
Part of the theme-based Fountainhead Press V series, *Green* emphasizes student accessibility through a preference for freshly published material and a cost (at $22 net and $27 to $32 to students) below the average textbook. This emphasis may limit *Green* as a resource for environmental issues; however, as a composition reader, *Green* offers engaging multimodal content on overlooked topics, opportunities for students to practice key skills, and sufficient instructor support.

According to editors Brooke Rollins and Lee Bauknight, *Green*’s written and visual texts address “the environmental crises we face and argue about how and why we should try to do something to protect the planet—and ourselves” (2). Although works from a few iconic environmental writers such as John Muir and Rachel Carson find a place here, the emphasis is on recent texts from less familiar sources, like Anne Marie Todd’s “Prime-Time Subversion: The Environmental Rhetoric of the Simpsons.” The primary visual text is a graphic novel excerpt from “As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial” by Derrick Jensen and Stephanie McMillan. Jensen, a columnist for the literary environmental magazine *Orion*, occasionally draws readers’ ire for being pessimistically radical. “As the World Burns” underscores the editors’ willingness to present material with an edge.

As a textbook, *Green* includes assignment prompts and discussion starters under icons like “Explore”, “Collaborate” and “Compose.” The prompts are useful, occasionally imaginative, and suggest connections among readings. *Green* also outlines five adaptable major assignments taking students from memoir to persuasive text. A filmography closes the book, demonstrating the rich film support accompanying an environmental theme.

Perhaps in the effort to be price sensitive and contemporary, *Green* slices off and serves up the top wedge of a conversation that has evolved over generations. Naomi Klein’s “A Hole in the World” about the spring 2010 BP oil spill struck my students as compelling when read in 2011. Whether it will hold up as engaging, representative environmental writing once the oil spill has receded in memory is unclear. Although Carson, Muir and Edward O. Wilson provide some ballast, many environmental voices and historically important conversations, such as those found in *American Earth: Environmental Readings since Thoreau*, are absent. Though not a textbook, *American Earth* works as a classroom reader, spanning environmental writing from the mid-1800s to the present and including such acknowledged contributors as Aldo Leopold, Edward
Abbey, Scott Russell Sanders, and Rebecca Solnit, all missing from *Green. Saving Place: An Ecocomposition Reader* contrasts with *Green* on a different front. With the exception of two environmental memoirs, *Green* focuses on environmental issues, as opposed to writings about place. *Saving Place* covers environmental issues but also explores the human relationship to place, including “relaxing in nature, consuming nature, [and] surviving nature” (Dobrin vii). This broader focus of ecocomposition might appeal to some instructors.

A lack of historic depth does not mean *Green* lacks challenging essays. Wilson’s “For the Love of Life” provides opportunities to discover and apply key terms, locate claims and evidence, and find more than one useful lens to view other essays. Todd’s scholarly analysis of *The Simpsons* serves as a sophisticated model for students wishing to do their own rhetorical analysis, as one of my students attempted with Marvel versus Dell comics.

Instructors who encourage students to put texts in conversation with one another will appreciate writings that capture controversies in environmental circles, such as the relative merit of individual change versus legislative action. Christie Matheson’s lightweight, upbeat (or perhaps deluded) “Green Chic: Saving the Earth in Style” can be countered with Mike Tidwell’s “To Really Save the Planet, Stop Going Green.” Colin Beavan, in “Life After the Year Without Toilet Paper,” then suggests a middle ground and models how to “move the discourse beyond the most familiar patterns of debate,” as Rollins and Bauknight stress in their introduction (i). Putting a twist on familiar work, *Green* also pairs “The Obligation to Endure,” from Carson’s defining book *Silent Spring*, with Bruce Watson’s “Sounding The Alarm.” Watson sets up historic and biographical context for Carson and *Silent Spring*, facilitating a teaching opportunity about primary and secondary texts.

*Green* is not a primer for environmental issues; it serves up a bite-sized introduction to a complex environmental conversation. But in the single composition class, the bite-sized theme is what we usually offer, whether we are studying a graphic novel or coaxing students through “In Plato’s Cave.” If our goals are to teach composition skills and critical thinking, and to provide compelling writing instigations while working with important subject matter, *Green* is a good choice. Its cost makes that choice even more student-centered. Regardless of questions about depth and focus, *Green’s* slice of the environmental conversation helps prop open the door to the significance and suitability of environmental issues as a theme in the composition classroom.
Works Cited
