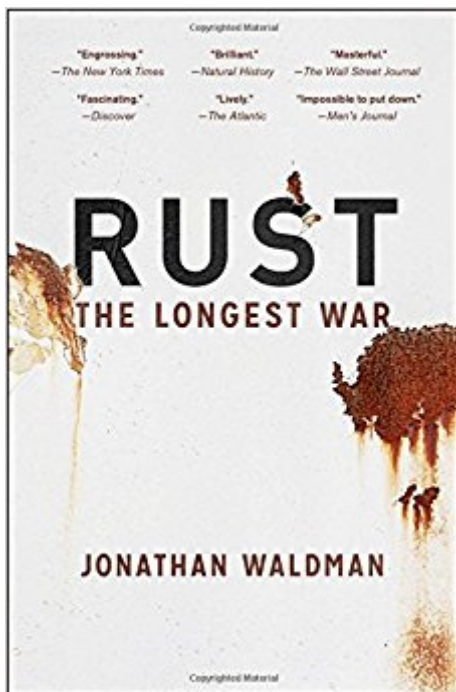


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Rust: The Longest War



Synopsis

Finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize ** A Wall Street Journal Best Book of the Year Rust has been called “the great destroyer,” “the pervasive menace,” and “the evil.” This look at corrosion—its causes, its consequences, and especially the people devoted to combating it—is wide-ranging and consistently engrossing (The New York Times). It is the hidden enemy, the one that challenges the very basis of civilization. This entropic menace destroys cars, fells bridges, sinks ships, sparks house fires, and nearly brought down the Statue of Liberty’s torch. It is rust—and this book, full of wit and insight, disasters and triumphs—is its story. Jonathan Waldman’s first book is as obsessive as it is informative—he takes us deep into places and situations that are too often ignored or unknown (The Washington Post). In Rust, Waldman travels from Key West to Prudhoe Bay, meeting people concerned with corrosion. He sneaks into an abandoned steelworks and nearly gets kicked out of Can School. He follows a high-tech robot through an arctic winter, hunting for rust in the Alaska pipeline. In Texas, he finds a corrosion engineer named Rusty, and in Colorado, he learns of the animosity between the galvanizing industry and the paint army. Along the way, Waldman recounts stories of flying pigs, Trekkies, rust boogers, and unlikely superheroes. The result is a man-versus-nature tale that’s as fascinating as it is grand, illuminating a hidden phenomenon that shapes the modern world. Rust affects everything from the design of our currency to the composition of our tap water, and it will determine the legacy we leave on this planet. This exploration of corrosion, and the incredible lengths we go to fight it, is “engrossing|brilliant|Waldman’s gift for narrative nonfiction shines in every chapter|. Watching things rust: who would have thought it could be so exciting (Natural History).

Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; Reprint edition (March 22, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1451691602

ISBN-13: 978-1451691603

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 218 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #290,636 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Materials & Material Science > Metallurgy #267 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Materials & Material Science > Materials Science #353 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Reference > History

Customer Reviews

“Jonathan Waldman’s first book, >, sounds like a building code violation. But don’t let that fool you. This look at corrosion’s causes, its consequences, and especially the people devoted to combating it is wide-ranging and consistently engrossing. Mr. Waldman makes rust shine. . . . At one point, a canning executive hostile to Mr. Waldman’s questions tells him rust is “a silly subject to write about.” It is a testament to Mr. Waldman’s skill and perseverance that this book proves that man so thoroughly wrong. • Gregory Cowles, > “Compelling . . . Mr. Waldman does a masterful job of interweaving elements of the science and technology. • Henry Petroski, The Wall Street Journal “Engrossing . . . Brilliant . . . Waldman’s gift for narrative nonfiction shines in every chapter. . . . Watching things rust: who would have thought it could be so exciting! • Natural History “It never sleeps, as Neil Young noted: Rust is too busy wrecking our world. The relentless, destructive process has downed planes, sunk ships, crashed cars, dissolved priceless artifacts, and committed countless other crimes of corrosion. Waldman uses our long war with the iron oxide . . . [to] offer fascinating insights into our endless battle with the dreaded four-letter word. • > “Lively . . . Don’t be put off by the subtitle, The Longest War. Waldman has embarked on the opposite of a slog. • The Atlantic “Fascinating . . . Waldman attends Can School, interviews rust experts, and visits the Alaska pipeline, among other adventures, to illuminate the myriad attacks rust makes on our daily lives. In doing so, he adds luster to a substance considered synonymous with dullness. • >

A Ted Scripps Fellow in environmental journalism at the University of Colorado, Jonathan Waldman grew up in Washington, DC, studied environmental science and writing at Dartmouth, and earned a master’s degree from Boston University’s Knight Center for Science Journalism in 2003. He has spent the last decade writing creatively about science, culture, and politics for Outside, The Washington Post, McSweeney’s, and others. Rust is his first book. He lives

in Colorado.

A good friend of mine in Hong Kong found this book by chance while scrolling the shelves of a local bookstore and recommended it to me. I have read it and enjoyed it immensely. Thank you Mr Waldman for this wonderful collection of corrosion-related stories as told anecdotally through the lives of so many interesting characters. I really appreciate your unique sense of humor blended with tons of solid data and useful reference. I have since bought 12 more copies to give to friends, colleagues and customers as gifts. Anyone who ever thinks that corrosion is boring should read this very entertaining book. Bruce P - Morristown, NJ

Hoping for a more scientific approach but I did come away with more knowledge. Wanted to know more about dissimilar metals and he does touch on that a bit. The most interesting part I think was about the maintenance and the processes of pigging the pipe line. It is a good read and recommend it for an introduction to corrosion engineering.

Hard to know exactly where to start here. Waldman has put together a book on a topic that, on the face of it and judging by the title, one might have a struggle finding a less interesting subject - rust? Really? Kind of like watching cement set. Not so. Waldman has a gift for doing what all very good writers can do - he takes a topic about which I imagine few of us know in any detail whatsoever, beyond "it's time to get a new car, the body is starting to rust out", and peels back the (considerable) onion on not only rust, but the entire process and impact of corrosion in general - or, as one might say, a huge wing of entropy. For those of us who love the exposition of the details of processes we've spent little or no time considering, this is great. The Statue of Liberty, bridges, pipelines, buildings....they're all going to hell. And that process starts from the moment that the materials roll off the manufacturing line - everything's on the clock. That 100-story skyscraper? That's going to go, whether we like it or not. Those bridges? Gone. How? How is this possible? The world is a tough place. Waldman gets into the details on the constant war against corrosion, and there is considerable science and fascination behind all of it. While I imagine this sort of writing is especially interesting to those who have a desire to understand how everything works, I also know that it will pull in those who have no connection to engineering, or similar disciplines. Here's a touch point: if you like John McPhee, you're going to like this book. Waldman's style lends a bit of gonzo journalism to this chase - he's The Man On The Scene, and parenthetically adds asides that make you smile or laugh. Part of the humor taken from his various interviews and encounters may have to do with the

individuals and corporations in question wondering: why are you interested in this subject, since so few are? Which, by the way, seems to be the presiding problem overall. It takes a visionary on this topic to address it successfully both as a profession and as a writer - why else would anyone else care? I'm glad that Mr. Waldman cared enough to write it. He's a stylist in the best sense - in the same manner that leads one to read articles in the New York Times or The New Yorker on subjects outside of any previous interest simply because they are so well-written. I had a great time reading this. Give it a shot. You will likely be glad you did.

Except for its first couple of chapters this isn't really a book about rust. It is a series of character sketches about people who somehow have something to do with rust. We read, for example, a biography of one of the early English developers of stainless steel. We spend an afternoon with the author as he accompanies a lady who takes pictures of rust; we do not accompany the lady - the focus is on the author. Another author-focused chapter concerns his adventures at Can School (an annual symposium for those in the canning industry); this turns into a lecture on the supposed health hazards of canned foods -- the industry's response to which, the author tells us, is incoherent and dishonest, conclusions far stronger than any evidence he cares to present. The chapter on the leader of the Pentagon's anti-rust efforts deals mostly with his bureaucratic and financial battles, though for variety that is interspersed with descriptions of backscene activities at the filming of a LeVar Burton documentary. A chapter concerning the Alaska Pipeline is about the trials and tribulations of an engineer responsible for sending a "pig" (a mechanism for inspecting a pipeline's interior) through it; the chapter tells us a lot about that fellow, a fair amount about pigs, and not much about rust. The prose is of the breezy, airline-magazine type that says more about the book's writing than its subject. And so it describes at great length what the author's informants look like, what they were wearing, what sort of personality they have, where they came from, and what they had for lunch (no, I'm not kidding about that last one). Much of the book is written in the first person, though some chapters are not and in others the intended point of view is unclear.

As an engineer I was captivated by the title, certainly a worthy subject for a semi technical treatise but written for the layman. It is much more about the people the author meets and what they do than the subject at hand. Readable, but do not buy on impulse (As I did) from reading the title. This is not a Petroski type book, where an incisive examination of the subject is expanded to make entertaining reading.

The first half of the book is incredibly informative and I felt that the price was justified just for that. If you're interested in metal working origins and how rust has affected various industries then this is a fantastic book. However it does tend to meander after about half way and goes on about a photographer and an eccentric military man and neither story has much to do with rust or was very interesting to me personally. I want to be clear though that the first half is great.

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