

[FREE] Greenhouse: The 200-Year Story of Global Warming

## Greenhouse: The 200-Year Story of Global Warming

*Gale E. Christianson*

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THE  
200-YEAR  
STORY  
OF  
GLOBAL  
WARMING

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**Gale E. Christianson : Greenhouse: The 200-Year Story of Global Warming** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Greenhouse: The 200-Year Story of Global Warming:

9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Science as storytellingBy MalvinGale Christianson has made the

science of global warming and climate change accessible to the general public with his book "Greenhouse." He has a knack for bringing the quirky personalities of the many scientists involved in the discovery of the greenhouse effect to life. He helps the reader easily understand the significance of each scientist's contribution and makes their scientific inquiries read like a great mystery novel. Gale's synthesis of material is creative. He includes the story of the Anasazi of the American southwest, the Viking settlement in Greenland and others when discussing the impact changing climactic conditions have had on humans in the past. The author includes profiles of scientists who theorized and then later documented the greenhouse effect (such as Svante Arrhenius) as well as the entrepreneurs whose inventions have contributed significantly to the problem (such as Ford). The author addresses the issue of why the earth experienced a slight cooling trend from the 1940s to the early 1970s, prior to the more recent period of steadily rising temperatures: the period in question witnessed twice the normal amount of volcanic activity, which helped block sunlight from reaching the earth. The evidence cited by the author strongly suggests that the earth is warming due to human activity. Yet, Christianson inexplicably accords the well-known greenhouse skeptic Fred Singer's criticisms of greenhouse theory more respect than this coal and oil industry-funded mouthpiece deserves. If the author did this in order to appear objective, he did so at the cost of confusing corporate propaganda with real science. In fact, my criticism of the book is that it contains precious little analysis. Christianson is a gifted storyteller, and no doubt many will enjoy his entertaining narrative. But the reader who seeks insight and understanding into why our society privileges technology at the expense of nature will need to look elsewhere. Still, I think Christianson has succeeded in his mission of writing a great book for the general interest science reader. It should help further the cause of making the science of global warming an increasingly popular topic of conversation in our society. 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Such a great book, so little interest... Why? By AJ Franklin A beautiful book full of understanding and love for the planet. Somehow I had a sense of dread going into this that what I would find would confirm many of the ideas in Al Gore's great "Earth in the Balance," and in fact they cite many of the same research studies and conclusions. And the last chapter of the book details why it is so necessary for government to be responsive and take a leadership role in caring for what we have left of our great inheritance of land, air and water. I loved the fascinating history of our planetary environment from back in the 18th and 19th century when men were sure that the answer to bad air was simply building a taller smokestack, all the way to Kyoto, where the Oil companies, in tandem with Republican Congressional majority maneuvers, tried to sabotage any efforts at cleaning up the environment, and largely succeeded. Now all we have left are the powerful forces of greed: Big Oil and Chemical money (read how they pandered scientists to join them against the Kyoto accords) against the fishes, the animals, the trees, and the health of humanity and our children and grandchildren. How can fish fight Big Oil company money and the politicians they control? I fear for our planet. We are on a slippery slope and big money--the attitude of "get yours and get out" may carry the day. "Nature never deceives us. It is always we who deceive ourselves." Rousseau 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A great synopsis... By Jessie Bader Gale Christianson gives a wonderful, dynamic historical account of global warming. Gale addresses so many aspects of the controversy we now know as global warming its difficult to summarize them. She explores 16th and 17th century scientists and their discoveries about the world, from evolution to the impacts of pollution, to the creation of the coal-burning engines that caused England to erect higher and higher smokestacks believing that the smoke would simply float away into the atmosphere. Gale also speaks of the global climate changes that have occurred across the history of humankind as we know it. She explains the tortuous trip that brought the Vikings to settle in Greenland, and the climate shifts that ceased their existence on the frosty continent. She explores the history of the Anasazi and the changes in their biospheres that chased them from their homes built high in the Southwestern US. Gale explains all the differing theories that address the effects of global warming, ending with the fact that we don't really know what the impact will be in the future. She dialogues the negotiations that occurred in Kyoto Japan and the political atmosphere that makes reductions in emissions so difficult. A wonderful account, reads like a novel with dynamic characters, interesting plot changes, and mysteries that may never be solved. Although it does not bring to light anything new to explain global warming, it is a superb overview of global warming as we know it, and why it is such a controversy today.

Greenhouse is the illuminating history behind a scientific idea that fills today's headlines. Christianson, author of *Edwin Hubble: Mariner of the Nebulae*, blends the research of a scholar with a novelist's storytelling skill. As the full range of its elements come into focus, global warming becomes both a memorable human drama and an integral part of our planet's history. An essential book for anyone interested in the history of science and the very nature of scientific inquiry and speculation.

From *Publishers Weekly* In an unorthodox blend of history, science and ecopolitics, Christianson (Edwin Hubble) makes a cogent case that global warming is realmost probably exacerbated by the massive consumption of fossil fuels with consequences that could include rising sea levels, spread of insect-borne diseases and epidemics of skin cancer as greenhouse gases destroy earth's protective ozone layer. A historian of science at Indiana State University, Christianson calls his gracefully written book the biography of a scientific idea. It traces the study of the phenomenon

of global warming from French revolutionary Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Fourier, who envisioned earth as a giant greenhouse, through Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius's 1896 prediction that accumulation of industrial pollutants in the atmosphere will gradually heat up the planet, to a slew of recent scientific evidence for global warming. The engaging text roams from Antarctica, where in 1985 geophysicist Joseph Farman discovered a continent-wide hole in the ozone layer, to Hawaii's Mauna Loa volcano, where in 1958 renegade geochemist/futurist Charles Keeling plotted the rhythmic breathing of the planet, confirming his discovery that atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are rising more rapidly than previously thought. Christianson works in colorful profiles of the Industrial Revolution's inventors and capitalist titans, as well as cautionary tales of disastrous climactic change involving the disappearance of the Anasazi Indians of the Southwest, the demise of Greenland's Vikings and the depression-era forced migration of Dust Bowl Okies. His concluding report on the 1997 UN conference in Kyoto, Japan, points up the reluctance of the U.S. to curb emissions of greenhouse gases and the outright refusal, led by China, of developing countries to accept mandatory emission controls. 30 illustrations, not seen by PW. Agent, Michael Congdon. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Science historian Christianson (*Edwin Hubble: Mariner of the Nebulae*, LJ 8/95) skillfully chronicles the scientific idea of global warming, drawing on documents that date back more than two centuries and then bringing us up to the present predicament. He writes in great detail of the significant and even the not-so-significant historical accounts that identify this phenomenon. Christianson's concluding chapters address the current debates between nations. A thorough bibliography with a helpful listing of web sites is an added resource. Offering an extensive historical perspective on global warming, this book is an excellent addition to any science collection. Trisha Stevenson, New York Univ. Medical Ctr., Sch. of Medicine Lib., New York Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist The dawning realization that the earth's atmosphere exhibits a greenhouse effect and the anxiety about the influence of industrial emissions on that effect are the focus of this well-arranged history. Christianson, boasting a stellar record as a science biographer, recently *Edwin Hubble: Mariner of the Nebulae* (1995), collects a potpourri of topics, though it seems initially strange to find the same book embracing the history of chimney construction and the history of the vanished Anasazi. However, Christianson vanquishes surprise with fluid narrative transitions between all the topics he tackles. Each one bears on a ramification of greenhouse gases, so the profusion of subjects makes a pleasing rather than confusing impression. The carbon dioxide unleashed in the past 150 years take Christianson's story to Mauna Loa, where scientist Charles Keeling first documented the increase, and thence to international conventions dealing with the fact. A levelheaded, multileveled historical excursion, providing an advantage in understanding the controversial global-warming threat. Gilbert Taylor