

A Movement that Changed the World



When Rivers Burned: The Earth Day Story

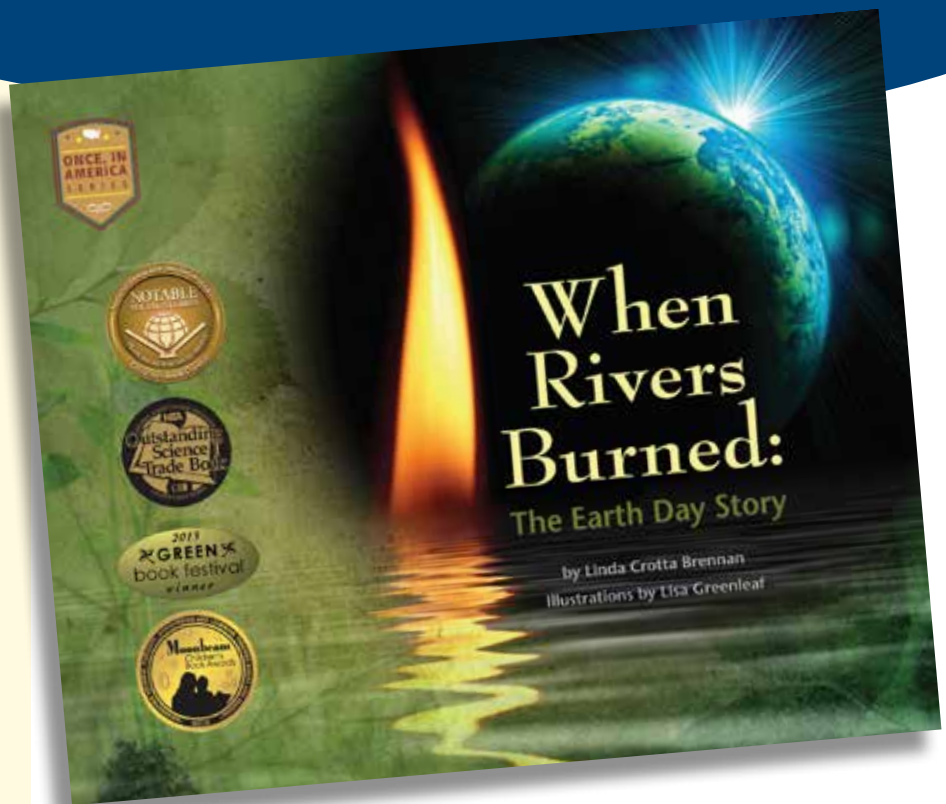
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Once, in America ...

chemicals killed plants and animals. Cars and factories filled the air with toxic fumes. Oil spills destroyed ocean life. The sewage floating along America's rivers was so thick it sometimes caught fire. The Earth was dying.

Senator Gaylord Nelson believed that attitudes about ecology could change if people understood what was happening. He charged student organizer, Denis Hayes, with setting a plan for a national Earth Day in motion. What these men began on April 22, 1970, would change the world for the better.



"...the best brief chronology of the historical strands in that period." ~Denis Hayes

Earth Day Timeline	
1916, January 4	Gaylord Nelson is born in Clear Lake, Wisconsin.
1944, August 29	Denis Hayes is born in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.
1948, October 26	Smog in Donora, PA kills 20 people.
1962	Rachel Carson publishes <i>Silent Spring</i> .
1963	The first Clean Air Act is passed by Congress.
1969	Paul and Anne Ehrlich publish <i>Population Bomb</i> .
January 28	There is a major oil spill in Santa Barbara, CA.
June 22	The Cuyahoga River catches on fire.
1970, April 22	The first Earth Day is celebrated.
May 4	The Kent State Massacre occurs. The National Guard opens fire on anti-war demonstrators and kills 4 students of Kent State College.
November	Denis Hayes helps direct seven anti-environmental candidates with his "Dirty Dozen" campaign, including powerful congressmen, George H. Fallon.



Plus the first ever holiday on the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970.

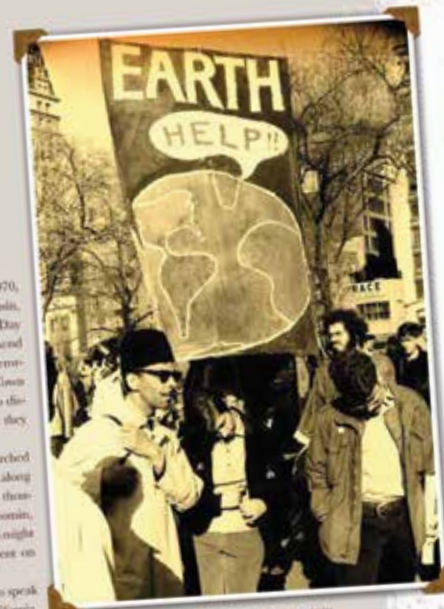
Chapter 10: Earth Day

April 22, 1970

On the eve of Earth Day, April 21, 1970, Senator Nelson flew home to Madison, Wisconsin, eagerly anticipating his home town's Earth Day parade of nonpolluting vehicles. But the weekend before, a peace rally in Madison had been terminated by violent radicals breaking windows. Town officials were afraid the radicals might try to disrupt the parade, too. To Nelson's chagrin, they cancelled Madison's celebration.

A small group of people bicycled and marched through Madison anyway, picking up litter along the way. Later that day, Nelson spoke to thousands of students at the University of Wisconsin, telling them of his hope that someday armies might become obsolete and money could be spent on the environment instead of weapons.

On Earth Day itself, Nelson planned to speak at events in Indiana, Colorado, and California.



The First Earth Day, New York City, 1970



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