



# The Way of Ignorance: And Other Essays

By *Wendell Berry*

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The continuing war in Iraq, Hurricane Katrina, the political sniping engendered by the Supreme Court nominations, Terry Schiavo — contemporary American society is characterized by divisive anger, profound loss, and danger. Wendell Berry, one of the country's foremost cultural critics, addresses the menace, responding with hope and intelligence in a series of essays that tackle the major questions of the day. Whose freedom are we considering when we speak of the “free market” or “free enterprise?” What is really involved in our National Security? What is the price of ownership without affection? Berry answers in prose that shuns abstraction for clarity, coherence, and passion, giving us essays that may be the finest of his long career.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Called "the prophet of rural America" by the *New York Times*, Berry has spent the last 40 of his 71 years simultaneously farming a hillside in Kentucky and issuing a stream of poems, novels and essays (including *The Gift of Good Land* and *The Long-Legged House*) that are probably the most sustained contemporary articulation of America's agrarian, Jeffersonian ideal. If the tone of the book's mostly brief 19 essays is sometimes angry and despairing ("We are destroying our country," begins one essay), one can hardly blame Berry. The mere title of one of the essays, "Some Notes for the Kerry Campaign, If Wanted," brings the reader up short—memories of the last presidential campaign are receding so quickly into the past that Berry's amorphous call for a return to "our traditional principles of politics and religion" is both quixotic and sad, a remnant from a vanished era. Many of the essays are taken from talks given to such organizations as the Crop Science Society of America and the Land Institute, and an air of preaching to the converted hangs over the book. The collection is not without its qualities, chief among them Berry's always well-honed prose, but if the agenda he proposes is to ever reclaim its rightful place in the body politic, it will have to be reframed in much more forceful and contemporary terms. (Nov.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Most of the longer pieces in Berry's new book about agriculture and community are speeches, though five very short essays start part 1. They are deliberately clear, straightforward, and focused on single topics; while rooted in Berry's agricultural experience and thought, they address national and international issues. A rouser against the kind of globalization that destroys small enterprises and "Charlie Fisher," which profiles a good logger to show what good logging is and can be, round out the section. With one exception, part 2 is all lectures and conference papers, altogether concerned with developing and maintaining human community, from the ground, or soil, up to the empyrean of religious affiliation, or love; the most demanding reading in the book is here. Part 3 consists of a letter on the future of the Democrats that a Montana politician solicited, the reply to it, and Courtney White's exciting report about bridge building between ranchers and conservationists. Everything in the book illumines. *Ray Olson*  
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About the Author

Berry's themes are reflections of his life: friends, family, the farm, the nature around us as well as within. He speaks strongly for himself and sometimes for the lost heart of the country. As he has borne witness to the world for eight decades, what he offers us now in this new collection of poems is of incomparable value.

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