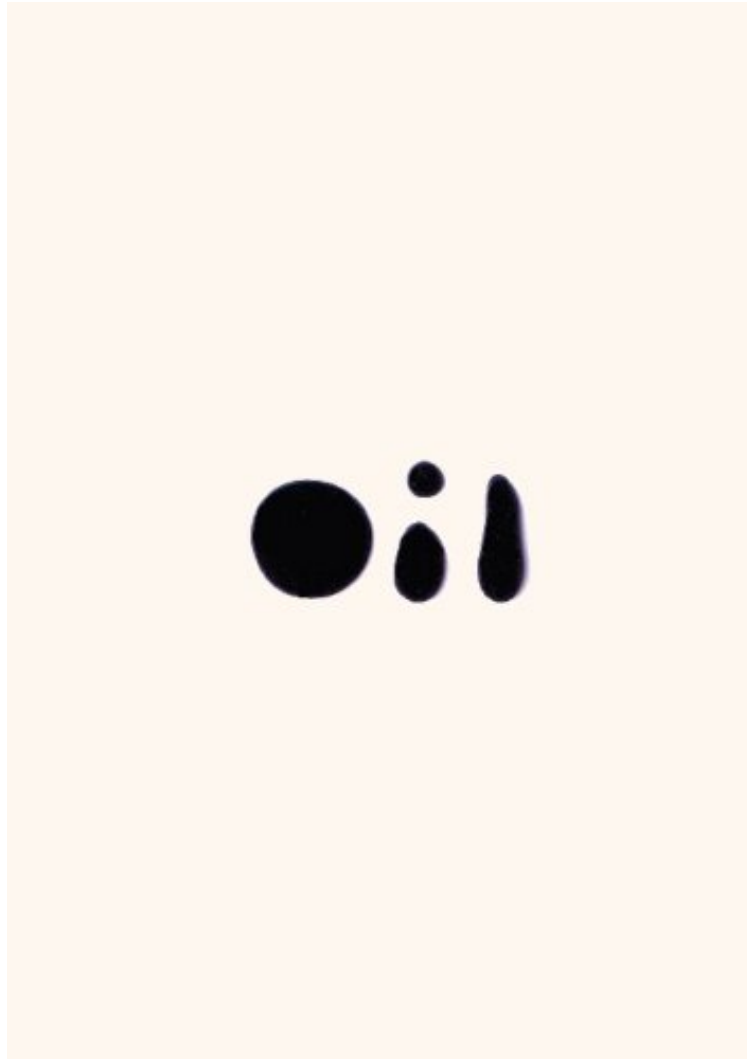


[Pdf free] Oil: A Concise Guide to the Most Important Product on Earth

# Oil: A Concise Guide to the Most Important Product on Earth

*Matthew Yeomans*

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**Matthew Yeomans : Oil: A Concise Guide to the Most Important Product on Earth** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Oil: A Concise Guide to the Most Important Product on Earth:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. So You Want to Know About Oil...By AlexOver the course of my life I've had limited exposure to knowledge about oil - I see gas prices daily, I occasionally pay attention to news stories that feature oil prominently, and I read the protest banners that exclaim "no blood for oil" (which I always found to be a rather silly slogan). End all be all, I didn't know Jack about oil until I read this book.The book starts with a history of oil discovery (Chapter 1). Usually such histories are incredibly boring in my opinion, but Yeomans does a great job keeping the reader interested (partially by moving pretty quickly, rather than dwelling on arcane and ultimately irrelevant historical analysis). Chapters 2-7 deal with different policy topics that are predominantly oil

oriented: cars in America, human rights and environmental issues in oil exploration, oil prices and scarcity, oil wars, President Bush's association with the oil industry, and CAFE (a piece of emissions standards legislation). The book then ends (Chapter 8) with a brief discussion of hydrogen as an emerging alternative and an afterward on the rising importance of China. From what I know of oil discussions in general, these chapters introduce most of the important elements of the general discussion of oil; reading this book made me feel prepared to discuss oil issues to a moderate degree of depth. For readers who are already familiar with these discussions about oil, I don't know that reading this book will tell you much more than you already know. Yeomans clearly has a liberal bias on the issue, but he is not quite a doomsayer. For those who do not know much about the politics and cultural aspects of oil, I highly recommend this book as a short read that will get you up to speed so whenever the topic comes up in conversation or news you can have an informed opinion.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Primer on "The Most Important Product on Earth" By Robert Carlberg

The preface to "Oil" describes the author's thought experiment of what it would be like to go a day without petroleum products. Naturally there would be no fuel or lubricants, for cars or any other type of machinery -- but there would also be no plastics (oops, there goes the computer and telephone). There would be no reading glasses or contact lenses. Most of the medicines in his cabinet would be gone. No shampoo, shaving cream or deodorant, and no curtain around his shower. No toothpaste ... or toothbrush. No non-stick cookware, oven-proof glassware or plastic dishes. No waterproof clothing or shoes (unless they have leather soles). There would be no heat in the winter. No harvesting of crops without machinery, fertilizers or pesticides. Credit and debit cards, being plastic of course, are gone. CDs and DVDs disappear, as well anything to play them on, because there are no electronic circuit boards. Very quickly you realize why Yeomans calls oil "the most important product on earth" -- it has not only fueled the Industrial Revolution, it *IS* the Industrial Revolution. Without oil, the world very quickly plunges into a wood, iron and stone economy not seen since the Middle Ages.

In Chapter 1 Yeomans gives "a short history of oil," from its discovery as a fuel to the mechanization of its extraction and refinement. How World War I was made more lethal (over 16 million dead!) through tanks and troop carriers. How the Allied powers divided up the oil-producing regions after the war in order to protect their own newfound dependence on the stuff. One of Yeomans' great talents is revealing the hidden oil-related motives in history. Pearl Harbor was Japan's bid to control Indochinese oil fields. Hitler's expansion was to ensure energy resources. Who has oil, and who controls its production, has truly shaped the 20th Century.

Chapter 2 describes the automobile culture that arose out of cheap gas, with interstate highways, a mobile workforce, and sprawling suburbs. Detroit and the oil giants encouraged excess, and American consumers love their inefficient chrome land yachts. Chapter 3 describes the machinations that have caused (and are still causing) regime change and political turmoil as oil companies set foreign policy and install businessmen to run the lucrative franchises known as "other nations."

The 4th chapter introduces the concept of "peak oil" and discusses the economics of the end of high-grade light crude in easily-drilled areas. Chapter 5, entitled "Energy Wars," describes the inevitable results of the major developed and developing nations competing for the rapidly dwindling reserves. The last three chapters are less timeless, written in 2003-4 and describing the now-familiar Bush Administration policies and mistakes. But they're still extremely clear-headed, factual, concise and irrefutable, and together with the rest of the book paint a very solemn portrait of the legacy we're leaving our children. A legacy of unsustainable growth built on an artificially-discounted, temporarily-available, non-renewable resource. When it's gone how much of our civilization will survive -- and at what cost?

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Way better options out there

By Tanya CI'm specifically writing my first book review because I just finished this book and it annoyed me so much. I think the topic is incredibly relevant and interesting, but Yeoman basically seems to regurgitate many other books and articles. He says himself that the history chapter is largely pulled from "The Prize" (Daniel Yergin). I know that Yergin's book is not quite light reading, but it does much more justice to the complex social and political history of oil. John Ghadvizian's (sp?) recent book "Untapped" is also much better, especially to understand more about Africa. Then, moving from rehashing, Yeoman goes into editorializing for the second half of the book, in a way that seems just as thoughtless, only more cliched. The book is clearly anti-W, and I definitely don't disagree with the effect that administration has had on our global reputation and energy policy (domestic and international), but he beats us over the head with his opinion instead of presenting the data for itself. Last, he preaches hydrogen as a saving promise. I believe that we'll need a diverse set of options to wean our current dependence on oil for transportation, and fuel cells may have a place in that, but he seems to just fall into the hype. [...] Last, for some reason it just annoys me that he re-titled the book a couple years after the first print (it was originally called "Oil: Anatomy of an Industry"). Yes, this may now be called the "concise guide", but it does a disservice to anyone who really wants to understand this critical element of our society better.

Matthew Yeomans begins his investigation into the role of oil in America by trying to spend a day without oil; only to stumble before exiting the bathroom (petroleum products play a role in shampoo, shaving cream, deodorant, and contact lenses). When *Oil* was published in cloth last year, it was quickly recognized as the wittiest and most accessible guide to the product that drives the U.S. economy and undergirds global conflict. The book sparked reviews and editorials across the country from the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Nation*

to Newsday , the San Francisco Chronicle, Wired and others. Author Michael Klare (Blood and Oil) called it "a clear, comprehensive overview of the U.S. oil industry . . . in one compact and highly readable volume," and Boldtype praised Yeoman's "crisp journalistic voice. . . . Understanding the business of oil is essential in any modern dialog of power, politics, or the almighty buck, and Yeoman delivers a well-researched and gripping read." Illustrated with maps and graphics; and now with an all-new afterword—Oil contains a brief history of gasoline, an analysis of the American consumer's love affair with the automobile, and a political anatomy of the global oil industry, including its troubled relationship with oil-rich but democracy-poor countries.

"Compelling and provocative. . . . Should be required reading for all who care about the future of this country and the planet as a whole." —The Nation "A volatile mix of history, politics, economics, science, and foreign and military policy." —In These Times "Yeoman does a fine job integrating a wide array of information, from the mechanics of oil production to how the politics of oil helped shape the modern Middle East. . . . Surprisingly nuanced." —Newsday "An informed primer that weaves together commentary, anecdote, and fact." —Wired "A wake-up call. Highly recommended." —The Washington Post