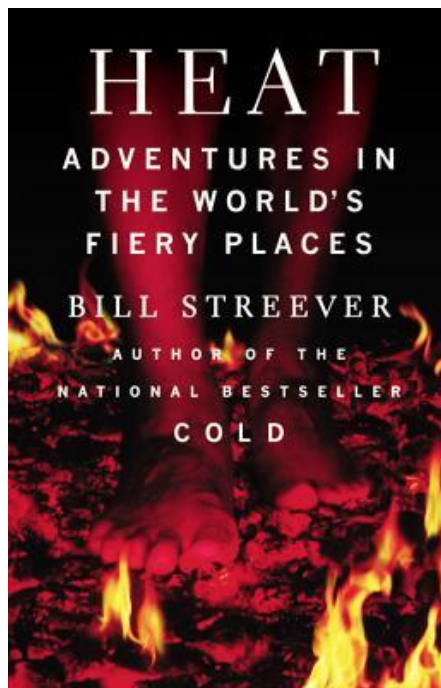




## Heat: Adventures in the World's Fiery Places

*Bill Streever*

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# Heat: Adventures in the World's Fiery Places

*Bill Streever*

**Heat: Adventures in the World's Fiery Places** Bill Streever

**An adventurous ride through the most blisteringly hot regions of science, history, and culture.**

Melting glaciers, warming oceans, droughts-it's clear that today's world is getting hotter. But while we know the agony of a sunburn or the comfort of our winter heaters, do we really understand heat?

A bestselling scientist and nature writer who goes to any extreme to uncover the answers, Bill Streever sets off to find out what heat really means. Let him be your guide and you'll firewalk across hot coals and sweat it out in Death Valley, experience intense fever and fire, learn about the invention of matches and the chemistry of cooking, drink crude oil, and explore thermonuclear weapons and the hottest moment of all time-the big bang.

Written in Streever's signature spare and refreshing prose, HEAT is an adventurous personal narrative that leaves readers with a new vision of an everyday experience-how heat works, its history, and its relationship to daily life.

## Heat: Adventures in the World's Fiery Places Details

Date : Published January 15th 2013 by Little, Brown and Company

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Author : Bill Streever

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## From Reader Review Heat: Adventures in the World's Fiery Places for online ebook

### Molly Ringle says

Bill, man! You don't have to put your hand in a candle flame or drink a spoonful of petroleum or play with hot lava or walk barefoot on coals or stay out too long in Death Valley in summer just to get our attention! Your writing is good enough to reel us in without that. Still, maybe that's just the kind of guy you are.

The result is a sometimes fun, sometimes disturbing, always interesting assortment of scientific topics under the heading of "heat"--Death Valley, volcanoes, wildfires, petroleum and other heating fuels, nuclear bombs, firewalking--which taught me, A Layperson, lots of things I didn't know. I'm giving copies of this book as a gift to my dad and dad-in-law, who both are into science and nonfiction.

Now put the hot coals down, Bill! I mean it!

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### Kathy says

Pretentious. Not so much a science book as musings about vaguely scientific topics

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### Tasha says

I received this book free from Goodreads' first reads.

This book started out by describing what prolonged exposure to heat does to the human body. The second chapter talks about wild fires. I feel a warning is needed, these two chapters are quite graphic. The squeamish beware. I'm not squeamish and found all this fascinating. I'd also like to add that whatever we pay firefighters is not enough, it couldn't possibly be enough.

Streever goes on to talk about cooking, fuel, volcanoes, nuclear weapons, and even supercolliders. This book was fun, informative, and very well written. It has convinced me to read his previous book about cold.

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### Margaret Heller says

Bill Streever is a weird guy. But I like the way he writes about science and history. Kind of like if Bill Bryson were crazy.

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### David Quinn says

I really enjoyed Streever's earlier book "Cold" and looked forward to reading this follow up. Not only did it not disappoint, I loved it.

The books are stylistically similar so what I'm about to say applies to both: the sentences are short and punchy; the books are loaded with interesting science and history facts; dry, irreverent Onion.com-like humor is woven throughout the books; Streever often comes back to subjects throughout the books to tie concepts together in seamless and fascinating ways; he's like the kid who can't take the teacher's word for it, he has to try things on his own (usually to great comic effect); the science is understandable but still interesting.

The Acknowledgments section is the best I've read in a long time. It seemed truly genuine, a rarity. (And it cleared up the nagging question about the identity of his unnamed companion.) If you read the book don't skip the Notes section, they're informative and interesting and written in the style of the book.

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### **Sarah says**

I have no idea where I got this print ARC, but it's old. I mostly read this on the island, and several people commented on the appropriateness of the title as I read and basked in the 80-degree sunshine. I'm always cold.

This is not a must-read, but it is fairly interesting, combining a fair amount of well-explained, well-incorporated science along with history and travel information.

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### **Sandy says**

I read this because I liked Cold, which was a better book than this one.

The first parts about the desert and fires were good. The history of oil drilling in the northeastern US was somewhat interesting. But, too much time was spent on it. It felt like it became the focal point of the book, when I'd be more interested in reading more about the volcanoes and nuclear research. His repeated references to fire walking were a weak attempt to glue the parts of the book together. When he finally does firewalk the description of the experience was so anti-climactic, it made me wonder why he bothered talking about it so much.

Streever's attempts to create a voice that combined Ed Abbey and a Physicist came off to me as unoriginal as he was unable to effectively synthesize the two perspectives. His experiments with disposable lighters and microwaves didn't impress me either.

I felt a little bamboozled by the title of this book. I probably won't read his future works about windy, wet, dry, scratchy, smooth, dark, bright.....

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### **Ellen says**

I would love to sit in a bar with this writer, like, all day

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## P D says

3.5

It helps to think of this as a memoir with heat (and a little kleptomania) as the defining theme - it's not chronologically organized, but over the course of the book we watch Streever's relationship with heat evolve. I found the repeated parallel construction at the beginning grating - it settles down eventually, but it took me a long time to get into the narrative and appreciate the detail.

Streever meets a lot of interesting people and goes to a lot of fascinating places, and it's hard not to appreciate the scientific curiosity as it is informed by the facts, but I do think this could have been stronger as a narrative.

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## Booknerd Fraser says

The title is a bit misleading - it's not really a travelogue of the geographically hottest places, but rather a scientific examination of different kinds of heat, with an eye toward global warming. The author is ever-so-slightly snotty, but otherwise good.

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## Becky says

“Mr. ~~Madison~~ Streever, what you've just said is one of the most insanely idiotic things I have ever heard. At no point in your rambling, incoherent response were you even close to anything that could be considered a rational thought. Everyone in this room is now dumber for having listened to it. **I award you no points, and may God have mercy on your soul.**”

I was very much looking forward to this book. I truly enjoyed Cold: Adventures in the World's Frozen Places. I learned so much, and was so excited about what I learned, that I was nearly stopping people on the street to talk about how houses in Alaska are built to try and withstand shifting permafrost, and how Moose start sweating at 20 degrees above zero, etc. Streever's authorial interjections about his own adventures, used most frequently as a set up for the next chapter, occasionally annoyed me but they were few and far between.

And then.... And then there is this book.

Its really terrible. I mean, I almost feel bad about how much I didn't like it, but it was so BORING and AGGRAVATING. There was almost nothing about animal or human adaptations to living in the heat, but there was what felt like an infinity of chapters about pipes on oil rigs. The first few chapters are interesting, and I was kind of excited to read the book. I mean, who doesn't want to know that a camel's poop is so dry it can be burnt as fuel immediately upon defecation? THAT'S AWESOME. The information on fire was old hat to me, but was still probably new for a lot of people- but this is where the author starts allowing his personality to shine through, and then he never puts it away for the rest of the story. And this should probably be a spoiler alert, but the author is kind of an ass. He gets lost in Death Valley, and while his companion (is this not his wife?) starts to suffer heat exhaustion he decides it's totally time to go exploring in some caves. He tries to hold his hand over a candle until the pain register an 11 in hopes to commune with the pain of firefighters (at least in this case he ultimately feels foolish). There are just so many instances that are ridiculous.

**He specifically mentions stealing from two museums** (sure he left a generous donation, but seriously? You just don't!), while his son was present, and makes what seems to me to be very judgmental criticisms of other nationalities such as describing Germans "**their mouths stuffed with bratwurst.**". Agh!

But more than that the writing is just bad. Gone is the enthusiasm that we saw in Cold. Now we are left with sentences like this:

We drive through the refinery. We look at columns. We look at pipes. We look at valves. We do not see oil. All the oil is inside the columns, the pipes, the valves.

And

The forty-niners created landscapes as barren as those of Death Valley, or more so, but wetter.

It's just horrifically boring writing. You really have to slog through it. You read more about the hike on the way to a destination than how the destination embodies one of the Earth's hottest places. Then on top of the overly simple sentence structure that just drones on, he is constantly running on about fire walking and carbon emissions. Now, I could almost totally see where he was going with the Carbon emission discussion, but he never concludes or fleshes it out... so it's a running meter in the background of the book that is distracting rather than enlightening. The problem with the fire walking is similar, it's just thrown in willy-nilly, it seems to not have a point in the book other than something the author could do, and his delivery falls flat here as well.

In the end I would give it zero stars, but that counts as a non-rating, so you get one Bill, just one.

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## Jessi says

This eclectic mix of scientific fact, odd anecdote, and poetic language was fascinating to read. I finished it and immediately searched for more by Streever.

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## Pat says

I would have enjoyed this a lot more if the guy's writing style hadn't been so irritating. As an editor, I longed to get rid of his conjunctions ("The pumps and drills and head frames and barrels of the early oil industry ...", too-short sentences (should have been combined with the NEXT too-short sentence!) and his fatuous repetitions. I felt like I was a child being lectured to.

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## Barb Keryan says

This book really drags toward the end. Worth reading for the chapter about the man who got lost in the desert. While the affects of heat on the body are not pretty it is probably something we all should know.

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## **Becca says**

Thanks to goodreads and the author for this First Reads giveaway!

I never would have thought a book about heat would be so boring. "Adventures" is certainly misleading.

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