



Community Book Connection Proposal Form

Proposed by: Debra Sambuco

Date of Proposal: October 11, 2021

A. Basic Book Information

- a. Title: Under a White Sky : The Nature of the Future
- b. Author: Elizabeth Kolbert
- c. Year published: 2021
- d. Number of pages: 234
- e. Is there a paperback edition? Not yet

B. Book Overview

- a. Brief Book Jacket Description: That man should have dominion “over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” is a prophecy that has hardened into fact. So pervasive are human impacts on the planet that it’s said we live in a new geological epoch: the Anthropocene.

In *Under a White Sky*, Elizabeth Kolbert takes a hard look at the new world we are creating. Along the way, she meets biologists who are trying to preserve the world’s rarest fish, which lives in a single tiny pool in the middle of the Mojave; engineers who are turning carbon emissions to stone in Iceland; Australian researchers who are trying to develop a “super coral” that can survive on a hotter globe; and physicists who are contemplating shooting tiny diamonds into the stratosphere to cool the earth.

One way to look at human civilization, says Kolbert, is as a ten-thousand-year exercise in defying nature. In *The Sixth Extinction*, she explored the ways in which our capacity for destruction has reshaped the natural world. Now she examines how the very sorts of interventions that have imperiled our planet are increasingly seen as the only hope for its salvation. By turns inspiring, terrifying, and darkly comic, *Under a White Sky* is an utterly original examination of the challenges we face.

- b. Blurbs and endorsements

“This is the best Kolbert book that I've read and my favorite book out of the three selected by the CBC. I love, love, loved it. It's short, engaging, and each chapter covers distinct topics related to environmental and earth sciences. I plan to use it in my classes”
—**Cristina Cardona, CCBC Assistant Professor of Physical Science**

“A superb and honest reflection of our extraordinary time.”—**Nature**

“[Kolbert] has a marvelous eye for the quirky . . . and she wields figurative language in

truly glorious ways. . . . Beautifully and insistently, Kolbert shows us that it is time to think radically about the ways we manage the environment; time to work with what we have, using the knowledge we have, with our eyes fully open to the realities of where we are.”—**Helen Macdonald, *The New York Times Book Review***

c. Awards: Author Elizabeth Kolbert won the Pulitzer Prize for an earlier book

C. Briefly describe how this book serves the mission of the Community Book Connection? Things you may consider:

The theme of the 2022-2023 Community Book Connection is Earth In Focus, and I believe that *Under a White Sky* speaks to that theme very well. The question that this book is working to answer is, how can we change nature in order to save our planet? While this book presents a clear-eyed view of our present situation and what the repercussions will be of staying on our present course, this book is not without hope.

Despite supplying much relevant information, this is not a long book. The total number of pages, before acknowledgements and notes, is 201. The book is also divided into three distinct sections which could be used independently of one another in the classroom. It is very readable and explains complex situations clearly. It makes use of pictures and graphs to further lend clarity.

The book deals with the topic of nature; its effects on humans as well as the effects of human actions on nature. It would clearly be a valuable book for earth and environmental science classes, as well as biology classes. Since English classes often assign essays on current issues, I believe it could be used easily among them as well. Since sustainability is also a social issue, I feel that the book could be used in Social Sciences classes as well.