



Beacons: Stories for Our Not So Distant Future

Gregory Norminton (Editor) , Tom Bullough , David Constantine , Clare Dudman , Sian Melangell Dafydd , Janice Galloway , Adam Marek , Toby Litt , more... A.L. Kennedy , Liz Jensen , Holly Howitt , Nick Hayes , Gregory Norminton , Joanne Harris , Rodge Glass , Alasdair Gray , Jay Griffiths , Adam Thorpe , Jem Poster , Lawrence Norfolk , James Miller , Maria McCann ...less

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A riveting and provocative collection of short stories, *Beacons* throws down the gauntlet to award-winning writers, challenging them to devise original responses to the climate crisis. From Joanne Harris' cautionary tale of a world where 'outside' has become a thing of history to Nick Hayes' graphic depiction of the primeval bond between man and nature, each story thrills the senses as it attempts to make sense of a world warping into something unfamiliar. Original, eclectic, and inventive, *Beacons* warns and inspires by offering stories that are as various as our possible futures.

All author royalties will go to the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition, one of the largest groups of people dedicated to action on climate change and limiting its impact on the world's poorest people.

Beacons: Stories for Our Not So Distant Future Details

Date : Published July 23rd 2013 by Oneworld Publications (first published March 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781851689699

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Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Science Fiction, Fiction, Anthologies

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From Reader Review Beacons: Stories for Our Not So Distant Future for online ebook

Charlene says

I almost always enjoy story collections. Beacons contains writings of multiple authors and because of that, the reader is treated to numerous variations on what our future may look like if we don't take global warming seriously. Sure, each of those stories is the result of a writer's imagination but the vivid descriptions and ideas in some of them give a sense of realistic bleakness. It's truly difficult to pick any story as a favourite in this book but Liz Jensen's Mother Moon's Job, Adam Marek's The Great Consumer, Holly Howitt's The Weatherman, and Gregory Norminton's Almost Visible Cities are the most memorable for me. There isn't much to dislike about this book. I fell in love with the cover, the stories cover a vast array of scenarios including, in one notable tale, visits from pop culture icons.

I have to add too, that when you purchase this book, all author royalties go to the Stop Climate Change Coalition.

Polly says

Only a three star book for me for several reasons: I disliked the dystopian slant & egoism of humans in the stories. Obviously it is a subject made for sci-fi but there was not much multi-species mention other than the usual 'all the bees died so humans are doomed'. It depressed me that none discussed overpopulation or the scourge of humans desecrating the planet by their greed & selfishness. When will we stop rewarding people for breeding. If humans were extinct the planet would probably thrive. (I'm with David Attenborough all the way on that view). If anything, this book made me more of a misanthrope! Bah humbug!

Val says

This is a collection of literary pieces for the Climate Chaos Coalition, an artistic response to the issue.

Most of the stories are set in an imagined future, where limited resources are either the preserve of the few or tightly controlled and rationed for the many. Very few of these are at all optimistic. There is an allegory in graphic format, which perhaps is.

Some of them are funny, including one set in the present where a family consider their carbon footprint. All of them are good.

Moatoh says

**I received a review copy

THIS IS A THINKER'S BOOK, and one of the most accessible of its kind.

I assume you accept that climate change is real right now, but do you ever muse about the widespread effects that may/will probably/must result?

If yes, you'll very much enjoy this chance to think more deeply about your current concerns, and be guided to new ripples you haven't seen yet. If no, then this is an effective and engaging introduction to the possible world yet to come.

The terms of reference for Beacons tell all. The editor and contributor, Gregory Normington, was moved by a 2007 lecture in Edinburgh, Scotland about the effects of climate change on Scottish wildlife.

He was spurred to action. Beacons is an anthology of 21 short stories, grouped equally under 'Looking In The Mirror', 'A Strand In The Web' and 'Go Light'.

Every work has been commissioned and asked for a treatment of the ecological results of climate change, with a special request to avoid cliches.

You'll get quality with this group; the authors are predominantly well-known, highly-respected, award-winning UK writers, and, in addition to the mandated creative story ideas, you'll see some wonderfully different writing styles. Aspiring writers, take note.

Short stories are slices of life, just right for Beacons' content. Note the points offered, internalize those that speak you, and fill in the the scene for the rest of the planet at your leisure.

I would like to see Beacons included somewhere in high school grades 9-12 (14-17 year-olds) with joint literature/earth science presentation.

Beacons is an excellent example of what U.S. philosopher Daniel Dennett calls an 'intuition pump'. The stories make you think; you can't help it.

NOTE TO AUTHORS: Get complete bios out there! I'm good with Google, but two of you took 2 minutes to find (way too long).

Christine Blachford says

This is a collection of short stories written around the subject of climate change, which sort of put me off to start with because it's such a divisive subject, and because there was bound to be some preaching involved.

Actually, it wasn't too bad in that sense. There was information at the beginning and at the end, but the real focus was on the stories. Ranging from simple looks at humanity as it was, or is now, to wild predictions about what the future could be like, there was a vast spread of interests. I found what I usually do with books like these – some I wasn't that interested in, but those that I was, I ended up disappointed that the stories were so short!

I'm still not convinced that short stories are for me, but this was a good fit – particularly the dystopian worlds in our future. At first, you think they are quite far fetched but when you get to thinking about it and everything happening with the world today, they seem more and more believable.

Alan Fricker says

A mixed bag really

Andreas says

I really wanted to like this book because of its promise to help us relate to climate change through narrative fiction. The book is a collection of some 20 short stories (+ one graphic novella) that all focus on climate change in some way or another.

Unfortunately, most of them feel very tired and forced, and frankly, quite depressing. Most of them don't actually bring the issues to life and make them relevant, they merely seem to coast along on the usual clichés about how terribly difficult everything will be on the other side of the expected climate-cataclysm. They don't challenge or expand my understanding of this crisis. They merely make me less interested — because the stories themselves feel so unengaging.

There are a few exceptions, notably editor Gregory Norminton's clever homage to Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, Maria McCann's CO2 footprint family drama and Siân Melangell Dafydd's poetic and minimalistic criticism of consumer culture.

I guess this goes to show not only how very difficult it is to write engaging fiction about climate change, but also how much we need it.

Max says

A great collection. Not every story hits the mark, but the ones that do are fantastic.

Lane Ashfeldt says

This beautifully produced and vividly written collection of stories on the theme of climate change, published by One World, has been put together by contributing editor and creative writing tutor at Manchester Metropolitan university, Gregory Norminton. At times the stories collected here make for scary reading, especially when seen in the context of the rise of 'extreme weather'. Unusual weather events from unseasonal snowfall to extreme high temperature, from flood to severe drought, have led to people losing their homes, their livelihoods, or even their lives. It is in the nature of news media, coupled with the geographic spread of the regions impacted, that such incidents are reported as and when they occur, rather than collectively. But given their increased frequency it has become almost impossible not to take seriously the concerns expressed by scientists, politicians, insurers and planners about global climate change. When it comes to the need to modify the habits of a lifetime, fiction has a unique role to play in helping people to imagine (and perhaps to shape) our shared future.

Liz Jensen, author of eco-thriller 'The Rapture' among other novels, delivers a chilling story. Her tween narrator's energetic voice seems more than capable of coping with the horrendous climate change-induced world in which he lives. Unintentionally, perhaps, 'Mother Moon's Job' almost makes you feel that no matter how bad it gets, the next generation of humans will somehow adapt when climates gets tough. But for many, it is not an adaptation that we would choose to make.

Adam Marek's offering reads a little like the script for a certain time-travelling doctor, but is none the worse

for it. His Doctor Who type character usefully brings inter planetary travel (and a sense of humour) to bear on the usual 'do something vs. do nothing' debate about climate change.

Toby Litt contributes an idiosyncratic take on global meltdown called 'The Gloop'. This story – or non-story, perhaps – is justified in his 'How To Tell A Story To Save The World' piece, which ends: "You are not a sympathetic central character because exactly what centre are we talking about? There are either seven billion equally important centres, in which case if they all behave like you we're screwed, or there are no centres, in which case we might just stand a chance."

Janice Galloway's atmospheric 'Fittest', as in 'survival of the...', is bang on theme with not a word wasted: "The weather had been wicked for ages but summer was little short of criminal... Stornoway reported fleets of stray jellyfish stranding boats offshore, and Perth, a shower of live eels. ...those of us who paid attention to our instincts began, like salmon, drifting north."

I could nearly quote the whole of Galloway's story as it is so perfectly written, but why not encourage you to buy your own copy instead? Especially when all author royalties from Beacons go to the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition, a group of people united by their desire to limit climate change and its impact on the world's poorest people. If the £8.99 price tag is a barrier, single stories in the collection can be downloaded to your e-reader for £0.75 a pop, direct from publisher One World. Among them are stories by Alisdair Gray, AL Kennedy, Adam Thorpe, Maria McCann, Rodge Glass, Joanne Harris and recent Frank O'Connor prize-winner David Constantine.

All in all a fascinating collection, and really well put together.

sisterimapoet says

A great premise for a book and the stories within really delivered. A good variety of styles and approaches - cementing my love of writers I knew as well as tickling my interest in some new names. Never overtly bleak, but regularly thought provoking. I found I responded with most emotion to those stories with recognisable details, like a character gardening or making a cup of tea. Those that showed the things we might still cling to in a world alerted by climate change - more than those with a visibly dystopian future.

Snoakes says

I've only given this four stars as I didn't read the whole book. To be honest I thought it might be a little depressing and/or heavy-going. But I couldn't resist downloading Mother Moon's Job by Liz Jensen (all the stories can be downloaded individually on kindle). It's brilliantly bleak and dystopian and a five star story. Mind you, if Liz Jensen wrote the blurb on the back of a box of Weetabix, I'd read it avidly!
