

# Rachel Carson's Silent Spring

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When Rachel Carson heard about Robin's dropping dead after eating insects treated with chemical sprays, she wrote a book decrying the use of pesticides called Silent Spring, which reawakened the environmental movement.

The book begins with a fictitious story warning about what could happen if pesticides continue to be used: "There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. ... Then a strong blight crept over the area and everything began to change. ... There was a strange stillness. ... The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of scores of bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh."



Though the story was fiction, she said all of the events in it had occurred somewhere at least once.

In the book, *Carson*, a marine biologist and zoologist, revealed, for instance, how pesticides travel through the environment and can be found "in fish in remote mountain lakes, in earthworms burrowing in the soil, in the eggs of birds and in man himself."

The book was a runaway hit, making its way to the New York Times best Seller List 86 weeks and 39 weeks as top seller. It is often called the most influential book of the past 50 years.

The book stirred an uproar among the chemical industry, who threatened lawsuits and belittled Carson's character and claims.

President John F. Kennedy read the book and initiated a presidential advisory committee that largely backed her scientific claims.