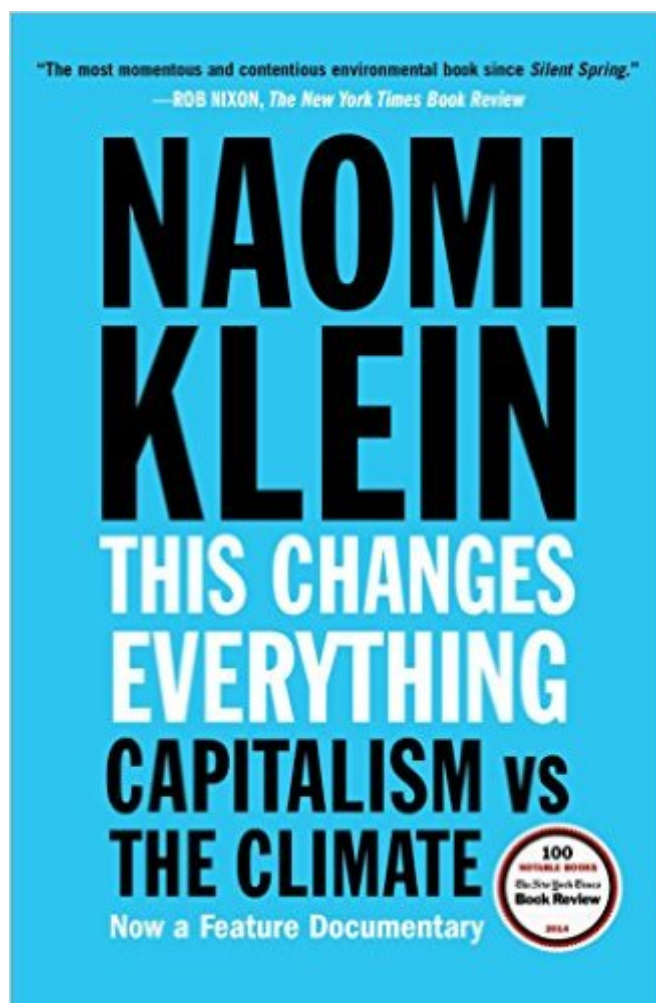


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This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate



Synopsis

The most important book yet from the author of the international bestseller *When Did We Start So Small?* is a brilliant explanation of why the climate crisis challenges us to abandon the core ideology of our time, restructure the global economy, and remake our political systems. In short, either we embrace radical change ourselves or radical changes will be visited upon our physical world. The status quo is no longer an option. In *Naomi Klein* argues that climate change isn't just another issue to be neatly filed between taxes and health care. It's an alarm that calls us to fix an economic system that is already failing us in many ways. Klein meticulously builds the case for how massively reducing our greenhouse emissions is our best chance to simultaneously reduce gaping inequalities, re-imagine our broken democracies, and rebuild our gutted local economies. She exposes the ideological desperation of the climate-change deniers, the messianic delusions of the would-be geoengineers, and the tragic defeatism of too many mainstream green initiatives. And she demonstrates precisely why the market has not and cannot fix the climate crisis but will instead make things worse, with ever more extreme and ecologically damaging extraction methods, accompanied by rampant disaster capitalism. Klein argues that the changes to our relationship with nature and one another that are required to respond to the climate crisis humanely should not be viewed as grim penance, but rather as a kind of gift—a catalyst to transform broken economic and cultural priorities and to heal long-festered historical wounds. And she documents the inspiring movements that have already begun this process: communities that are not just refusing to be sites of further fossil fuel extraction but are building the next, regeneration-based economies right now. Can we pull off these changes in time? Nothing is certain. Nothing except that climate change changes everything. And for a very brief time, the nature of that change is still up to us.

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Customer Reviews

First off, I agree with many of the 5 and 4 star comments--this is an inspiring book. Klein has helped her readers better understand the germination of a broad based, multi-dimensional climate movement from the ground up and its potential to galvanize and revitalize the Left. Also, she hasn't shied away from calling out the source of the problem--capitalism--when so many liberals shrink from mentioning the "c" word. In addition, her focus on the fossil fuel industry as the strategic target of the movement clearly highlights the importance of isolating one of the most malignant sectors of industrial capitalism. But despite her insightful and inspirational treatment of the climate movement's potential to change everything, I believe Klein over-states her case and overlooks crucial features of the dangerously dysfunctional system we're up against. By putting climate change on a pedestal, she limits our understanding of how to break capitalism's death grip over our lives and our future. For instance, Klein ignores the deep connection between climate chaos, militarism, and war. While she spends an entire chapter explaining why Virgin Airlines owner, Richard Branson, and other Green billionaires won't save us, she devotes three meager sentences to the most violent, wasteful, petroleum-burning institution on Earth--the US military. Klein shares this blind spot with the United Nations' official climate forum. The UNFCCC excludes most of the military sector's fuel consumption and emissions from national greenhouse gas inventories. This exemption was the product of intense lobbying by the United States during the Kyoto negotiations in the mid-1990s. Ever since, the military establishment's carbon "bootprint" has been officially ignored.

This Changes Everything belongs to the noble tradition of investigative, crusading journalism championed by the likes of Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, Rachel Carson and John Pilger. It is a meticulously researched and passionately argued exposé and a call to arms. Klein spells out in detail the work of the cabal of corporately-funded propaganda houses such as the Heartland and Cato Institutes, and the Heritage Foundation in undermining climate science and subverting what was once a bi-partisan approach to dealing Climate Change. She gives an extended account of the methods and agendas of these groups and provides good insight into their motivations and the reasons for their success in altering public opinion on Climate Change in the last ten years. The strength of this crusading journalism approach is its passion and sense of outrage, the weakness is

that it portrays the world as a simplified battle between good guys and bad guys. The bad guys in the this story are the greedy fossil fuel corporations, the extractive coal and oil companies, the white, middle class, right-wing men who are thoroughly invested in the system as it stands. The good guys are the poor and dispossessed of the Earth, the Indigenous Peoples fighting for their rights, the local communities who want to do the right thing if only the political and business elites would allow them to live in harmony with the Earth. The problem with this world view is that while it may be emotionally plausible is it too simplistic. As I can personally attest from my six years working for Shell Wind there are plenty of caring, environmentally committed people working for oil companies, and there are plenty of selfish and greedy people among the supposed "good guys".

Naomi Klein's call for the abolition of capitalism sounds like lunacy until you consider the alternative: a climate crash so severe that it wipes out civilization. "Oh well," you say, "it can't be that bad." Actually it's worse: capitalism has to go within two decades, three at most. "Impossible," you say, and probably, you're right. But it's the reason you should read Klein's book. Everybody should read it, to learn about the hideous predicament that we are in. Happily, though, we have two bright spots. First, you don't need to read Klein to get the doomsday science. The United Nations has already published the science. It's comprehensive, the product of the best climate specialists in the world, and it boils down to this: unless we drastically scale back carbon emissions, the planet will warm four to seven degrees centigrade by 2100. Humans and most other species have never lived in a world that hot. Civilization cannot survive in a world that hot, and again, this isn't Klein talking, it's the U.N. That's "bright spot" #1: the fact that you don't have to take Klein's word on the doomsday business. Bright spot #2: there's a solution! It's Klein's big contribution to the climate debate, her case that the reduction of carbon emissions to safe levels requires a new economic system--and in a hurry. What a relief, huh, that there's actually a way to save civilization? Okay, that's not funny. But it's the reality. And you can't find a better guide to it than Klein's book. Consider it in personal terms. We have a choice. Humanity can continue on the present course, which will fatally heat the world within the lifetimes of people now living. Or humanity can change course, and save the world for future generations. We either commit suicide--or we don't.

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