

WORTH
A READ

CORBIS//GREAT STOCK

Books to look out for



JONATHON HANKS IS THE FOUNDING PARTNER OF INCITE SUSTAINABILITY, SENIOR ASSOCIATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE PROGRAMME FOR INDUSTRY AND A VISITING SENIOR LECTURER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN'S GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS. HE IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF MIND SHIFT.



Whether it be a “too red to be green” politician, a die-hard merchant banker or a Texan Republican, there’s a book out there for everyone...

WORDS: JONATHON HANKS

1 ***A New Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations* (Paperback)**
by Clive Ponting

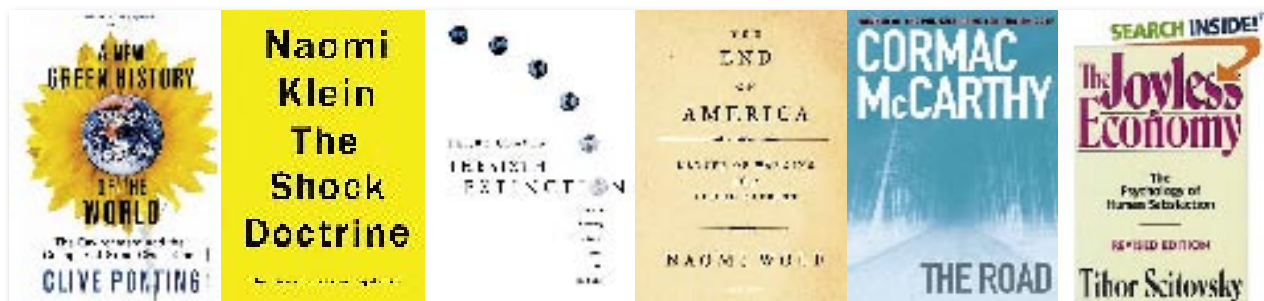
This significantly revised and updated edition of Clive Ponting’s international bestseller provides a compelling account of the role played by the environment in the collapse of some of our great civilizations. Promoting a thesis similar to that in Jared Diamond’s *Collapse*, Ponting argues that we have repeatedly built societies that have grown and prospered on the back of natural resources, only to expand to a point where society’s consumption of these resources can no longer be sustained. In many instances – he cites as examples the Sumerians, the Egyptians, the Mayans and even the Roman Empire – this non-sustainable use of resources culminates in social collapse. In light of the recent stark findings of the United Nations Environment Programme’s Global Environment Outlook (GEO4) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the book is a timely reminder of the finite nature of our resources and of the potential catastrophic impacts of exceeding environmental limits.

FOR THOSE OF OUR POLITICAL LEADERS WHO ARE STILL “TOO RED TO BE GREEN” (AND PROUDLY SO).

2 ***The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism***
by Naomi Klein

Described by fellow corporate sceptic and spy-writer John le Carré as “impassioned, hugely informative, wonderfully controversial, and scary as hell”, Naomi Klein’s latest book sets out to explode the myth that the global free market triumphed democratically. *Éminence grise* in the anti-globalisation movement, and best-selling author of *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, Klein reviews the economic history of the last 50 years, arguing that America’s “free market” policies have come to dominate the world through the exploitation of disaster-shocked people and countries. She backs up her argument with accounts of the privatisation of post-war Iraq, the auctioneering of tourist resorts in Tsunami-damaged South East Asia, the nature of the transition to capitalism in Poland, and the adoption of free-market ideology by the ANC-led post-apartheid government. As a 500-page treatise on economic issues it may seem an intimidating holiday read, but Klein has the engaging style of the best-selling journalist she has become.

FOR THE DIE-HARD MBA-TRAINED MERCHANT BANKER IN THE FAMILY.



3 **The Sixth Extinction: Journeys Among the Lost and Left Behind**
by Terry Glavin

This is an entertaining and very readable account of what Glavin suggests is the imminent sixth (and most devastating) of the mass extinctions the planet has faced. Taking the reader on a global journey to meet the very things we are losing, and to find hope in what is left, Glavin provides a fresh perspective to the usual ponderous gloom of most environmentalists. While he was not convinced that human extinction is on the cards, he is less upbeat in his assessment of the thousands of plants and animal species that are on the brink of annihilation, and on the future of many of the world's languages. Lamenting the "plague of sameness" spreading across the Earth – in the way we eat, speak and live – he argues that humanity's only hope lies in places where diverse ideas, choices and living things are allowed to flourish.

FOR ARM-CHAIR TRAVELLERS AND PONDEROUS ENVIRONMENTALISTS.

4 **The End of America: Letter of Warning To A Young Patriot**
by Naomi Wolf

In her latest book, Naomi Wolf – renowned feminist author and former political consultant to Clinton and Gore – argues that the last six years of the Bush administration bear an uncomfortable resemblance to what history suggests is a blueprint for turning democracy into dictatorship. She identifies ten steps that twentieth century dictators have taken to destroy constitutional freedoms, and makes a compelling case that the Bush administration has taken the US a lot further down this route than most of us might be willing to recognise. By choosing to publish this book through a small press in Vermont that is committed to "the politics and practice of sustainable living", rather than through the potentially more profitable large trade house, Wolf gives signal of her political intentions.

FOR THE REPUBLICAN IN-LAWS WHO LIVE IN TEXAS.

5 **The Road (Paperback)**
by Cormac McCarthy

McCarthy's Pulitzer prize-winning novel is an "exquisitely bleak" post-apocalyptic tale that describes a man and his son's trek across an incinerated wasteland, foraging for food and hiding from gangs of starving cannibals. Short on plot, but long on masterful prose, *The Road* depicts with brutal imagery the world as it may become should we allow a breakdown in the interdependence between human society and the natural environment. The book follows a father's struggle to keep his son alive and to sustain his son's innate goodness, while forcing him to witness the corruption of all moral behavior. It has been described as "a frightening, profound tale that drags us into places we don't want to go, forcing us to think about questions we don't want to ask."

NOT PREFERRED HOLIDAY READING FOR ETERNAL OPTIMISTS.

6 **The Joyless Economy: The Psychology of Human Satisfaction**
by Tibor Scitovsky

First published in 1976, this classic by US economist Tibor Scitovsky deserves a re-read. Its central argument – that more is not necessarily better – has received renewed prominence recently with a glut of books on the meaning of happiness and the dangers of too much choice. At the time it was published the book placed Scitovsky in direct conflict with mainstream economists, but his thesis has since gained much wider acceptance. *The Joyless Economy* is one of the first books to apply theories of behaviourist psychology to questions of consumer behaviour in clear, non-technical language. Analysing the failures of our consumerist lifestyle – epitomised by that in the US – Scitovsky argues that, contrary to classical liberalism, consumers are not the best judges of their own long-term interests. He maintains that capitalism's focus on satisfying immediate wants and needs leads to comfort, monotony, boredom and a craving for unnatural and destructive forms of stimulation. The answer, argues Scitovsky, is to undertake pursuits that are demanding and creative. ■

FOR THE NON-MATERIALIST, FRUSTRATED BY THE PREVAILING PREFERENCE FOR MINDLESS DISTRACTION AND CONSUMERISM.

7 **The Everyday Activist** by Michael Norton



This is a handy guide on how to "get off our backside and start to make a difference!" Believing that together we can change the world, Norton's book packs 60 pages with practical advice on 365 ways (each of which take little time or effort) to address the problems that concern you, at a local, national or global level. Many of the actions he advises

are small and personal – such as switching off plugs at night, eating seasonal foods or recycling toner cartridges – but, cumulatively, they have the potential to make a difference.

VALUABLE INSPIRATION FOR THOSE WHO STILL INSIST ON MAKING NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS, GIVE THINGS UP FOR LENT, OR THE LIKE.