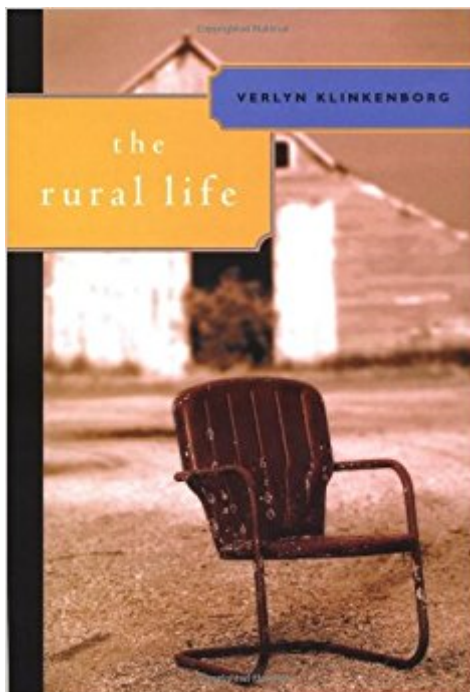


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The Rural Life



Synopsis

In *THE RURAL LIFE*, the hugely admired author of "The Last Fine Time" preserves and makes new the sights, smells, sounds, and poetry of country living. Here, Verlyn Klinkenborg reveals the beauty of the American landscape, not from a scenic overlook, but through a screened-in porch or from the window of a pickup driving down an empty highway in the teeth of an approaching storm.

Klinkenborg brings reports of rural life back to us, his readers, with writing as vivid as high noon on a summer day or as dreamy as a dusk lit by fireflies. Composed in sections corresponding to the months of the year, *The Rural Life* highlights the pleasures and hardships, the reveries and stillness, that each season offers to the willing observer. Whether he writes of a small farm in upstate New York, a high pasture deep within the Rocky Mountains, or the bricked edge of a city shuddering in the wake of a "sudden Tuesday," Klinkenborg bears witness to nature's play in language as simple, unsentimental, and direct as life itself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Klinkenborg's third book (after *Making Hay* and *The Last Fine Time*) is a selection of columns originally appearing on the New York Times editorial page under the heading "A Rural Life." They document in vivid detail the daily challenges of life in the country, and on a farm in particular.

Though the columns are drawn from seven years of writing, the book is organized into a single year-12 chapters starting in "January" and ending in "December"-and flits from topic to topic, relying on a few short passages of news or descriptions of holidays to mark the passage of time. Likewise, the author never sticks to one place for long, but ranges across the continent of the U.S. and

glimpses events in dozens of country towns from Wyoming and New Hampshire to Minnesota and New Mexico. Some episodes are emblematic of contemporary American culture: a high school football game, President Clinton's dedication of Walden Pond, the disquiet in the days following September 11. Others are more intimate passages discussing the author's family and the solace he finds in keeping bees, stacking hay or simply turning earth. Though this highly personal chronicle lacks any narrative arc other than the changing of the seasons and the author's emotional reaction to them, nothing in the prose is accidental, and the deliberate, finely hewn sentences convey, above all else, the seriousness with which Klinkenborg takes the task of watching the world around him. A heady meditation on our relationship to nature, echoing the works of the transcendentalists Thoreau and Emerson, the writing is much closer to poetry than essay. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Klinkenborg is a member of the editorial board of the New York Times and author of *Making Hay*. This collection of essays, most of which have previously been published in the NYT and elsewhere, describe his experiences of rural life, from his farm in upstate New York and in the American West. When a book is a compilation of essays, it can often suffer from a lack of continuity or context. While these selections are gathered according to month, they leap from geographic locations without regard to year; in fact, there is no indication of when they were written (except a couple references to 9/11). Klinkenborg explains: "If spring seems to be well advanced on one page and balky and weeks behind on the next...I'm probably describing two very different springs." Because he writes so well, one can endure the bumpy ride. Recommended for public and academic libraries.--Lee Arnold, Historical Soc. of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I have been reading, and loving, Verlyn Klinkenborg's books since *The Last Fine Time*, and *The Rural Life* delivers the same luminous prose that so defines his writing. These beautifully crafted essays describe life on a farm, but they also exquisitely limn a mind present to the ebb and flow of nature and community. Like the "suppleness of light" Klinkenborg notes in late October, his gifts with language capture the glow of the ephemeral before it slips beneath the horizon of another day, another season; like the "intermittent, staccato whine" of a cricket, these essays anchor us at once to the personal and the universal, with phrasings as reassuring as a front porch and as pursued as true North. A beautiful book.

Verlyn Klinkenborg is a perfect writer. I can see myself in his house and wandering around his

property in the snow. I have never lived where it snowed as much as it does in upstate New York but I would like to try for a while. I would have to adopt his attitudes first. I know he is familiar with the west but I didn't care for those sections of the book as much as the up state New York sections. I just have never wanted to visit those sections of the country. He never said if he decided to raise pigs. I hope not unless they were pets. Mr. Klinkenborg is an exceptional writer and I hope he writes forever.

I love this writer, but actually prefer his later work, I think it's called "More Rural Life." He writes beautifully.

Verlyn Klinkenborg's work discusses his life in Rural New York and also some of his travels in the West. It was interesting to read this book after reading the newer "More Scenes from the Rural Life" recently. This gives the earlier columns compared to the new book. One interesting thing that Verlyn does is combine many years writing into a single "month". So you are reading about say "August" over a period of ten years or so. It is about seasons, but a single year.

A peaceful, cozy book. I liked it so much I bought another one for my sister.

Verlyn Klinkenborg has an amazing way of writing about country life and not just on his upstate farm but all over the country -- I have ordered two more of his books just so I can enjoy his lyrical style.

I started reading 'The Rural Life' in the New York Times and couldn't get enough. Then I discovered Verlyn Klinkenborg's books. Never maudlin or bogged down in sentimentality, his observations bring a fresh, uplifting perspective of life lived close to nature.

Bought a copy for the whole family.

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