



Voices in the Hills: Collected Ramblings from a Rural Life

Nessa Flax

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This is a book with all the color and rhythm of the seasons of New England. Timeless and yet personal, universal and yet so local you recognize your neighbors, can count the logs in their woodpile, smell the smoke from chimneys on a sunny cold autumn day and savor the taste of last summer's raspberries. Life in the North Country, as folks call this part of New England, is hard. But people here have roots sunk deep into the land and into their small communities. Communities where elected representatives are the folks next door, and campaigns for town offices consist of standing up at town meeting and saying a few words. Villages and farms, main streets and meadows, woods and brooks, churches and barns, are strung together between the Green and White mountains by dirt roads and highways. Brightening predawn skies and lingering sunsets behind the hills, sudden storms, birdsong and animal tracks, sultry summers and frigid winters all inspire reflections on childhood memories, departures and returns, mournings and rejoicings. For a writer like Nessa Flax, the North Country of Vermont and New Hampshire is a storyteller's dream every detail is spun into the yarn of stories celebrating a people and a landscape as she listens to the Voices in the Hills, weaving them into so many small pieces of glittering magic.

Voices in the Hills: Collected Ramblings from a Rural Life Details

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From Reader Review Voices in the Hills: Collected Ramblings from a Rural Life for online ebook

Tania Dey says

Nessa Flax's "Voices in the Hills" is a compilation of her newspaper columns written for the Journal Opinion. It is a four-season diary about the nature, life and people of Vermont - a place where I have lived for long, a place that I am still deeply madly in love with. That's why I became elated when I won a complimentary copy of this book, the nicest thing ever! Through the author's narratives we get to know about the life in the North Country, the specialties of quintessential Vermont, the mysterious nature and its abundance, and most of all the people that makes that place so beautiful. Only those who have seen and felt Vermont from close will feel associated with the author. Any thoughtful person will appreciate the author's perspective and writing style. The author is nostalgic and poetic in nature, which is reflected in all of her columns and adds an extra charm to this book. Her vocabulary is very rich, which blends well with her writing. Some of the words that I never heard about, but really enjoyed in this context, are: clattering cataclysm (p. 89), beleaguered (p. 93), rhapsodized (p. 98), quixotic (p. 142), somnolent minds (p. 143), capricious (p. 169) and so on.

Sometimes the author tends to be philosophical, expressing deeper meanings. For example, while picking raspberries the author says: "It isn't always necessary to see the fruit. Sometimes, just reaching into the darkness is enough. But your hand has to be open." (p. 174). And while observing hummingbirds, the author says: "To taste bliss, sometimes we have to just sit." (p. 188).

The author may wish to include some photos in the next version, but even if she does not, this book will remain an absolute pleasure to read, and for me, to retrospect my Vermont days.

Pat says

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

"Across America, country folk are linked, pearls on a string of rural routes."

I've never been to New England, but Nessa Flax's tales and reflections on life in the North Country resonate. Most could also take place near my home in southwestern Michigan (we don't have mountains or porcupines). Definitely a book to savor, and I wish it were longer.

Jeannie Hudson says

Sensitive treatment of that age-old question, 'Can you ever go home again?' Ms. Flax clearly proves that one's own home and surroundings can be a lovely, nourishing place. Very nice book.

Bonnie Staughton says

This book was won by me in the GoodReads Giveaway. The author, Nessa Flax writes a weekly column "Rambling Reflections" for the "Journal Opinion" an "independent, locally owned weekly newspaper that covers more than a dozen small Vermont and New Hampshire towns". "Voices in the Hills" is a book composed of many of her articles.

I thoroughly enjoyed her descriptions of her life in Vermont, the changing of the seasons, the animal encounters, how she tried to fit in with the locals, etc. This is a book you could re-read several times or just re-read certain chapters and feel the "thrill" all over again. I especially enjoyed how the author takes you through each season of the year and how it affects her. The "leaves dancing" was a particular favorite of mine. Anyone familiar with the "North Country" will understand most of what the author describes and those of us who aren't will get an appreciation of what it is like to live there. I highly recommend this book.

Debbie Manning says

I was a lucky winner of this book. To really enjoy this book, I suggest savoring it; don't try to read it like a novel. The vignettes are short, but it's most enjoyable to read them slowly, preferably in a warm sunny spot. The author takes you on a very pleasant visit to the North Country. As a fellow New Englander, I enjoyed, and related well to, her description of our lovely seasons, including black fly, mosquito, and mud.

Patti says

Looking forward to my goodreads copy of this book.

I love to read stories about places I've lived. These books capture & invite me to feel the familiar ways of folks & culture in New England.

Kate says

This was a Goodreads Giveaway, and I was totally unprepared to like it.

In fact, I found that when the pace of my life was feeling frenetic, reading a column of rural ramblings made everything seem a little bit better.

"Voices in the Hills" (a.k.a. Chicken Soup for the Vermont-Lover's Soul", is a collection of the choicest columns of "Rural Ramblings" by Garrison Keeler's best friend, Nessa Flax. From her perch in Mayberry (whoops, Ryegate Corner), Vermont, Flax places a charming stamp on her corner of the country.

Being a city girl who also lives in the country, I especially identified with some of Flax's columns about breaking into society in a tight rural community, about learning the cherished history of the town, and or

combatting and celebrating wildlife.

The most captivating parts of this book are Flax's prose on nature as it lives outside her home. She paints vivid, colorful pictures that made me want to go outside and enjoy the out-of-doors, even though I live in Arizona.

I recommend reading this book one or two chapters at a time. Since it is a collection of columns, each part is meant to be enjoyed separately from the others. It was my bathroom book for a few months.

Move Over Uncle John, 'cause Aunt Nessa's in town.

Janine Brouillette says

Voices in the Hills are short reflections from her weekly column about rural Vermont living. If your heart is in the country life, you will love this book. She writes about the rhythm of the seasons in New England and her small town where everyone knows your name....and your dog's name. Each story is two pages long, so a great book for people who have short spurts of time to read.

Alyce says

This book is a perfect representation of rural northern American communities. Although it is set in northern Vermont it is typical of many small towns in the northern states. So if you live in Minnesota, New York, Montana, Maine, Wisconsin or here in Vermont you will be able to relate to the challenges but also the reasons we choose to live here. Nessa Flax, the writer and I are both transplants from other places that chose to live here in the middle of nature's wonders and down to earth, good people. Well written in short easy to read chapters, this book of ramblings is delightful.
