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MEMORIES OF ALABAMA

In her essays, Margaret Renkl's childhood in rural Alabama is represented frequently as the nostalgic inspiration for her lifelong love of nature, including her great passions for birdwatching, gardening, and conservation. Indeed, Renkl's text often contrasts more traditionally agricultural spaces like her rural home in Andalusia with her later adult experiences living in such big cities as Philadelphia and Nashville, where natural spaces are difficult to find, appreciate, and fully experience. Yet Renkl is also clear that rural life in small town Alabama was not always perfect or entirely idyllic. She recounts, for instance, her mother's mental health struggles, which were exacerbated by outdated state laws that prevented new mothers from working or having a career. She also reflects on Alabama's complicated Civil Rights history and the persistent culture of poverty that made everyday life a constant struggle for working people. This dichotomy between rural and big city America—and, especially, between the natural beauty and social contradictions inherent to the Deep South—is an important theme of the book worth pondering.

"I was so homesick for the natural world that I tamed a mouse who lived in my wall [...] just to feel the creature's delicate feet skittering across my own bare toes."

LATE MIGRATIONS

A NATURAL HISTORY OF LOVE AND LOSS Margaret Renkl



DO YOU THINK LIVING IN CITIES HAS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED OUR CONNECTION TO NATURE AND THE NATURAL WORLD?

IF SO, HOW CAN THE MODERN CITY REVERSE THIS IDEA?

USA COMMON READ/COMMON WORLD
2025/26 BOOK SELECTION:

LATE MIGRATIONS
A NATURAL HISTORY OF LOVE AND LOSS