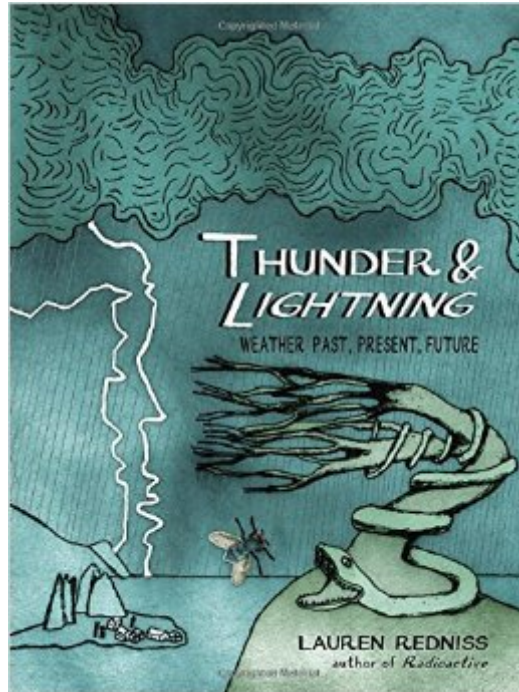


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# Thunder & Lightning: Weather Past, Present, Future



## Synopsis

From the National Book Award finalist Lauren Redniss, author of *Radioactive*, comes a dazzling fusion of storytelling, visual art, and reportage that grapples with weather in all its dimensions: its danger and its beauty, why it happens and what it means. WINNER OF THE PEN/E. O. WILSON LITERARY SCIENCE WRITING AWARD • NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, KIRKUS REVIEWS, AND SHELF AWARENESS

Weather is the very air we breathe—it shapes our daily lives and alters the course of history. In *Thunder & Lightning*, Lauren Redniss tells the story of weather and humankind through the ages. This wide-ranging work roams from the driest desert on earth to a frigid island in the Arctic, from the Biblical flood to the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Redniss visits the headquarters of the National Weather Service, recounts top-secret rainmaking operations during the Vietnam War, and examines the economic impact of disasters like Hurricane Katrina. Drawing on extensive research and countless interviews, she examines our own day and age, from our most personal decisions—“Do I need an umbrella today?”—to the awesome challenges we face with global climate change. Redniss produced each element of *Thunder & Lightning*: the text, the artwork, the covers, and every page in between. She created many of the images using the antiquated printmaking technique copper plate photogravure etching. She even designed the book’s typeface. The result is a book unlike any other: a spellbinding combination of storytelling, art, and science. Praise for *Thunder & Lightning*

• “[An] aesthetically charged and deeply researched account . . . a wild rainstorm of a book, pelting the reader with ideas and inspiration.”

• “Nature • A gorgeous and illuminating illustrated study of weather in all its tempestuous variety . . . Redniss’s combo of fact, folklore, and vibrant etched copperplate prints enthralls.”

• “O: The Oprah Magazine • Eerily beautiful . . . Contains plenty of scientific explanation (including more than a few nods toward global warming), but also far-flung personal stories that illuminate the beauty, wonder and chaos inherent in the elements.”

• “The New York Times • Magical . . . Redniss has . . . shown us how human beings live with nature—fighting, coexisting, taming, predicting via leech barometer and radar and intuition.”

• “The New York Times Book Review • [A] twenty-first-century genius . . . Redniss is inventing a new literary genre. . . . The reader willing to put herself fully in Redniss’s hands will be rewarded with a delicious feeling of being enveloped by a phenomenon that eclipses the chiming trivialities of daily life.”

• “Elle • Lends a graphic-novel-like allure to some of nature’s most curious paradoxes.”

• “Vogue • Redniss is one of the most creative science writers of our time—her combination of beautiful artwork, reporting, and poetic prose brings science to life in ways that words alone simply cannot.”

• “Rebecca Skloot • Redniss combines her own dual punch of

expressive art and impressive erudition to give an entirely new take on all that happens above our heads. This is an illuminated book that is also an illuminating one.âAdam Gopnik  
âA strange and wonderful thing, the work of a first-class mind that refuses to submit to any categories or precedent.âDave Eggers  
âBeautiful and totally original.âElizabeth Kolbert

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I can't believe all the low reviews for this book. It's fantastic, but it's certainly not for everyone. This book is filled with art, both in the graphical illustrations that fill every page, as well as the way the stories and facts pertaining to weather have been presented. The layout itself is beautiful. I loved reading all of the stories and tidbits about weather, presented from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. No, this book is not a novel, and doesn't read like one. Yes, it's a bit abstract. That's part of its beauty. Yes, there is nudity in several of the illustrations. No, it's not [even remotely] pornographic, and I'd have no problem with children of any age looking through this book. Again, this book is not for everyone. But if you like the art, and might enjoy reading interesting history about global weather events and related cultural and other things that you would likely never come across otherwise, give the book a chance. I found reading through it to be a beautiful experience.

This is not quite what I was expecting, but it's a beautiful and intriguing work. I was expecting it to be more science-y and less story-telling-y. It's a lot more about how we FEEL about the weather and events associated with the weather, and how people EXPERIENCE the weather than an Explanation of weather per se. (And I was expecting more of the latter.) So, if you take this as a work

of art-science or science-art that immerses in the phenomenon of weather and explores it with you and shows you some things you didn't know -- if you're ready for that -- it's remarkable and wonderful. There are 12 Chapters here, on Chaos, Cold, Rain, Fog, Wind, Heat, Sky, Dominion, War, Profit, Pleasure, and Forecasting, and several pages of footnotes/references at the end. It's not quite a coffee-table book, in that it's fun to flip through the pictures, but they're tied to the stories... I think one might want to nestle in and read a story at a time as the best way to enjoy this book.

I loved Redniss's previous book, *Radioactive*, a history of Marie Curie and of radiation itself, told via historical, scientific and personal vignettes in an original handwritten-like font and hundreds of original illustrations evocative of the mystery and magic of radiation. Redniss's new book changes the topic to weather but continues the beautiful format and presentation, with a similar font that's much easier to read and artwork that is positively ... atmospheric :) There is the disorienting blindness of fog, captured in an extended series of gray-toned pages with minimal anchoring text. There is a section on "meteorological warfare," where clouds are seeded to induce disruptive rain. There is forecasting, from medieval almanacs to the 1792 debut of the *Old Farmer's Almanac* with its "secret forecasting formula." I'm fascinated by wind and enjoyed the section on trade winds, including when they meet near the equator and create the "doldrums" (a void; a still, windless zone) and also where they flow unobstructed, as swimmer Diana Nyad noted when she and her trainer once chatted with a sailor while waiting for favorable weather conditions between Cuba and Florida: "[She took us] out on the dock in Key West, on the Atlantic Ocean side, and she said, 'Put your tongue out in the air.' So the three of us are standing there with our tongues hanging out in the breeze. And she said, 'What do you sense?' We definitely sensed something grainy, crunchy, you know, in the mouth. And we said, 'Wow, it's the salt.' She said, 'No. It is the Sahara dust.' Literally grains of sand from the Sahara Desert." I enjoyed *Thunder & Lightning* slightly less than *Radioactive*; its content feels born of a folder-full of stories about people, events and topics related (sometimes peripherally) to weather, accumulated over years, more than a real exploration of the topic. But it's curious. Poetic. Beautiful. A satisfying experience.

Having never read a graphic novel of this type, I was unsure what to expect. What I did find was a pleasure to view and read. This is a fairly large format book, so it is heavy. A single-hand hold when reading will fatigue you. But, this is my only negative. I'm sure the large format made the artwork inside more compelling, or at least I thought so. If you read magazines like *Discover* or some

science-based other magazine the content of this book will grab you with it. The author's meandering stories of locales, people, etc. and the effects of weather on them. There are several sections each covering an aspect of weather, such as wind or fog and in these sections stories related to this phenomena. Essential bits and pieces that capture the essence of this weather fact. It is not comprehensive by any means but just facts and info that caught the author's fancy to include. The artwork relates to the stories within. Some of it very involved and some simple such as an entire 2-page spread that captures that azure blue a sky gets on a warm and humid day. All the artwork is in a cartoon or caricature type of style, befitting a graphic novel. Some, I could figure out what it was depicting, others no so much. I enjoyed the stories and the artwork, and I guess that would be the whole point.

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