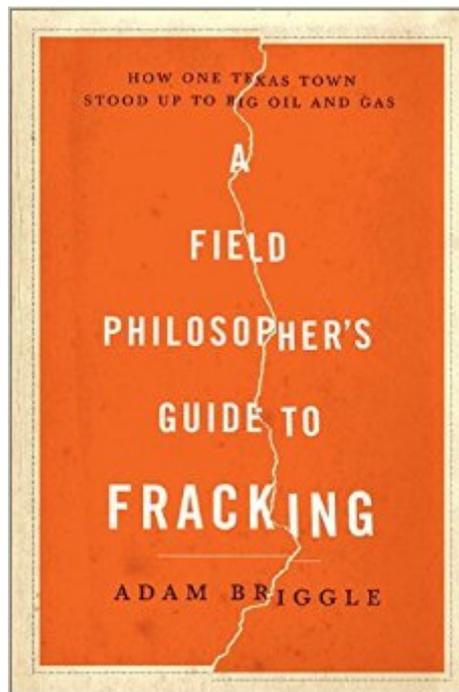


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A Field Philosopher's Guide To Fracking: How One Texas Town Stood Up To Big Oil And Gas



Synopsis

From the front lines of the fracking debate, a *field philosopher* explores one of our most divisive technologies. When philosophy professor Adam Briggie moved to Denton, Texas, he had never heard of fracking. Only five years later he would successfully lead a citizens' initiative to ban hydraulic fracturing in Denton—the first Texas town to challenge the oil and gas industry. On his journey to learn about fracking and its effects, he leaped from the ivory tower into the fray. In beautifully narrated chapters, Briggie brings us to town hall debates and neighborhood meetings where citizens wrestle with issues few fully understand. Is fracking safe? How does it affect the local economy? Why are bakeries prohibited in neighborhoods while gas wells are permitted next to playgrounds? In his quest for answers Briggie meets people like Cathy McMullen. Her neighbors' cows asphyxiated after drinking fracking fluids, and her orchard was razed to make way for a pipeline. Cathy did not consent to drilling, but those who profited lived far out of harm's way. Briggie's first instinct was to think about fracking deeply. Drawing on philosophers from Socrates to Kant, but also on conversations with engineers, legislators, and industry representatives, he develops a simple theory to evaluate fracking: we should give those at risk to harm a stake in the decisions we make, and we should monitor for and correct any problems that arise. Finding this regulatory process short-circuited, with government and industry alike turning a blind eye to symptoms like earthquakes and nosebleeds, Briggie decides to take action. Though our field philosopher is initially out of his element—joining fierce activists like "Texas Sharon," once called the "worst enemy" of the oil and gas industry—his story culminates in an underdog victory for Denton, now nationally recognized as a beacon for citizens' rights at the epicenter of the fracking revolution. 16 illustrations

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Customer Reviews

I first heard of Briggles' book by way of C-SPAN's Book-TV. Having long been concerned about fracking, I was impressed with his oral presentation and ordered the book immediately. To his credit, he explores both sides of the issue "all throughout" the full spectrum of choices citizens have concerning the issue of fracking. Philosopher Briggles opens with an epigraph from Goethe's Faust, which I cannot possibly translate, so I offer up what two different auto-translate sources seem to do with it. DaÃ ich erkenne was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhÃlt That I know what the world (Google Translator) At the core holds together The fact that I recognize what the world in the most inner holds together (Reverso) From the start Briggles, a philosophy professor at the University of North Texas in Denton, is trying to convey what his book will be about: an ancient struggle, which continues today, between those who have little power (David) to stand up against those who seem to possess it all (Godzilla). His narrative is part memoir, part science, part philosophy, and part sociopolitical. He sets it motion by relating how he first comes to know what fracking is. Pushing his son's swing at Denton's McKenna Park in 2009, he chats with a young mother, who matter-of-factly informs him that the area next to the park, open ranch land, is soon to have three new gas wells. In some ways how else can a philosopher examine this situation except through the lens of his specialty? Such a lens offers a logical and sensible view, not often held by proponents of fracking.

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