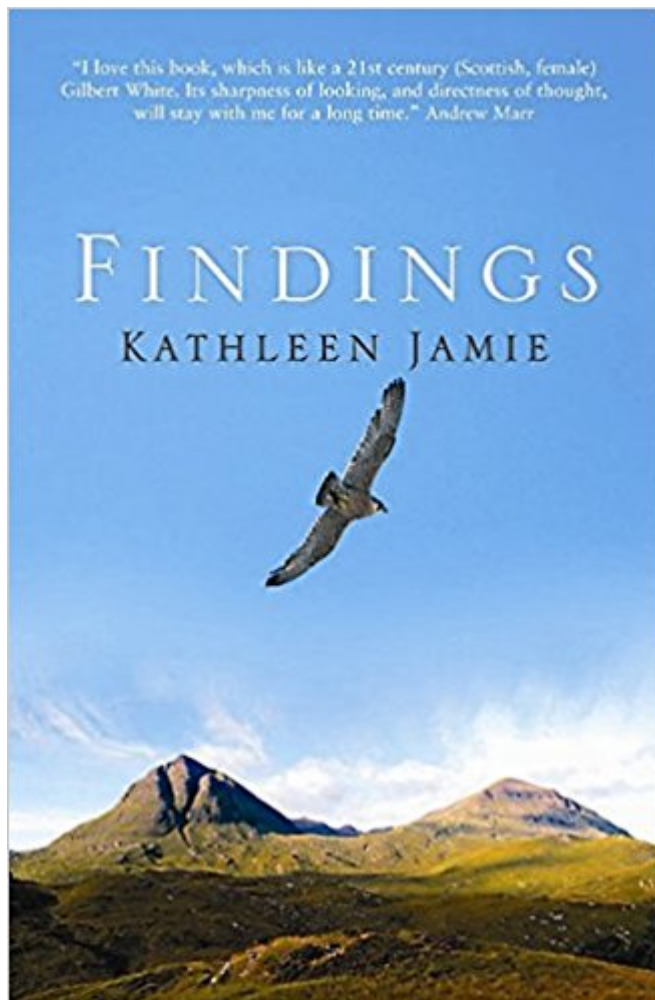


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# Findings



## Synopsis

It's surprising what you can find by simply stepping out to look. Award-winning poet Kathleen Jamie has an eye and an ease with the nature and landscapes of Scotland as well as an incisive sense of our domestic realities. In *Findings* she draws together these themes to describe travels like no other contemporary writer. Whether she is following the call of a peregrine in the hills above her home in Fife, sailing into a dark winter solstice on the Orkney islands, or pacing around the carcass of a whale on a rain-swept Hebridean beach, she creates a subtle and modern narrative, peculiarly alive to her connections and surroundings.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Prose essays of a sharpness of looking, and directness of thought, that will make them last a long time; some of the best writing out of rural Scotland for many decades. Jamie observes the extraordinary, alien natural world around her with a frank uncluttered candour, while nevertheless standing rooted in the middle of modern family life. -- Andrew Marr Kathleen Jamie is a supreme listener. Her attention - to the beckoning calls of the peregrines that nest near her house, to the brimful darkness in the neolithic chambers at Maes Howe, to the mute appeals of embryo skeletons in a medical museum - has a directness that borders on the heroic. And in the quietness of her listening, you hear her own voice: clear, subtle, respectful, and so unquenchably curious that it makes the world anew. This is as close as writing gets to a conversation with the natural world. -- Richard Mabey From the moment you meet Kathleen Jamie's words, you meet a passion for the environment, not as an abstract quality but as what surrounds her...the small birds in the garden,

the landscapes of her native Scotland, even ordinary familiar domestic cares are illuminated with curiosity, affection, knowledge and a deep concern. -- Rosalind Coward, writer and journalist

Award-winning poet, Kathleen Jamie was born in the west of Scotland in 1962. Her first travel book, *Among Muslims* (also published by Sort Of Books), was described as 'utterly luminous' (The Independent) and 'one of the most powerful accounts by a contemporary Western writer' (TLS). Her latest poetry collection, *The Tree House* (Picador), won the 2004 Forward prize. A part-time lecturer in Creative Writing at St Andrews University, Kathleen Jamie lives with her family in Fife.

My book group loved *Findings*. I was studying and reading for assignments and found this book a welcome distraction. I could have been on the island!

In a word, wonderful. Full of wonders. A completely fresh way to look at the world and our place in it

Jamie writes with sobriety, sensitivity and grace about the natural world and our human place within it. Her book is sparsely illustrated with delicate black-and-white photographs that picture many of her topics. She chronicles visits to places ranging from her own backyard to the Orkney Islands to Edinburgh and beyond, with a marked preference for those wilder spots where the human imprint may still be seen, but nature prevails. In the Central Highlands she explores a glen scattered with "abandoned shielings," small stone huts used by villagers for thousands of years as summer homes while they pastured their cattle on the fresh upland grass, and she reflects on a by-gone way of life. "Up here they made milk, butter and cheese, and it was women's work. What a loss that seems now: a time when women were guaranteed a place in the wider landscape, our own place in the hills." Living on and with the land is important to her; she pays attention to the seasons, the birds and fish, the trees and other plants, going about in all kinds of weather, walking, biking or sailing. At times she is with her children or friends; often she is alone. Always she strives to be alert, to catch that moment of revelation, "to glance up from my own everyday business, to see the osprey or the peregrine going about hers." The book opens with a chapter called "Darkness and Light" about the winter solstice, magical scenes of the half light of northern Scotland, her own desire "to enter into the dark for the love of its textures and wild intimacy," and her pilgrimage to Maes Howe, a Neolithic stone cairn built with a long passageway arranged so that each evening, for a few days around the solstice, a ray from the setting midwinter sun shines through to light the chambered vault, like a promise, like a kiss. Nearly a dozen chapters later Jamie's book closes with a joyous dolphin

sighting off the coast of Tobermory, a celebration of life. Along the way she helps us see the value and vulnerability of an ancient, yet ever new, world now threatened by contemporary technology and human carelessness. Buy this book, read it, scribble down lines you want to share with others, talk about them, reflect on them, enjoy a renewed connection with nature as well as a heightened awareness of our need to protect it.

Jamie has wit, knowledge, sharp prose: delightful read

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