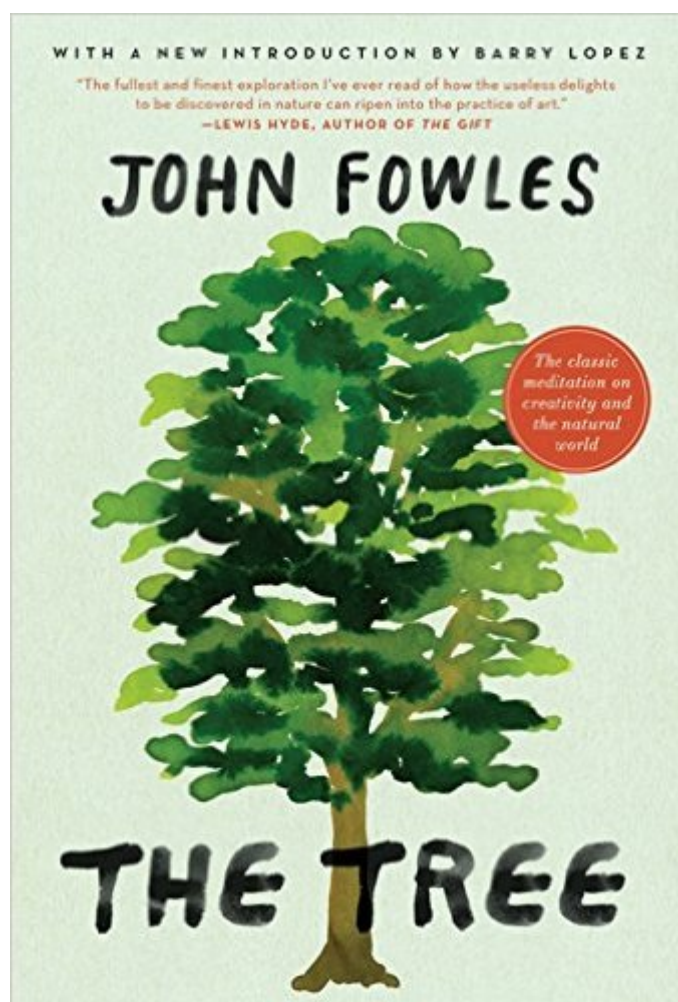


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The Tree



Synopsis

“For years I have carried this book...with me on travels to reread, ponder, envy. In prose of classic gravity, precision, and delicacy, Fowles addresses matters of final importance.” —Los Angeles Times Book Review
“The Tree is the fullest and finest exploration I’ve ever read of how the useless delights to be discovered in nature can ripen into the practice of art.” —Lewis Hyde, author of *The Gift*
“The most original argument for wilderness preservation I have encountered.” —Washington Post
Finally back in print, here is the 30th anniversary edition of *The Tree*—the renowned English novelist John Fowles’s (*The Magus*, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*) moving meditation on the connection between the natural world and human creativity. An inspiring modern ecological classic, *The Tree* is both a powerful argument against taming the wild and a major author’s inspiring and beautifully written defense of the joys of getting lost, and of spontaneity in life and art.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I received this fantastic book I was absolutely blown away by the life-changing words. This is the thirtieth anniversary of this wonderful nonfiction look at how the natural, "wild" world affects our human lives. Mr. Fowles passed away in 2006, but his legacy of classic stories including *The Gift* and, my favorite, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, will remain part of our culture for the rest of time. But this small yet, intricate, look at how this fantastic author "saw" life, and the relationships that made up his own existence, should truly be a permanent fixture on every human’s bookshelf. Talk about taking me home to my upbringing in the "hills" of Connecticut; this author first speaks about

the trees. Throughout history, trees have provided many different things to different people; they've been the sanctuary for some, as well as the hiding place for the "justly and unjustly persecuted and hunted." This is a powerful statement. Whether living in a city or wild country, if the trees could speak, we can only imagine what stories they could tell. Mr. Fowles grew up in London - the huge city where activity was a constant. His father was a man who had a small garden in the back of their flat, and worked very hard at keeping his bushes, flowers, and trees alive. Here was the place where John's father would go and be one with nature. John, unlike his father, wanted the "openness" of the countryside. He wanted to go on "woodland walks" where a path would lead him into the unknown. He even goes into a garden in the old Swedish university town of Uppsala, where a beautiful garden resides that is equaled only by the one spoken of in the Book of Genesis. But the one "chord" that kept driving home with me was his father.

This is the 30th anniversary edition of John Fowles legendary essay about trees. Or rather, what trees mean in a greater sense than just the biological. At first, I expected this to be similar to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*-both were written decades ago. However, this slim text is more of a set of questions rather than answers. In fact, despite the title, it could be said that trees are just the smallest portion of his purpose. "Do we feel that unless we create evidence-photographs, journal entries, picked and pressed flowers, tape recordings, pocketed stones-we haven't actually been intimate with nature?" Fowles was known for writing *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as well as other fiction titles. Here, in this book, he discusses via anecdotes the relationship between humans and nature, and the juxtaposition between nature on its own and our experience of nature. First, the introduction by Barry Lopez comfortably sets the scene, and hints that this is no simple environmental manifesto. And never does Fowles lecture about how people should view nature; rather, he talks about what nature may or may not mean in a larger sense. For example, he talks about his childhood home where his father cultivated small garden and fruit trees. Nothing was out of place, and while it was in the city, his father managed to tame anything unruly from the garden. Clearly it was his goal to conquer the plot of land. He was the victor over it. Yet his son, Fowles, purchases property that is larger, but by no means tame. Fowles neither cultivates or cuts back, he sees no point in amending the soil, pruning the trees, and to the horror of his father, the parcel of land is wild. Is it a moral battle over who conquers the natural world?

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