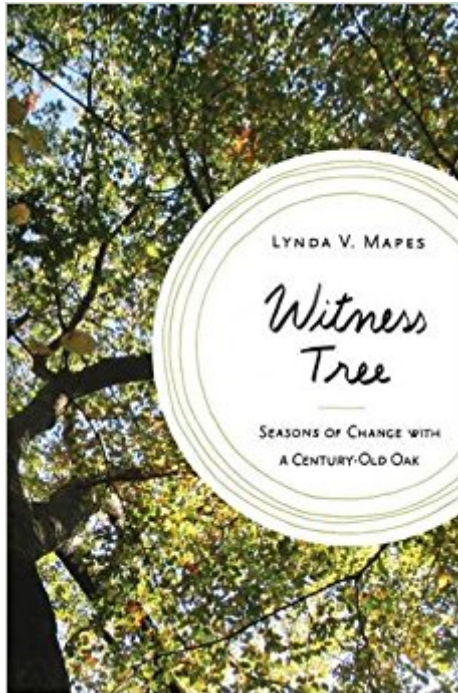




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# Witness Tree: Seasons Of Change With A Century-Old Oak



## Synopsis

An intimate look at one majestic hundred-year-old oak tree through four seasons--and the reality of global climate change it reveals. In the life of this one grand oak, we can see for ourselves the results of one hundred years of rapid environmental change. It's leafing out earlier, and dropping its leaves later as the climate warms. Even the inner workings of individual leaves have changed to accommodate more CO<sub>2</sub> in our atmosphere. Climate science can seem dense, remote, and abstract. But through the lens of this one tree, it becomes immediate and intimate. In *Witness Tree*, environmental reporter Lynda V. Mapes takes us through her year living with one red oak at the Harvard Forest. We learn about carbon cycles and leaf physiology, but also experience the seasons as people have for centuries, watching for each new bud, and listening for each new bird and frog call in spring. We savor the cadence of falling autumn leaves, and glory of snow and starry winter nights. Lynda takes us along as she climbs high into the oak's swaying boughs, and scientists core deep into the oak's heartwood, dig into its roots and probe the teeming life of the soil. She brings us eye-level with garter snakes and newts, and alongside the squirrels and jays devouring the oak's acorns. Season by season she reveals the secrets of trees, how they work, and sustain a vast community of lives, including our own. The oak is a living timeline and witness to climate change. While stark in its implications, *Witness Tree* is a beautiful and lyrical read, rich in detail, sweeps of weather, history, people, and animals. It is a story rooted in hope, beauty, wonder, and the possibility of renewal in people's connection to nature.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Lynda V. Mapes adopts a narrower lens but is equally ambitious in *Witness Tree*, which gets at sweeping ideas by looking at one century-old oak tree in Massachusetts. Among many other subjects--forest regeneration, acorn production, pollen records--Mapes has plenty to say about our early spring(s). 'Climate change, the trees, streams, and puddles, and birds, bugs, and frogs, attest, is not a matter of opinion or belief,' she writes. 'It is an observable fact.'" - New York Times Book Review

"A meticulously, beautifully layered portrayal of vulnerability and loss, renewal and hope, this extensively researched yet deeply personal book is a timely call to bear witness and to act in an age of climate-change denial." - starred Review, Kirkus Reviews

"For those with an abiding fondness for New England farmsteads and woodlots, Mapes offers up literary comfort food, as welcome as hot cocoa on a chilly day . . . To walk with Mapes through these pages is not only to enjoy the charm of rural New England, but also to experience the global effects of our civilization--for better and for worse--on an intimate scale." - Natural History Magazine

"The Harvard Forest is a center for the scientific study of climate change, but also--as this deep book makes clear-- for what you might call the philosophic and historical inquiry that we should be making into this most crucial of topics. Lynda Mapes has managed to find a new and intriguing way into this question, and her book will be read with great profit by a great many." - Bill McKibben, author *EARTH: MAKING A LIFE ON A TOUGH NEW PLANET*

"Mapes chronicles how this 'witness tree' both mirrors and is shaped by our changing, warming world. Lyrical, engaging, and wise, Mapes invites us to understand trees as individuals rather than a collective forest. This is compelling storytelling and natural history that, like our elder trees, is both enduring and inspiring." - Brenda Peterson, *WOLF NATION: THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RETURN OF WILD AMERICAN WOLVES*

"Mapes' vivid language immerses us in the grand world of one esteemed red oak. *Witness Tree* is a splendid story that enriches our view of nature and ourselves." - David R. Montgomery and Anne Bikl, authors, *THE HIDDEN HALF OF NATURE*

Lynda V. Mapes is the environmental reporter for the Seattle Times. She researched and wrote *Witness Tree* while a Knight Fellow in science journalism at MIT and a Bullard Fellow in forest research in residence with her oak at the Harvard Forest. This is her fourth book. She lives in Seattle. [www.lyndavmapes.com](http://www.lyndavmapes.com)

What a great story, I learned so much!

This is a perfect gem of a book. Full disclosure: I worked with Mapes professionally over many years, sometimes in semi-adversarial roles. I always respected and enjoyed her professionalism and accuracy. She's top-drawer all the way. This is the first of her writing I have read outside our professional relationship and I am delighted with it. I completely enjoyed Mapes' clear and elegantly simple writing. As a science reporter of repute she knows what she's writing about and does it with style, warmth and crystal clarity. This book will have a permanent place on my bookshelf. As will Mapes in my respect.

It's a good book, and I learned quite a bit, but I felt slightly off-kilter for the first half because I was expecting a more chronological account of studying this tree through the seasons. Instead, there is a lot of going back and forth in time to talk to different people. The information from experts is great - tree coring, pollen samples etc, plus the historical view of New England through colonization, deforestation through to reforestation. It's all very interesting. Just wished there was a bit more intimate look at being with the tree in a day by day way. Would recommend it though.

Great book, fun to read and full of information. As an ISA Certified Arborist I found this book very accurate and full of information. A must read for up coming arborist or anyone interested in arborculture.

I know nothing about trees but found this book fascinating. A great study filled with precise details. Charles Burton

For those interested in climate change and beautiful prose about trees, this is the book for you. I would recommend it to people who like Thoreau and who are looking for a new way to think about climate change.

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