

Where We Belong



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著者:Shepard, Paul/ Shepard, Florence, Rose (EDT)/ Helphand, Kenneth (FRW)

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Gathered here in book form for the first time, the fourteen essays in "Where We Belong" exemplify Paul Shepard's interdisciplinary approach to human interaction with the natural world. Drawn from Shepard's entire career and presented chronologically, these pieces vary in setting from the Hudson River to the American prairie to New Zealand. Equally impressive is Shepard's spatial range, as he moves from subtle differences to grand designs, from the intimacy of an artist's brush stroke to a vista of the harsh Greek terrain. Alluding to a range of sources from Star Trek to Marshall McLuhan to the Bible, the writings discuss such topics as the geomorphology of New England landscape paintings, beautification and conservation projects, the Oregon Trail, and tourism. Whether Shepard is pondering why the Great Plains conjured up sea imagery in early observers, or how pioneers often resorted to architectural terms--temple, castle, bridge, tower--when naming the West's natural formations, he exposes, and thus invites us to unshoulder, the cultural and historical baggage we bring to the act of seeing. Throughout the book, Shepard seeks the antecedents of environmental perception and questions whether the paradigm we inherited should be superseded by one that leads us to a greater concern for the health of the planet. This volume is an important addition to Shepard's canon if only for the new view it offers of his intellectual development. More important, however, these

selections demonstrate Shepard's grasp of a wide range of ideas related to the physical environment, including the various factors--historical, aesthetic, and psychological--that have shaped our attitudes toward the natural world and color the way we see it.

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