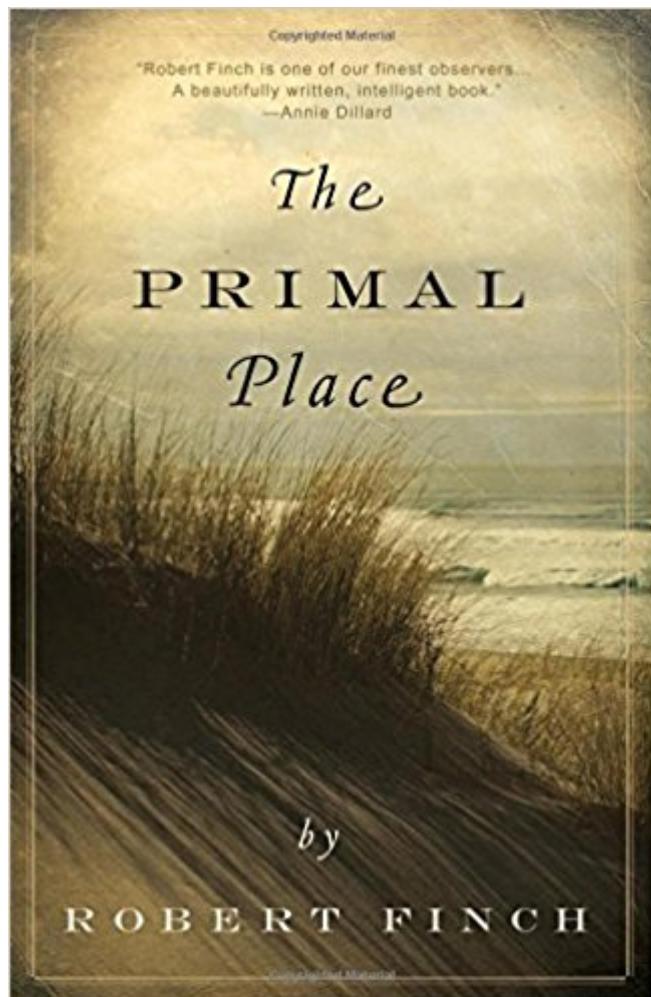


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The Primal Place



Synopsis

From acclaimed author and naturalist Robert Finch, a richly detailed observance of Cape Cod's seemingly vanished natural and human past, as it clings to its present landscape. This is a voyage of discovery, a personal odyssey into the nature of a single Cape Cod neighborhood. It is a rich portrait, beautifully drawn, of a landscape and a community whose essential character lies in their penetrating interface with the sea. But it is also an individual quest, a journey of the heart and mind in which the author seeks "entrance, or rather re-entrance" into "that vast living maze stretching out beyond my lines of sight."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Robert Finch has lived on Cape Cod for more than forty years, currently in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. He is the author of seven collections of essays, most recently of his radio scripts for his weekly radio broadcast, "A Cape Cod Notebook" on the Cape and Islands NPR station, WCAI.

A must read if you love nature and books about nature. Mr. Finch writes about his beloved Cape Cod where he resides and the reader (at least I did) becomes totally immersed in his world even when the latter has only vague notions about the Cape Cod setting. On finishing the book I only wish that the author could be transported to other natural settings and write about them...the observations and prose are so good, so entrancing...what a nature series it would make. But The Primal Place, in itself, is enough to set the standard for other incursions into nature writing. Mr.

Finch is knowledgeable of natural science without being a know it all, relates his observations/thoughts to his own life and others of the humankind which is impossible for any writer of nature not to do, no matter how detached they may pretend to be. This book sets the standard for writing about a place that is loved...read it and keep it on your shelf.

One day people will realize that Robert Finch is the greatest nature writer of our time. He is a competent naturalist - he easily identifies animals, plants and other natural phenomena with their scientific names; he is a keen observer - he notices the intricate details of the objects of his observation; and he is also an excellent writer - all the scientific lingo are woven seamlessly into his writing, and the details are always accurate, vivid and never boring. Compared with some of his near-contemporaries, Mr. Finch is also more humane, tolerant and even personable. Aldo Leopold essentially only wrote one book (albeit a very good one), and he was too much of a hunter, always trigger happy; Edward Abbey writes with pungency, but he was often ornery and undoubtedly a misanthrope; Joseph Wood Krutch was too detached, too distant in his writing; Anne Dillard was prone to prolonged and irrelevant theological rambling. As to this book, as Mr. Finch said, it is his favorite, the best "book book" (as opposed to a collection of loosely related essays) he has written. In the first part of the book, "Digging in", the setting is centered around his house in Brewster, Cape Cod: the house itself, the garden, the adjacent cemetery, the roads, Punkhorn. In the second part, "Going out", the author ambles to the nearby surroundings: the brooks, ponds, seashores and "The Landing". Mr. Finch writes about the natural phenomena: the herring run, the woodchuck in his garden, the stranded marine animals on the beach, etc., but he also writes about the people and the human history of the land. In his words, this is not a static place, but "a landscape in motion". Although Mr. Finch lived in Cape Cod for years, the book vaguely suggests the continuation and changing of seasons of one single year (interestingly, the book itself was written in a year) - it starts in about early Spring, then rolls into summer, fall, winter, and finally ends in early Spring again. This and the geographical concentricity are perhaps what give the books a cohesive theme and the reason why Mr. Finch says that it is a "book book". They also remind one of *Walden*, which without a doubt has influenced Mr. Finch's writing and perhaps also his philosophy.

This book was purchased as a gift for my wife after a week in Cape Cod.

Beautifully written & illustrated.

Once more 'Fonch'. Read it!

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