

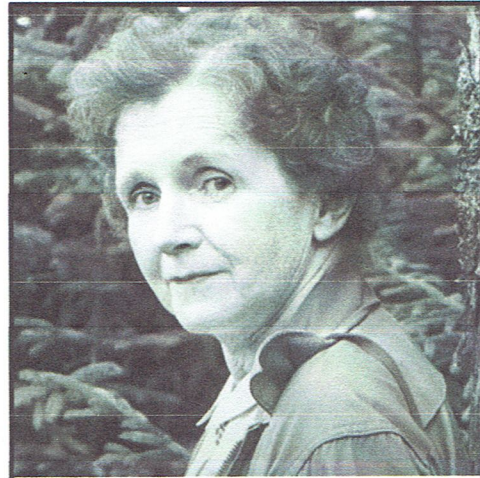
RACHEL CARSON

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(1) You're probably wondering why you're reading about me. I'm not a household name outside of certain circles, but it was my book, *Silent Spring*, that helped to spark the modern day environmental movement. My book made a new generation realize that they were not separate and independent from nature, but instead, deeply dependent on the health of the planet for their own well-being and for the well-being of future generations.

(2) I was born on May 27th, 1907 in Springdale, Pennsylvania. I loved two things growing up, nature and writing. I was introverted and would often go exploring around my family's farmland and wrote many fanciful stories about animals. I published my first story when I was 10 in the *Nicholas Magazine*. I dreamed of becoming a writer. In 1925, I graduated high school at the top of my small class of 45 students. I then went to Chatham University (then known as the Pennsylvania College for Women) and initially studied English, but I had a really amazing biology professor who inspired me to change my major to biology. I graduated in 1929 *magna cum laude* (Latin for "with great honor"). The following summer, I took a course at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Massachusetts. This is when I fell passionately in love with marine life. Later in life, I would end up writing a very successful trilogy of books about the oceans.

(3) I earned my master's degree in zoology at John Hopkins University in 1932 when I was 25. I wanted to continue my studies to get my PhD, but was forced to leave when my family's finances declined and my father died unexpectedly. I had to get a job to support my mother so I decided to take a job with the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries. My new job allowed me to go back to my love of writing. I was responsible for writing a series of weekly 7 minute long educational radio shows. The show was called *Romance Under the Waters* and the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries wanted it to create public interest in the work of the Bureau and in aquatic life. There were many writers for the show before me, but none were able to do a good job. With my passion for marine life and my writing ability, I was able to be successful in my new role. I wrote 52 episodes of *Romance Under the Waters*. My boss was so impressed that he offered me a full-time job with the Bureau as a junior aquatic biologist. It was 1936 and I was only the second woman to hold a full-time position at the Bureau.



Rachel Carson
Marine Biologist, Conservationist
(1907-1964)

(4) In my new full-time role, I began analyzing marine data and writing fisheries brochures. However, even when writing something as boring as a government document, my passion for nature shone through in my writing and my boss thought that the brochure was "too good" to be a mere pamphlet. He encouraged me to do more with it and in 1941, my brochure was rewritten into a book called *Under the Sea Wind: A Naturalist's Picture of Ocean Life* and it was critically acclaimed. I couldn't believe it. I was living out my dream of becoming a writer, yet I was also able to include my love of marine biology into my book. I couldn't be happier.

(5) In 1945, I first heard about a new pesticide called DDT. In the years that followed, DDT became widely used all over the world. The global increase in pesticide use began to greatly concern me. During this time, I also wrote my second book called *The Sea Around Us*, which won the National Book Award and was on the New York Times Best Seller List for 82 weeks. The book also won me two honorary doctorates! I quit my job at the Bureau to become a full-time writer. My second book was turned into a documentary though I was very unhappy with the lack of scientific accuracy in the final version of the movie. To my amazement, it won the Academy Award for the Best Documentary in 1953. After that experience though, I swore that I would never again sell film rights to any of my work.

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(6) By the 1957, the U.S. government had begun a widespread DDT spraying campaign against gypsy moths. This compelled me to do four years of investigative research on the effects of DDT and other pesticides on the environment. I obtained accurate and confidential data from my former connections with the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries and in 1962, I turned all of my investigative research into my most compelling book to date, *Silent Spring*. The four years spent writing the book was difficult, but I knew the work was important. Two years into researching the book, I discovered I had intestinal cancer and became gravely ill. I continued writing through my cancer treatments and in 1960, I discovered that the cancer had spread to my breast which I had to get removed by undergoing a mastectomy (cutting off the breast containing

the cancerous tumor). Through all of this, I still worked on the book. My research revealed many negative environmental effects of pesticide use. One effect was that DDT was causing bird eggs to become fragile and break. Bird populations were beginning to go into decline. I was worried that if this continued many bird populations would crash, hence I decided to title my book *Silent Spring*.

(7) The chemical industry launched strong opposition to my book. However, a new young generation of activists also became inspired by my book and started a new movement towards environmentalism. They took up the cause and fought to get rid of DDT. I died two years after *Silent Spring* was published, but eight years after my death, DDT was banned in the United States. I consider that a victory.