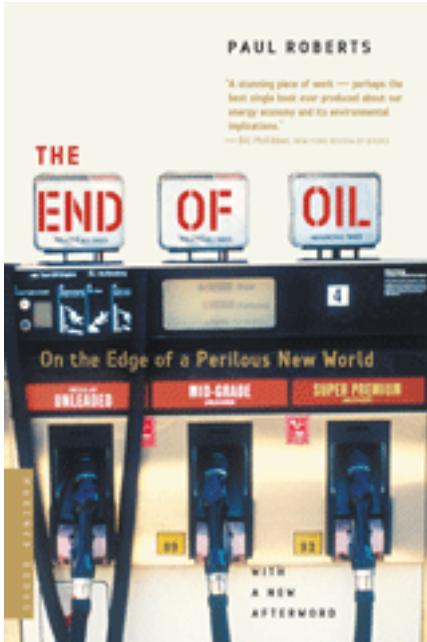


A Reader's Guide

The End of Oil

by Paul Roberts

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About the Book

The situation is alarming and irrefutable: Within thirty years, even by conservative estimates, we will have burned our way through most of the oil that is readily available to us. Already, the costly side effects of dependence on fossil fuel are taking their toll. Even as oil-related conflict threatens entire nations, individual consumers are suffering from higher prices at the gas pump, rising health problems, and the grim prospect of long-term environmental damage.

In this frank and balanced investigation, Paul Roberts offers a timely wake-up call. Brisk, immediate, and accessible, this is essential reading for anyone who uses oil, which is to say every one of us.

"[Roberts's] lively, penetrating investigation . . . will leave you feeling as if someone splashed cold water on your face." — *Audubon*

"Fascinating . . . Roberts offers a stinging rebuke of America's myopic, do-nothing energy policy." — Joseph J. Romm, former acting assistant secretary of energy, author of *The Hype About Hydrogen*

"Brilliant . . . Takes up virtually the full range of problems which a diminishing supply of oil will present to this country and the world." — *Baltimore Sun*

"An extraordinarily clear and powerful analysis of what is arguably the most serious crisis our industrial society has ever faced." — *Boston Herald*

About the Author

Paul Roberts is a regular contributor to *Harper's Magazine*. A longtime observer of both business and environmental issues, he is an expert on the complex interplay of economics, technology, and the natural world.

Questions for Discussion

1. Was your perception of the global oil crisis transformed or confirmed by *The End of Oil*? Of all the evidence and arguments that Paul Roberts presents, what did you find most surprising? Did you find any one aspect of the current energy crisis especially alarming? Do you feel you have a clearer understanding of how we got here and what the future holds for us?
2. As Roberts describes, China has seen dramatic increases in its energy consumption in recent years (pp. 143–145). What cultural factors have contributed to this rise in energy demand? How can this be viewed as one of the most significant shifts in the emerging global energy economy?
3. What is the problem, as Roberts sees it, with the supply-side approach to energy policy? What has caused the shift in the past few decades from a demand-side approach to a supply-side approach?
4. Is oil ultimately a political issue or a geological issue?
5. What are the economic obstacles to developing and implementing a conservation-based approach to energy use? How does the answer to this question change as the scale shifts from a global level to a national level to a single business, on down to an individual consumer? Do you find these obstacles insurmountable, given the stakes? Are there economic benefits as well? What are they?
6. Roberts writes, "Whether we blame American energy politics on the people or their politicians, it's plain that U.S. energy policies will have tremendous impact on the evolution of the global energy economy" (p. 305). How do the demands of American industry influence energy policy in this country? What effect does the energy policy of the United States have on the rest of the world?
7. Roberts assesses some of the most promising alternative energy sources, including hydrogen fuel cells, wind power, and hybrid cars. What are some of the potential drawbacks and benefits of these emerging technologies?
8. Do you think Americans can change our energy consumption habits? After reading *The End of Oil*, do you feel impelled to address energy inefficiencies in your own life, by installing energy-saving appliances in your home, for instance, or by choosing "greener" means of transportation? Have you altered your own habits since reading the book?

[A Conversation with Paul Roberts](#)

For Further Reading

The following books may also be of interest to readers of *The End of Oil*.

[Fast Food Nation](#) by [Eric Schlosser](#)

[Silent Spring](#) by [Rachel Carson](#)

[Water](#) by [Marq de Villiers](#)