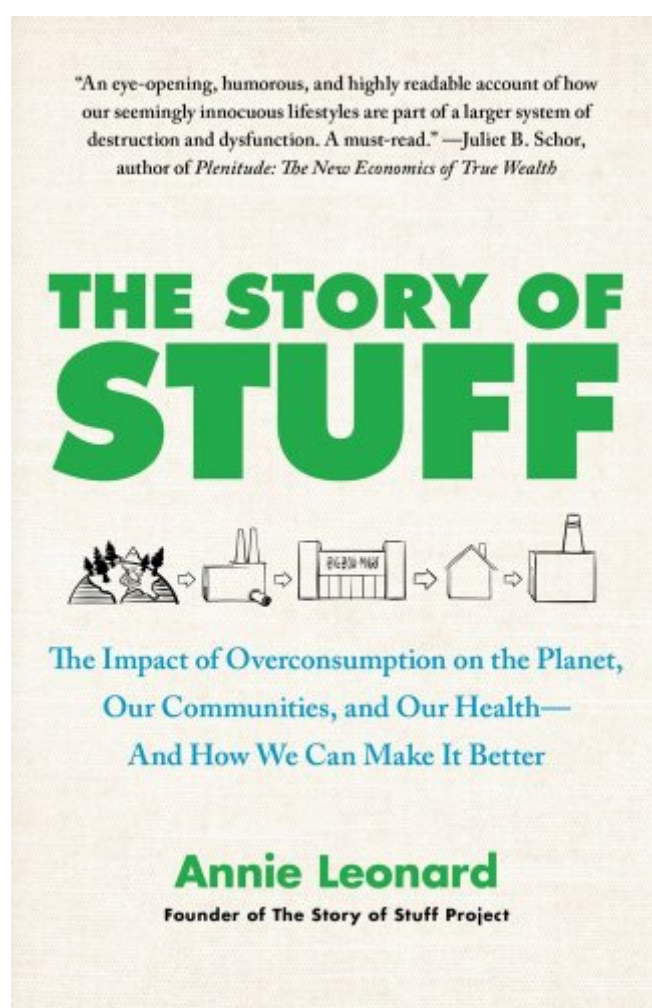


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# The Story Of Stuff: How Our Obsession With Stuff Is Trashing The Planet, Our Communities, And Our Health—and A Vision For Change



## Synopsis

A classic exposé in company with *>* and *>*, *>* expands on the celebrated documentary exploring the threat of overconsumption on the environment, economy, and our health. Leonard examines the stuff we use everyday, offering a galvanizing critique and steps for a changed planet. *>* was received with widespread enthusiasm in hardcover, by everyone from Stephen Colbert to Tavis Smiley to George Stephanopoulos on *>*, as well as far-reaching print and blog coverage.

Uncovering and communicating a critically important idea "that there is an intentional system behind our patterns of consumption and disposal" Annie Leonard transforms how we think about our lives and our relationship to the planet. From sneaking into factories and dumps around the world to visiting textile workers in Haiti and children mining coltan for cell phones in the Congo, Leonard, named one of *>* magazine's 100 environmental heroes of 2009, highlights each step of the materials economy and its actual effect on the earth and the people who live near sites like these. With curiosity, compassion, and humor, Leonard shares concrete steps for taking action at the individual and political level that will bring about sustainability, community health, and economic justice. Embraced by teachers, parents, churches, community centers, activists, and everyday readers, *>* will be a long-lived classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Annie Leonard's book tells us so much about our world and about, as it says on the cover, the environmental and social impacts of "our obsession with stuff." But it also tells us about who we are and what we think is important. Not preachy or judgmental, Annie creates a new way to think about the choices we make in our own lives and how they connect to everyone and everything. It's really a book about community and how to create one, and how to make choices --both personal and political --that can lead to a healthier, safer and more sustainable world for all of us. Loved the mix of personal stories and analysis and the detailed footnotes and citations. You can read the whole book, or just dip into individual chapters. It's well written and tells a great story. A great read that will make you see the world differently -- and open up many opportunities to make change. My only criticism is that the pages are very dense --would have loved more graphics and white space -- and I don't like the feel of the paper (100% post consumer recycled of course) but I know the author wanted to walk her talk by insisting on the highest possible green standards for publishing. This book picks up where the video leaves off with lots of discussion of solutions and what we can each do to create a more sustainable life for ourselves and the planet. One more thing: this book is not anti-stuff or anti-profit. The message is that life is about more than stuff or profits --that we should honor and appreciate everything we have (Who made those shoes? Where? How did they end up in my closet? Who raised the beef in my hamburger and how? How did it end up on my grill?). And of course businesses need to make money, as do we all. It's just not the only thing that life is about.

Annie Leonard and Ariane Conrad bring essential details to light about our stuff! In this important book I finally caught on to the concept of "real cost." While it is nuts how much stuff people buy that they can't afford the really crazy thing is that we pay nowhere near the real cost of almost anything that we buy. We don't pay to treat the poisoned children in the developing world that have no clean water because of the techniques used in materials extraction, we don't pay for a living wage for the oppressed peoples that manufacture our goods and we certainly don't pay for our goods to be "disposed of" in any kind of a way that would keep more pain and suffering and damage being done. This isn't a political screed (and don't believe anyone that tells you that it is) -- this is the story of how our very real stuff interacts with millions of people and the environments of nations all over the world. Point being that it is not a story about governments or ideologies. It is about people and materials and how we can make things better. The book is very well written and has the 'flow' that

Annie has when she speaks on her film (which is very good -- google it if you haven't seen it yet) and goes into all the details. It also has a lot of really good stories from Annie's travels all over the world gathering the information that she has put in this book. Honestly, I think that this is an essential book -- buy it and read it, then make the changes that you'll know you should.

I heard Al Gore on the evening news once describe the climate change trend as the "Earth has a fever." In her book, *The Story of Stuff*, I found that Annie Leonard explains -- with sobering, and yet hopeful clarity -- why our planet is overheating from, in part, massive over-consumption by a relatively small part of Earth's human population. Without diminishing the appropriate emphasis on "how are we going to get out of this mess and not just survive, but thrive," the author illuminates the materials cycle, from extraction all the way to the dump. Clive Cussler or Robert Ludlum, it's not, but it kept me interested enough with anecdotes and a sense of humor rarely present in most tomes about how we're screwing ourselves and the 3rd Rock. I was happily surprised, and even energized, by her inclusion of a basic roadmap of sorts for reversing the over-consumption cycle -- one of our species most damaging trends. Here in the U.S., we are at the vanguard of a trajectory that threatens to make us consumers of the world, instead of citizens of the world. With more and more power and rights being ascribed to irresponsibly bottom-line-only-focused corporations (witness the recent Supreme Court *Citizens United* decision), I found *The Story of Stuff* entirely refreshing with its practically presented idea that I can take charge of my behavior, and increase the quality of my life by shifting how I consume. This is a handbook for crafting a better way of living with ourselves, families, and the Earth. *The Story of Stuff* would make a great curriculum for K-College students. Beyond the classroom, I hope everyone gets this book and then we can begin to make this important transition together!

I have spent years at second hand stores and shopping to get all the stuff I thought I needed and now that I have everything I could want, I began to think a bit bigger. I had started to question the existence of all of my possessions. What now? I don't need anything more. What am I going to do with all this stuff? I started to do my own research and stumbled onto Annie Leonard's *Story of Stuff*. She has saved me a lot of time. It would have taken me years to learn what she has found out. I first saw Annie Leonard's video on you tube which is a 20 minute condensed version of this book. See the video, it's twenty minutes of truth and revelation! I have used this video for teaching my Sociology class and it struck a chord in every student. Annie has done a great service by asking the questions that needed to be asked. Where does this stuff come from? Who makes the money? Why

do they keep making more stuff? Why do they make it break? What happens when we get oversaturated with stuff? How can our disposable society keep going? In 2053 when we are projected to have 9.3 Billion people on this earth, how much stuff can we possibly make room for? Very thought provoking. The book itself has sections not edited well which make it hard to follow in some spots. Her video is excellent, the book is for those of us who yearn for a few more details. If nothing else watch the video.

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