ten years may well resonate for the next ten thousand. The ultimate goal, Earle argues passionately and persuasively, is to find responsible, renewable strategies that safeguard the natural systems that sustain us. The first step is to understand and act upon the wise message of this accessible, insightful, and compelling book.

### The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kamkwamba

*The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* is the immensely engaging and inspiring true account of an enterprising African teenager who constructed a windmill from scraps to create electricity for his entire community. William Kamkwamba shares the remarkable story of his youth in Malawi, Africa—a nation crippled by intense poverty, famine, and the AIDS plague—and how, with tenacity and imagination, he built a better life for himself, his family, and his village. The poignant and uplifting story of Kamkwamba's inspiration and personal triumph, co-written with Bryan Mealer, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* has already won ringing praise from former Vice President and Nobel Laureate Al Gore as well as Paolo Coelho, internationally bestselling author of *The Alchemist*.

### Voices from Chernobyl by Svetlana Alexievich

On April 26, 1986, the worst nuclear reactor accident in history occurred in Chernobyl and contaminated as much as three quarters of Europe. *Voices from Chernobyl* is the first book to present personal accounts of the tragedy. Journalist Svetlana Alexievich interviewed hundreds of people affected by the meltdown---from innocent citizens to firefighters to those called in to clean up the disaster---and their stories reveal the fear, anger, and uncertainty with which they still live. Comprised of interviews in monologue form, *Voices from Chernobyl* is a crucially important work, unforgettable in its emotional power and honesty.

## The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History by Elizabeth Kolbert

Over the last half a billion years, there have been five mass extinctions of life on earth.

Scientists around the world are currently monitoring the sixth, predicted to be the most devastating extinction event since the asteroid impact that wiped out the dinosaurs.

Elizabeth Kolbert combines brilliant field reporting, the history of ideas and the work of geologists, botanists and marine biologists to tell the gripping stories of a dozen species – including the Panamanian golden frog and the Sumatran rhino – some already gone, others at the point of vanishing.

The sixth extinction is likely to be mankind's most lasting legacy and Elizabeth Kolbert's book urgently compels us to rethink the fundamental question of what it means to be human.

## The Future of Life by Edward O. Wilson

One of the world's most important scientists, Edward O. Wilson is also an abundantly talented writer who has twice won the Pulitzer Prize. In this, his most personal and timely book to date, he assesses the precarious state of our environment, examining the mass extinctions occurring in our time and the natural treasures we are about to lose forever. Yet, rather than eschewing doomsday prophecies, he spells out a specific plan to save our world while there is still time. His vision is a hopeful one, as economically sound as it is environmentally necessary. Eloquent, practical and wise, this book should be read and studied by anyone concerned with the fate of the natural world.

## The Wild Muir by Lee Stetson

Here is an entertaining collection of John Muir's most exciting adventures, representing some of his finest writing. From the famous avalanche ride off the rim of Yosemite Valley to his night spent weathering a windstorm at the top of a tree to death-defying falls on Alaskan glaciers, the renowned outdoorsman's exploits are related in passages that are by turns exhilarating, unnerving, dizzying, and outrageous.

## Cadillac Desert by Mark Reisner

The story of the American West is the story of a relentless quest for a precious resource: water. It is a tale of rivers diverted and dammed, of political corruption and intrigue, of billion-dollar battles over water rights, of ecologic and economic disaster. In *Cadillac Desert* Marc Reisner writes of the earliest settlers, lured by the promise of paradise, and of the ruthless tactics employed by Los Angeles politicians and business interests to ensure the city's growth. He documents the bitter rivalry between two government giants, the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in the competition to transform the West.

Based on more than a decade of research, *Cadillac Desert* is a stunning expose and a dramatic, intriguing history of the creation of an Eden—an Eden that may be only a mirage.

## We are the Weather Makers by Tim Flannery & Sally Walker

First published for an adult readership, THE WEATHER MAKERS got kudos for its solid science and powerful message. Now this accessible edition speaks directly to young adults, offering a clear look at the history of climate change, how matters will unfold over the next century, and what we can do to prevent a cataclysmic future. Newly featured are twenty-five practical tips for living a greener lifestyle—at home, in school, in the community, and ultimately, on Earth.

## Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth by William Bryant Logan

“You are about to read a lot about dirt, which no one knows very much about.” So begins the cult classic that brings mystery and magic to “that stuff that won’t come off your collar.”

John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Saint Phocas, Darwin, and Virgil parade through this thought-provoking work, taking their place next to the dung beetle, the compost heap, dowsing, historical farming, and the microscopic biota that till the soil. With fresh eyes and heartfelt reverence, William Bryant Logan variously observes, “There is glamour to the study of rock”; “The most mysterious place on Earth is right beneath our feet”; and “*Dirt* is the gift of each to all.”

Whether Logan is traversing the far reaches of the cosmos or plowing through our planet’s crust, his delightful, elegant, and surprisingly soulful meditations greatly enrich our concept of “dirt,” that substance from which we all arise and to which we all must return.

## Cradle to Cradle by Michael Braungart

'Reduce, reuse, recycle' urge environmentalists; in other words, do more with less in order to minimize damage. But as architect William McDonough and chemist Michael Braungart point out in this provocative, visionary book, this approach only perpetuates the one-way, 'cradle to grave' manufacturing model, dating to the Industrial Revolution, that creates such fantastic amounts of waste and pollution in the first place. Why not challenge the belief that human industry must damage the natural world? In fact, why not take nature itself as our model for making things? A tree produces thousands of blossoms in order to create another tree, yet we consider its abundance not wasteful but safe, beautiful and highly effective.

## Our Stolen Future by Theo Colborn

...a book about the health and environmental threats created by man-made chemical contaminants that interfere with hormones in humans and wildlife.

Endocrine disrupting chemicals alter development of the fetus in the womb by interfering with the natural hormonal signals directing fetal growth. Their impacts, sometimes not detectable until years or decades after exposure, include reduced disease resistance, diminished fertility and compromised intelligence and behavior.

Our Stolen Future tells the story of how endocrine disruption was discovered, how it works what it means, and how families can protect themselves and their communities, all in clear, simple language intended for a general audience.

## Desert Solitaire by Edward Abbey

First published in 1968, *Desert Solitaire* is one of Edward Abbey's most critically acclaimed works and marks his first foray into the world of nonfiction writing. Written while Abbey was working as a ranger at Arches National Park outside of Moab, Utah, *Desert Solitaire* is a rare view of one man's quest to experience nature in its purest form.

Through prose that is by turns passionate and poetic, Abbey reflects on the condition of our remaining wilderness and the future of a civilization that cannot reconcile itself to living in the natural world as well as his own internal struggle with morality. As the world continues its rapid development, Abbey's cry to maintain the natural beauty of the West remains just as relevant today as when this book was written.