

## Further Reading

### **Still Waters: The Secret World of Lakes**

**Curt Stager (2018)**

**SCIENCE ENVIRON STA**

An exploration of the world's most remarkable lakes and our ancient connection to them draws on firsthand investigations to examine the significance of humanity's impact on iconic inland waters, sharing their stories and how they represent history, culture and the importance of conservation.

### **The Ripple Effect: The Fate of Freshwater in the 21st Century**

**Alex Prud'homme (2010)**

**SCIENCE ENVIRON PRU**

This work of investigative journalism shows how freshwater is the pressing global issue of the twenty-first century.

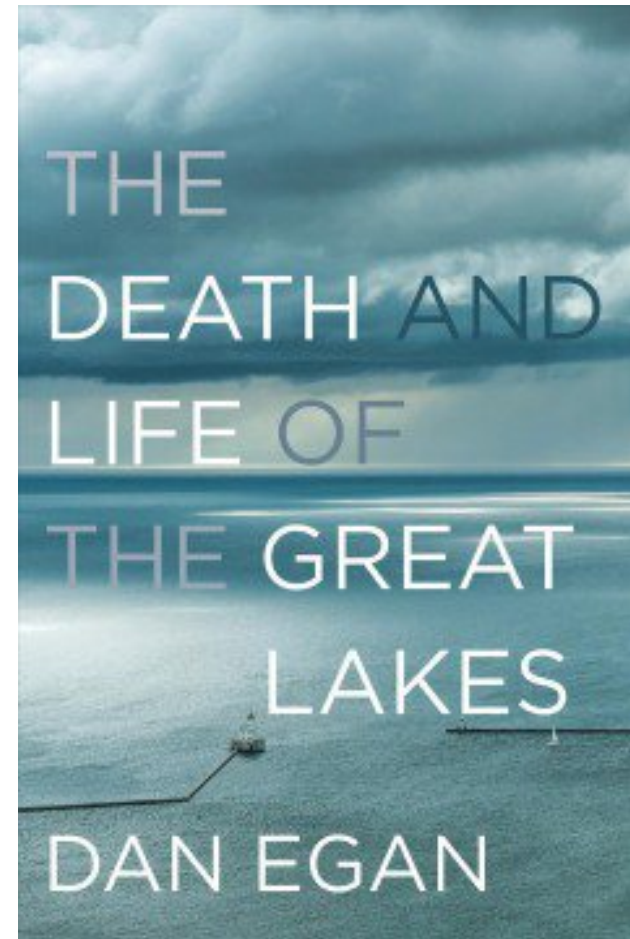
### **The Big Thirst**

**Charles Fishman (2011)**

**SCIENCE ENVIRON FIS**

Description: Explores every facet of water and examines the issues surrounding water scarcity and what can be done to ensure that humans have plenty of clean water in the future.

## Book Discussion Guide



## About the Book

The Great Lakes—Erie, Huron, Michigan, Ontario, and Superior—hold 20 percent of the world’s supply of surface fresh water and provide sustenance, work, and recreation for tens of millions of Americans. But they are under threat as never before, and their problems are spreading across the continent. The Death and Life of the Great Lakes is prize-winning reporter Dan Egan’s compulsively readable portrait of an ecological catastrophe happening right before our eyes, blending the epic story of the lakes with an examination of the perils they face and the ways we can restore and preserve them for generations to come.

## Discussion Questions

1. The five great lakes — Lake Erie, Superior, Michigan, Huron and Ontario — make up the world’s largest freshwater system. Some 40 million people live near their shores, and many of more of us depend on them for fresh drinking water, work or recreation. What’s been your own experience of the Great Lakes?
2. In the book’s opening, Egan writes that more than any ordinary lake, each of the Great Lakes “can hold all the mysteries of an ocean, and then some.” He mentions that there are 6,000 shipwrecks, many of which have never been found, at the bottom of the Great Lakes. What other mysteries are you learning about as you read?
3. Egan also writes that the biggest threat to the Great Lakes at present “is our own ignorance,” and that it’s a “mirage” that humans and lakes have learned to get along. What surprises you about how humans have messed with the lakes, even after the passage of the major Clean Water Act of 1972?

4. Why is it not actually a good thing that the Great Lakes are as clear as they are?
5. A recurring theme in the book is the invasive species that have been brought to the lakes from ships arriving from ports all over the world. Today, the Great Lakes are home to 186 non-native species — the worst being the zebra and quagga mussels. How and why are these species a problem?
6. Egan tells us that one of the most recognizable images of the perils facing the Great Lakes is “the grotesque mug of an Asian carp,” which was imported in the 1960s for government research on sewage treatment. This invasive species can grow up to 70 pounds and eat up to 20 percent of its weight in plankton a day, and is now making its way closer to Lake Michigan. What could happen if the Asian Carp do enter the Great Lakes?
7. Does this book introduce us to heroes and villains in the Great Lakes story? If so, who are they?
8. As the news is filled with stories of water shortages in California and water crises like the one still facing Flint, Michigan, how do the Great Lakes fit in?
9. Egan argues that if threats to the Great Lakes aren’t addressed, there will be huge implications for property owners, shipping, drinking water and sewage treatment. How could it affect you, if at all?
10. What does the book suggest can be done to protect the future of the Great Lakes? What do you think Egan is trying to tell us in the book’s final scene with his son?

*Courtesy of pbs.org*