



In Suspect Terrain

John McPhee

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From the outwash plains of Brooklyn to Indiana's drifted diamonds and gold, John McPhee's *In Suspect Terrain* is a narrative of the earth, told in four sections of equal length, each in a different way reflecting the three others-- a biography; a set piece about a fragment of Appalachian landscape in illuminating counterpoint to the human history there; a modern collision of ideas about the origins of the mountain range; and, in contrast, a century-old collision of ideas about the existence of the Ice Age. The central figure is Anita Harris, an internationally celebrated geologist who went into her profession to get out of a Brooklyn ghetto. The unifying theme is plate tectonics-- here concentrating on the acceptance that all aspects of the theory do not universally enjoy. As such, *In Suspect Terrain* is a report from the rough spots at the front edge of a science.

In Suspect Terrain is the second book in a series on geology and geologists, presenting a cross section of North America along the fortieth parallel, and gathered under the overall title *Annals of the Former World*. The other books in the series are *Basin and Range*, *Rising from the Plains*, and *Assembling California*.

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Leonard Bassett:

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Michael Sheridan:

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