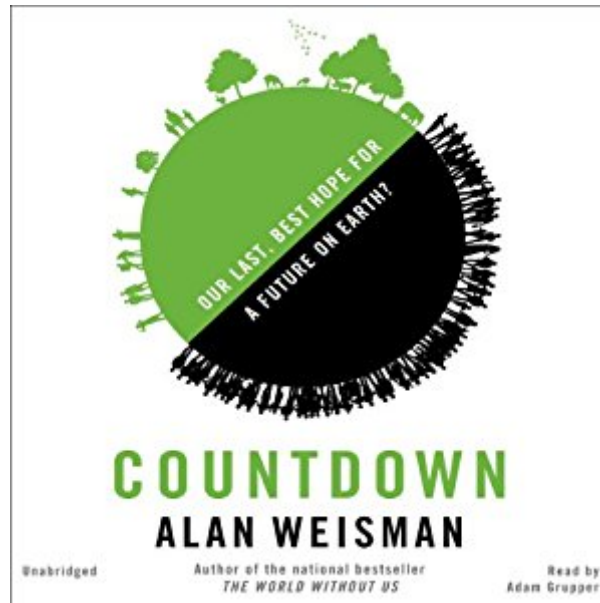


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Countdown: Our Last, Best Hope For A Future On Earth?



Synopsis

A powerful investigation into the chances for humanity's future from the author of the best seller *The World Without Us*. In his best-selling book *The World Without Us*, Alan Weisman considered how the Earth could heal and even refill empty niches if relieved of humanity's constant pressures. Behind that groundbreaking thought experiment was his hope that we would be inspired to find a way to add humans back to this vision of a restored, healthy planet - only in harmony, not mortal combat, with the rest of nature. But with a million more of us every four days on a planet that's not getting any bigger, and with our exhaust overheating the atmosphere and altering the chemistry of the oceans, prospects for a sustainable human future seem ever more in doubt. For this long awaited follow-up book, Weisman traveled to more than 20 countries to ask what experts agreed were probably the most important questions on Earth - and also the hardest: How many humans can the planet hold without capsizing? How robust must the Earth's ecosystem be to assure our continued existence? Can we know which other species are essential to our survival? And, how might we actually arrive at a stable, optimum population, and design an economy to allow genuine prosperity without endless growth? Weisman visits an extraordinary range of the world's cultures, religions, nationalities, tribes, and political systems to learn what in their beliefs, histories, liturgies, or current circumstances might suggest that sometimes it's in their own best interest to limit their growth. PLEASE NOTE: When you purchase this title, the accompanying reference material will be available in your My Library section along with the audio.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Different people appreciate books according to their own tastes, still, I'm puzzled by a couple of the reviews published at this time of COUNTDOWN: OUR LAST, BEST HOPE FOR A FUTURE ON EARTH. I found this book fascinating. This book isn't meant to be a story in the traditional sense; it was written to provide information, although in my opinion, the information covered is as illuminating as any story! Mr. Weisman basically covers the population explosion and the problems of feeding several billion more people. To make the point, he travels the world investigating how cultures within various countries deal with population problems. He frames this information within the historical context of that particular culture. It would appear that any meaningful discussion about population would have to place that discussion within historical, cultural, religious and other contexts. Otherwise, how can birth control, just for instance, be discussed especially since some religions forbid it. Or allow more than one wife. And it clearly matters if a family needs 10 or more children to work the fields or if the family lives in a city with both parents having an understanding that one or two children are more than manageable. Mr. Weisman also discusses problems evident due to the number of people thriving (or not) at this time. He then points out what could happen in the future if human growth continues. He deals with both water and food issues because the question is totally valid: what will happen when the water runs out? How will we feed several billion more people.

(NOTE: PLEASE click on read more" to read the entire review!) I have waited so long for Weisman's follow up to The World Without Us. I was so eager for a book that I could use with my high school juniors and seniors who opt for my Environmental Science course - a book that would explain how all of the issues that they are passionate about, i.e., global warming, climate change, air pollution, water pollution, over fishing et al are rooted in one problem: the human population explosion. If anyone could tell this story, I expected that Alan Weisman could. After all, he had held my sophomores' attention through the conjectural regeneration that followed human demise. I couldn't wait to read his synthesis of the current state of our planet. Alas - this is not the book for my students. In fact, I wonder who the audience for this book will be. I suggest a professional association of editors. I hate to say it, but Countdown is a mess. You know when you start reading a book, you immediately get a sense of what you're in for? About 10 pages into the book, I saw the flashing yellow lights in my mind's eye. "Uh-oh. This is meandering quite a bit". Weissman starts the book by examining birth rates in that crucible of human existence, the Middle East. In the first seven pages, Weissman recites a historical litany of facts from King Solomon, the Wailing Wall, the 10 commandments, Ramadan, Yasser Arafat's "biology bomb", ultra orthodox haredi, Egyptian bondage of the Jews, miraculous plagues that related God to nature, Zionism and Jesus' miracle wit

loaves and fishes. This leads up to the first of a new set of Four Questions (think Passover haggadah) which is "How many people can their land really hold?" This is a good fundamental, relevant question to ask.

If I see an interesting book I put it on my wish list, and I'd had Weisman's previous book, *The World Without Us*, on there for almost a year when I decided in August 2013, to order and read it. I'd just finished it, and was very impressed, when this book was offered to Vine reviewers. I don't know what the other reviewers expected when they got *Countdown*. To me, *The World Without Us* leads up to this book. Yes, it has a lot of material, and yes, it appears disjointed, but that is the nature of its subject - overpopulation. Everyone in the world seems to have an opinion - should we use birth control or encourage people to have as many children as possible? Can we make people change their crops to something that produces more food? Weisman has travelled the world for two years to interview large numbers of people. Most of them have strong feelings - the mayor of an African town who has several wives and sired over 30 children, the man who encouraged birth control over all of Thailand, and experts on the subject who appear to have little doubt that we're heading towards a crisis. The general opinion is that in 2050 we will have ten billion people - and that's on the same earth as we have now. The three billion extra people will want more food and will create more waste products that destroy the earth, but none of the world's leaders seems focused on this eventuality. That's why so many voices need to be heard - every one of us has the power to change the amount of population in the world, but of course we only see our immediate society.

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