

Silent Spring

Trigger warning for images of creepy crawlies.

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ENGL 5V78

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[Podcastologist.ca](https://podcastologist.ca)



Rachel Carson in Context

Rachel Carson's Life & Writing

- ▶ Born May 27, 1907, Springdale, Pennsylvania
- ▶ 1936 to 1952 wrote for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- ▶ 1941 *Under the Sea*
- ▶ 1951 *The Sea Around Us*
- ▶ 1955 *The Edge of the Sea*
- ▶ 1962 *Silent Spring*
- ▶ 1963 testified before the Senate Government Operations subcommittee
- ▶ Died April 14, 1964, Silver Spring, Maryland
- ▶ 1965 *The Sense of Wonder*
- ▶ 1998 *Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson*

Interactive timeline:

<https://www.rachelcarson.org/interactive-timeline>

Social & Political

- ▶ 1939-1945 Second World War
- ▶ 1947-1991 Cold War
- ▶ 1960-1980 Second Wave Feminism
- ▶ 1963 Life Sciences Panel of the President's Science Advisory Committee published
- ▶ 1963 Clean Air Act (US)
- ▶ 1970 creation of the Environmental Protection Agency under Nixon
- ▶ 1970 creation of annual Earth Day
- ▶ 1972 Clean Water Act (US)
- ▶ 1973 Endangered Species Act (US)
- ▶ 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act
- ▶ 2025 the EPA cuts the Office of Research and Development

Silent Spring as Literary Journalism

- ▶ Immersion in subject's world and background research
- ▶ Accuracy & candor
- ▶ Routine events
- ▶ Intimate voice, informal, human, frank, ironic
- ▶ Plain style
- ▶ Disengaged, mobile stance
- ▶ Structure incorporates narrative with digressions to amplify/reframe
- ▶ Build meaning on readers' sequential reactions

(Kramer)

Women and Nature

Female	Male
Passive	Active
Nature	Reason
Background	Foreground
Bearer of meaning	Maker of meaning
Dependent	Independent
Cold, moist	Hot, dry
Indoor/domestic space	Outdoor/active space
Wild, untamed	Self-controlled

Ecofeminism

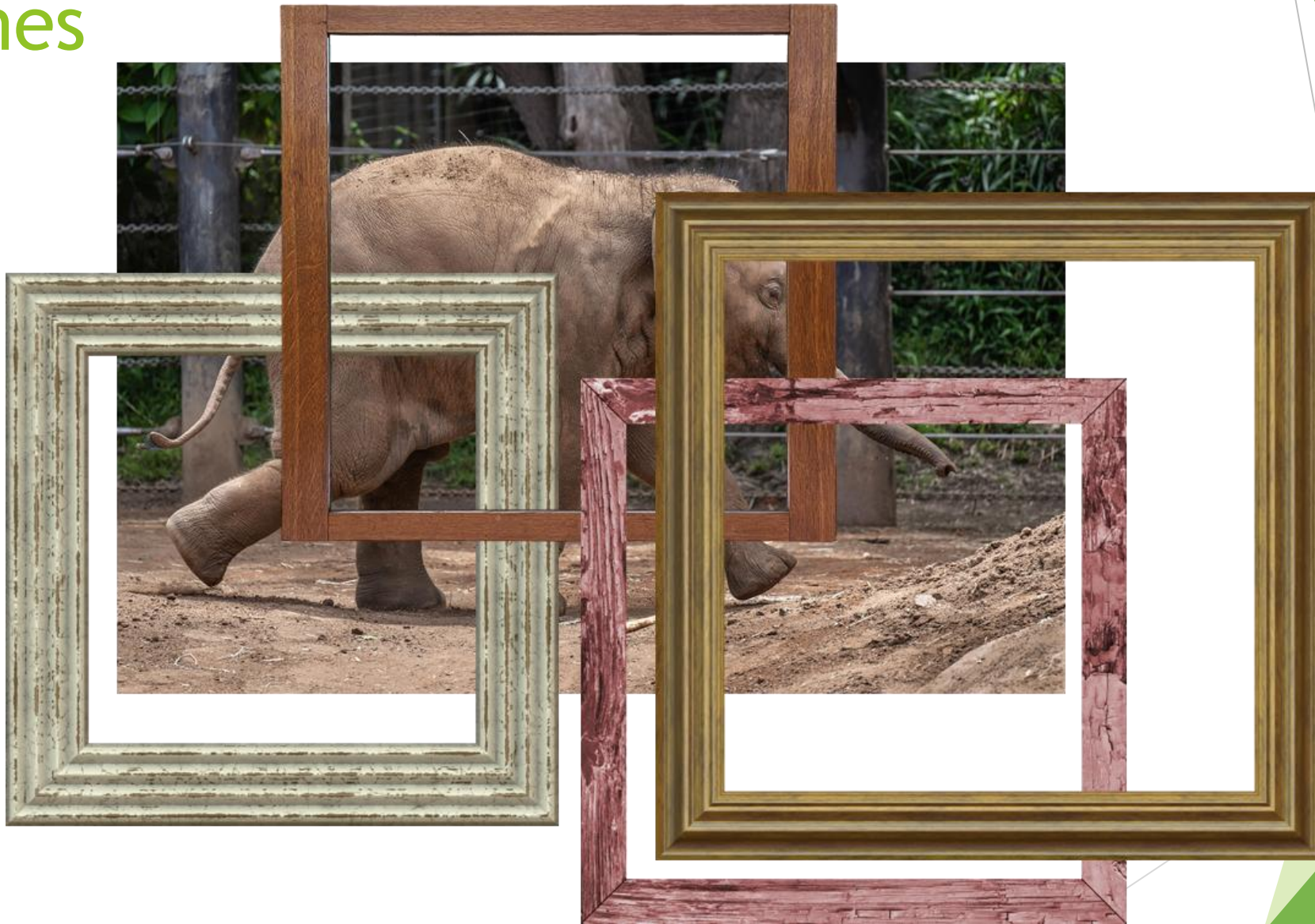
- ▶ Correlates the oppression of women with the destruction of nature
- ▶ Challenges androcentrism
- ▶ Makes visible interconnections between domination of women and nature
- ▶ Seeks to subvert domination
- ▶ Radically communal
- ▶ Grounded in praxis

Grievability



Clockwise from top left: Malaria-bearing mosquitos (*Anopheles*); Spruce budworm moth and caterpillars; Spruce budworm; Spongy moths (*Lymantria dispar*) and caterpillar; sand fiddler crab; fire ant

Frames



Balance



Relationship with Land



Discussion

- ▶ Kramer (1995) provides us with eight breakable rules of literary journalism. Focussing in particular on her chapters on water, how does Carson use or break these rules to frame human relationship to the environment?
- ▶ Using the Marland and Glotfelty readings from last week, what would you include in the eight rules of ecofeminism or ecocriticism? Would there be rules that would be included in ecofeminism but not ecocriticism (or *vice versa*)?

Discussion

- ▶ Kramer says “the defining mark of literary journalism is the personality of the writer” (1995, 29). In what ways do you see Carson’s personality emerge (or not) in these chapters? How does this compare to Robin Wall Kimmerer’s writing?
- ▶ Robin Wall Kimmerer wrote her exploration of the environmental destruction of Onondaga Lake in New York state fifty years after Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*. What threads or themes does Wall Kimmerer continue? What new threads does she pick up (or what threads does she lay down)?

Selected Sources

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