

# Medium

## 6 Books On Climate Change You Need To Add To Your Reading List



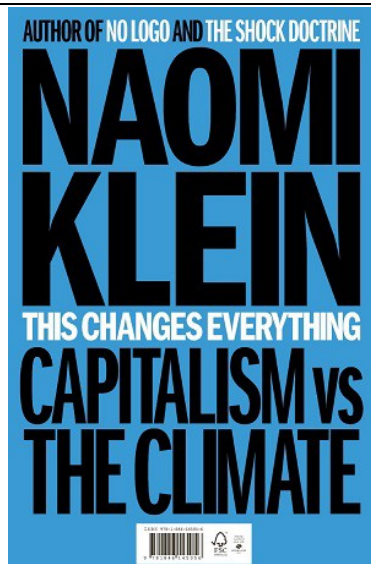
[Tabitha Whiting](#) Dec 4, 2019 · 7 min read

*Cut through the confusion of the daily news and read one of these instead.*



Photo by [Christin Hume](#) on [Unsplash](#)

If you're looking to increase your understanding of climate change and the solutions we need to be focused on, then books are a great place to start. This list covers 6 *essential* reads (in my opinion) on the topic of climate change.

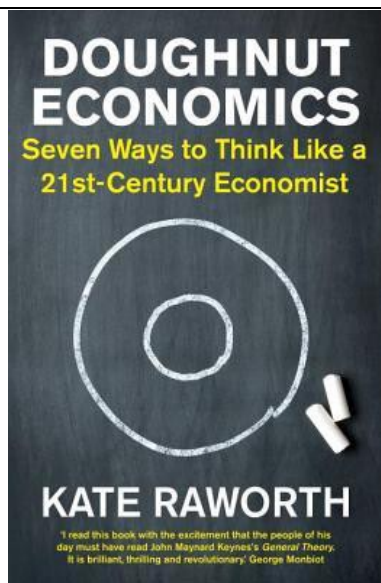


## This Changes Everything: Naomi Klein

“It is a civilizational wake-up call. A powerful message — spoken in the language of fires, floods, droughts, and extinctions — telling us that we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet.” (Naomi Klein)

The central argument of *This Changes Everything* is that we cannot address the climate crisis without changing the way that our economic system (i.e. capitalism) functions.

For [Naomi Klein](#), capitalism and climate solutions are fundamentally in conflict. This is because capitalism aims for constant growth in revenue, continuing to use up our earth’s resources to create this revenue. To avoid the collapse of our climate, though, we need to drastically reduce the amount of resources that we are using — and to do this, we must *stop* constant growth and look for a different type of economy.



## Doughnut Economics: Kate Raworth

“For over 70 years economics has fixated on GDP, or national output, as its primary measure of progress... For the 21st century a far bigger goal is needed: meeting the human rights of every person within the means of our life-giving planet” (Kate Raworth)

Tying in nicely with the call for a fundamental change in our economic system in *This Changes Everything*, [Kate Raworth’s \*Doughnut Economics\*](#) presents an alternative economic system, focused on the idea of the circular economy.

Our current economy is designed to continually take resources from the planet, turn them into consumer goods, use them, and then dispose of them for something new. This model is the opposite of how our planet naturally functions, constantly recycling its resources to sustain life, such as oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen.

Instead, the book argues, our economies should always support human prosperity and stay within the boundaries of what our planet can cope with.

[Raworth](#) presents the ‘doughnut’ as an alternative model, with our social foundation as the inner circle of the doughnut and the ecological ceiling as the outer circle, ‘the safe and just space for humanity’ where all people are catered for and we are not overshooting the bounds of what the planet can handle. If we fall outside of the inner circle then people will start to suffer, and if we fall outside of the *outer* circle the planet will become unable to sustain us.

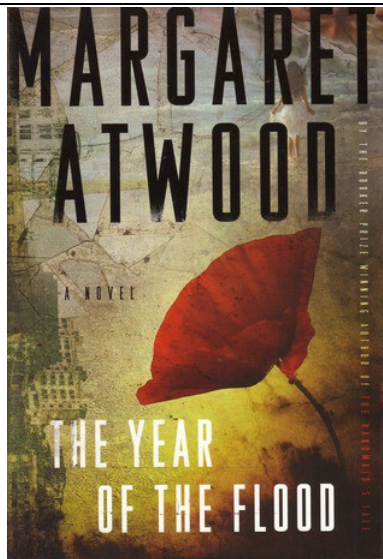


## There Is No Planet B: Mike Berners-Lee

“Whatever we make it into, Earth will be our only home for a very long time to come. There is no Planet B.” (Mike Berners-Lee)

[There Is No Planet B](#) is written as a handbook or a guide to climate change. It’s a great book for the people in your life who care about our climate crisis, but don’t have a great deal of knowledge about what global warming is, how it’s been caused, and what the impacts are.

It covers all the key topics areas within climate change: the climate science, the impacts of food production and animal agriculture, our energy usage, the role of travel and transport, money and the economy, technology, and how businesses can be part of the solution.



## The Maddaddam Trilogy: Margaret Atwood

“We’re using up the Earth. It’s almost gone. You can’t live with such fears and keep on whistling. The waiting builds up in you like a tide. You start wanting it to be done with. You find yourself saying to the sky, Just do it. Do your worst. Get it over with.” (Margaret Atwood)

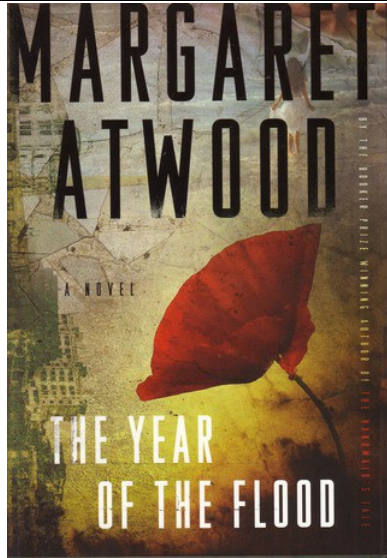
The books covered in this list so far have all been non-fiction, but there’s also some brilliant climate fiction out there which portrays potential futures and the impacts of global warming on people (or characters). [Margaret Atwood has climate change as a central theme in many of her books.](#)

Her *Maddaddam* trilogy is set in a future where climate change has firmly set in. It is a world of droughts, deserts, high radiation, dead zones in the oceans, a lifeless Great Barrier Reef, raised sea levels and lost lands. These things aren’t invented. They’re reality, and they’re already happening.

*The Year Of The Flood*, the second in the trilogy, focuses on the civil unrest — the human aspect of environmental degradation. States have collapsed and corporations are in charge. The very wealthy live in gated communities. Everyone else lives in slums, eating burgers made from mouse parts. Gangs are rife, as are religious cults, and it feels like ‘the end of the world’ is nigh.

The Maddaddam trilogy is written as science fiction, but the reality is that the details are ‘alarmingly close to the fact’ — as Atwood puts it herself in the acknowledgements section of *The Year of the Flood*. This is why it’s important to include climate fiction in this list of essential climate change reading. Fiction allows us to deviate from the

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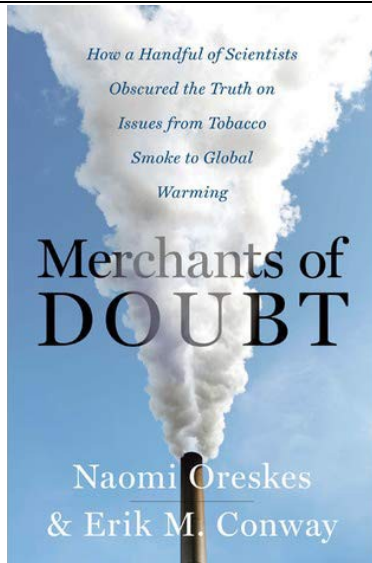
present, exploring what our future could (and will) look like if we continue to emit carbon as we currently are.

Poetry can do this too. One of my favourite [Margaret Atwood](#) poems is called *The Moment*. It speaks to the disconnect between our romantic perception of nature as humans, and the reality of our impact on nature:

The moment when, after many years  
of hard work and a long voyage  
you stand in the centre of your room,  
house, half-acre, square mile, island, country,  
knowing at last how you got there,  
and say, I own this,

is the same moment when the trees unloose  
their soft arms from around you,  
the birds take back their language,  
the cliffs fissure and collapse,  
the air moves back from you like a wave  
and you can't breathe.

No, they whisper. You own nothing.  
You were a visitor, time after time  
climbing the hill, planting the flag, proclaiming.  
We never belonged to you.  
You never found us.  
It was always the other way round.

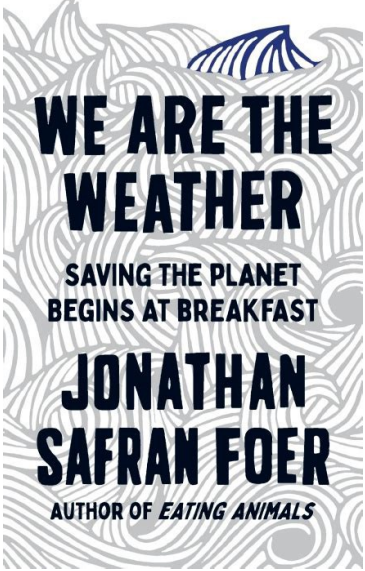


## Merchants of Doubt: Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway

“For the past 150 years, industrial civilization has been dining on the energy stored in fossil fuels, and the bill has come due. Yet, we have sat around the dinner table denying that it is our bill, and doubting the credibility of the man who delivered it.” (Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway)

[Merchants of Doubt](#) asks why we have failed to effectively address climate change and to cut our use of fossil fuels, despite climate scientists warning us about the impact of carbon emissions from the 1980s.

The book looks into the subset of the US scientific community that led the campaign denying the existence of climate change. These are high-level scientists and scientific advisers who had deep connections within politics and within business, and so who had incentives outside of preventing the impacts of global warming.

	<p>They also make the connection between the denial of climate change by these scientists, and the denial of dangers of other controversial topic areas such as tobacco, the pesticide DDT, and acid rain. These are the experts who cast doubt in the minds of the public, ensuring that people continue to use these products and drive profit to the businesses connected to them.</p> <p>The book concludes that there would have been considerably more progress on climate change solutions and policy implementations if these so-called ‘experts’ had not undermined public trust in scientific consensus.</p>
	<h2><b>We Are The Weather - Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast: Jonathan Safran Foer</b></h2> <p>“Choosing to eat fewer animal products is probably the most important action an individual can take to reverse global warming — it has a known and significant effect on the environment, and, done collectively, would push the culture and the marketplace with more force than any march.” (Jonathan Safran Foer)</p> <p>More and more people are acknowledging the huge role that the animal agriculture industry plays in carbon emissions and climate change. Inevitably, this means that we need to shift our diets to be more sustainable, vastly reducing the amount of meat and dairy we consume, and increasing the amount of plant-based protein in our diets.</p> <p><a href="#">Jonathan Safran Foer</a> began his writing career as an author of fiction novels, which gives his non-fiction work a brilliant storytelling quality. This was true in his previous book <i>Eating Animals</i>, which was an insight into the cruelty of the animal agriculture industry. In <i>We Are The Weather</i>, he connects this insight to the climate crisis, looking at the environmental impact of agriculture industry.</p> <p>It’s an important topic and an important book — we cannot leave meat and dairy out of discussions of climate change simply because we do not want to change our diets.</p>

## The Rebel Read

*There is No Planet B* by [Mike Berners-Lee](#) was the [Rebel Book Club’s](#) pick for the September 2019 ‘Planetary Emergency’ theme - but it could just as easily have been one of these other books!