



Apollo's Fire: A Day on Earth in Nature and Imagination

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The critically acclaimed author brings a scientist's curiosity and a poet's soul to a delightful tour of a single day on Earth

Most of us do not give a second thought to the elemental rhythms of daily life. In *Apollo's Fire*, Michael Sims sets out to open our eyes—literally—to the miraculous events that lie underneath the oldest story on Earth: the passing of a single day. In a profound and witty narrative that begins in the darkness before dawn, progresses through morning, noon, evening, and ends, fittingly, back in darkness, Sims takes us on an exhilarating ride through the oft- overlooked journey that all of us make every day.

Apollo's Fire is popular science at its most engaging—sure to appeal to fans of Diane Ackerman, Michael Pollan, and Dava Sobel.

Apollo's Fire: A Day on Earth in Nature and Imagination Details

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From Reader Review Apollo's Fire: A Day on Earth in Nature and Imagination for online ebook

Mazola1 says

Apollo's Fire is structured as a day in the life of the sun, told from the perspective of the earth. It's really lots of little stories strung together from night, to dawn, day, noon, dusk and darkness. Along the way, we learn a bit about many things, some of which are directly related to the daily journey of the earth as it turns on its axis, and some only tangentially related. Some of the topics are clouds, bats, circadian rhythms and Galileo and his telescopic observations.

Some are well known and mundane, while others are obscure and odd. Some are quite fascinating, falling into the category of "who would have known?" A prime example is the little known fact that Edgar Allen Poe came up with an elegant solution to the perplexing puzzle known as Olbers' Paradox (Why is the night sky dark if there are billions and billions of stars out there?)

While the daily journey of the earth was supposed to be the glue that gave this book a unifying theme, somehow all the pieces didn't really seem to come together all that well, and the inclusion of some seemed artificial and forced. Overall, the concept of the book was better than its execution. So although it is well written, even beautiful at times, it was a bit disappointing.

Lisa says

It's not a bad book, just not what I thought it would be. I'm sure many people will like it- it's a blend of anecdote, science, literature, and history that probably would have worked for me if I had been in the mood for that. Might be a good book for high school students or an intro level college class.

Alicia Rossano says

Even with some obvious problems, I quite enjoyed this little book! Here is the story of an ordinary day under ordinary conditions (as in, minus rainstorms, drought, snow, etc.). Beginning before the break of dawn, the author takes the readers on a tour through morning, noon, afternoon, evening, and night time. Essentially, it is a science book chronicling the day's wonders, flourished with references to art, mythology, literature, and popular culture and how they have paid homage to this cycle. In this way, it is more a way of sparking interest and awe than training an would-be expert on the subject.

The writing in this book is often beautiful and well-crafted. The author, Michael Sims, has an obvious love for the world around him and the way that it enriches the human experience. From lectures about light scattering at sunrise to the way that Edgar Allen Poe helped to illuminate studies of night time stars, Sims acts as a comforting guide that inspires great wonder at nature and all its nuances. Where the writing often falls short, however, is in the way that it weaves together its material. Granted, this book deals with a rather loose premise and attempts a wide collection of topics at once. I suppose in this way I expected there to be some meandering, but I still think there could have been more done to better transition between different ideas. At one point, Sims attempts to use the myth of Phaeton, and even The Phantom Toolbooth, as points

of reference for talking about the different aspects of the day, neither of which I found to be entirely successful. I found this wandering to be more of an issue earlier in the book, as the author begins to find better footing in the chapters regarding High Noon and Afternoon, but even then there does still appear to be some persistence of meandering writing.

No matter, though. This is an overall enjoyable book! Sure, it could use some fine-tuning in places, but this is an ultimately fine journey through an ordinary day. Maybe readers would be better off reading it in parts that as a whole, but I would not keep away from it entirely. Especially if you're someone who enjoys science, or art, or even both.

Brandon says

This book had promise, but for me it failed to deliver. Part of the problem is the structure of the book, how it followed the course of the day, discussing first dawn for a chapter, then midmorning, and so on. The story of Phaethon had to be broken into pieces all across the book, which at times was bewildering. Another miss was the way it tried to be both a science book and a book involved in mythology and culture; now, blending them can be done by some authors, but not in this case. I would have preferred one or the other, but doing both halfway didn't do it for me. I felt like some really interesting things were totally glossed over where I'd have loved more detail.

That said, there were some beautiful passages in this book, and a lot of interesting facts about a broad array of topics. This should get two and a half stars, but I'm rounding down in this case.

Grace says

more like a reference to literature with mentions about the sun intertwined with some science.

Amanda says

One of the most interesting, attention-keeping, well written scientific narratives I've ever had the pleasure of picking up: the cohesion of the myths, literature, and historical references that Sims includes to anchor and move the information forward is amazing, and if textbooks were written this way, every kid in school would finish his homework.

Sean says

not a bad read, but forgettable.

Tom says

The author is a good writer whose writing style is casual and engaging; but the topic is not that interesting, so I'm not sure why I bought this book, or why I started reading it, or, for that matter, why I am posting a review of it here.

Jon says

A cornucopia of random facts about the day/night cycle. Very interesting read.

Nazim Suzaly says

I had to grind my way to finish this book. I'm just not a fan of deep literature and history I suppose, and this book provides plenty of that. Generally the book is all about our surroundings that we tend to overlook and not see the deeper detail behind it and the history that it brings along. Relating everything to science, literature, history and even fables.

Well the good thing about this book that it somehow did manage to make me apprehend the present surroundings and appreciate it for the fact that there is a history behind everything (like literally everything from light, to the bloody dust that you can only see with a microscopic eye).

Anyway I got this book cheap (BBW lol) and train rides are boring. So this book did a good job keeping me company for a week haha. I don't recommend it though.

Kerry says

If you live 70 years you will have experienced 25567 days. Imagine within the construct of your own biography that you condensed the history and anecdotes of your life during this time to 1 day. What would be your dawn, midday, and sunset? If you like thinking about this then you might like this book. I enjoyed it. That said... perhaps there are some books that are better reads due to the environment from which they are read. Bourbon/water, fireplace and a rainy day anybody? This book is sympathetic to this. Do not read this as too harsh a review because I truly enjoyed reading this book--the bourbon too. But in recommending this book one might pause with the same consideration if they were to recommend a book of poetry. Compare it with Age of Wonder.

Kitty says

Apollo's Fire is good for dipping in and out of. The book goes through a day's time touching on some of its many aspects in science, mythology, literature, music. There are brief discussions of various topics, giving ideas for avenues to explore. The annotated bibliography is great - many books to add to my to-read list.

Rob says

Apollo's Fire follows the sun through a day, considering both scientific and cultural aspects of this journey. Best thing about it: it's broken up into discreet episodes. In other words, it's a good quick break book, or for any other, ah, breaks one might take during the day.

Perhaps the most interesting thing I learned is that the Myth of Phaeton is the first "Dad, can I have the keys, please?" story. This book is alternately fascinating and boring. Just when I'd think I was ready to discard it, I came across something interesting. It gets better towards the end, though, or perhaps I simply have more affinity for darkness. In some ways the best chapter is the one concerning Charles Darwin.

Nicoleku says

From the title and cover I expected this book to be more imaginative, mystical. It turned out to be a kind of basic science book, which is ok, but not what I wanted it to be when I picked it up.

I wish the author had delved deeper into scientific methods and inventions outside the Greco-Roman and European Enlightenment realms, if only to throw in stories that most moderately informed people aren't familiar with.

I enjoyed the pacing of the book and the way it follows a day. It made it easy to read one section or four depending on how much time I had. Overall, not a bad read, but it could have been better.

Grindy Stone says

The author is after some sort of lyrical reflection on the sun, sky, and atmosphere, but this book is just trivia strung together with awkward prose. Don't bother.
