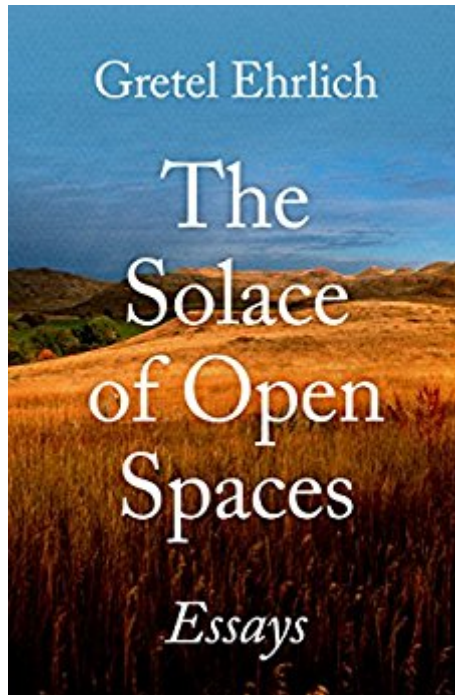




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The Solace Of Open Spaces: Essays



Synopsis

These transcendent, lyrical essays on the West announced Gretel Ehrlich as a major American writer. “Wyoming has found its Whitman” (Annie Dillard). Poet and filmmaker Gretel Ehrlich went to Wyoming in 1975 to make the first in a series of documentaries when her partner died. Ehrlich stayed on and found she couldn’t leave. *The Solace of Open Spaces* is a chronicle of her first years on “the planet of Wyoming,” a personal journey into a place, a feeling, and a way of life. Ehrlich captures both the otherworldly beauty and cruelty of the natural forces—the harsh wind, bitter cold, and swiftly changing seasons—in the remote reaches of the American West. She brings depth, tenderness, and humor to her portraits of the peculiar souls who also call it home: hermits and ranchers, rodeo cowboys and schoolteachers, dreamers and realists. Together, these essays form an evocative and vibrant tribute to the life Ehrlich chose and the geography she loves. Originally written as journal entries addressed to a friend, *The Solace of Open Spaces* is raw, meditative, electrifying, and uncommonly wise. In prose “as expansive as a Wyoming vista, as charged as a bolt of prairie lightning,” Ehrlich explores the magical interplay between our interior lives and the world around us (Newsday).

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Customer Reviews

love Love LOVE Gretel's other works. Grew up in New Mexico, so definitely have a few "open space solitude" memories of my own, that informed my mental images while reading this book. Nothing bad to say about it, but there's a lot of jumping around in the stories that challenged me (not pleasantly, sorry) to keep track of while reading. Still, the descriptions of the places and people were WELL worth the price of admission to this narrative. I actually found myself reading sections of the book, as if for inspiration, and then remembering my own life times on the high plains, hiking trails, or mountain bike single tracks of NM. Her descriptions of solace were springboards to my own recollections of solitude and lone-experienced beauty, to which I'm eternally grateful. Definitely read this book if you, too, know of solitary, peaceful times in your life you'd like to recollect. The remembering may be tinged with an edge of melancholy, but that may just be the spice that makes the dish so ultimately palatable. Bon appetit.

The first of this book flows into your mind and heart. It swells your heart and draws your tears. The next quarter runs a bit slow but brings you to the last quarter where the prose flow and completion of the tale is satisfying. Erlich made me homesick for the openness of the high plains.

If stream-of-consciousness writing and large words are your thing, this book is a good companion for you. The stories are interesting, but get a bit tiresome after awhile. If you like Wyoming weather and bedraggled characters, read on! I admire the author's stamina, if nothing else! (grin)

Good atmospheric, but the book would be strengthened by a stronger narrative line and a simpler style. Metaphors run wild.

Ehrlich's essays often read like meditative poetry reminiscent of Thoreau and Abbey at their best. Her work exhibits a "mind of winter" fit for lonesome spaces, rendering an often harsh environment as sublimely beautiful and spiritual.

I first learned of this book from a wizened sheep rancher and shearer discussed in one of Ehrlich's

vignettes, and expected a trite outsider's view of this area. (I live not too many miles from where she lived during most of the book). As I feasted on the author's prose, though, I was thrilled to find that I was wrong. This is a spirited, moving, and perceptive portrait of a land that can be both hostile and nurturing, and those people who have become a part of the country. The author relates her responses to the land, tying these reactions to emotional transformations she experienced as she learned the territory and its ways. Yes, the book is good as a travelogue. However, it really excels in its analysis of a land and its people. Ehrlich's book both confirmed and sharpened the impressions I had developed as I learned about my new home. Wherever you live, this is an excellent book for you to read.

From now on, I only read essays. This book is why.

Great reading. Felt like I was right there.

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