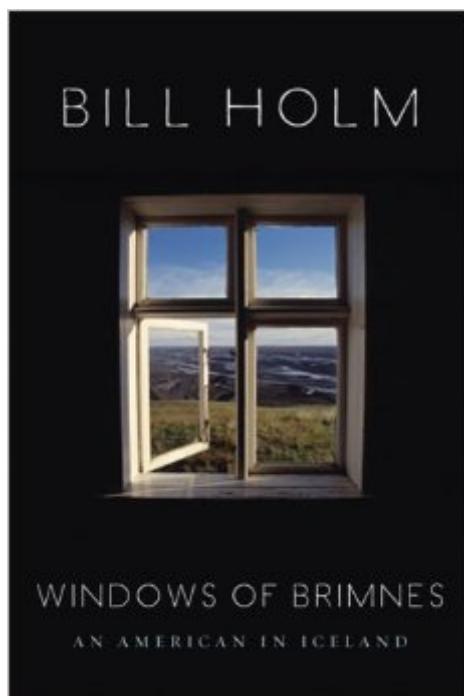


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The Windows Of Brimnes: An American In Iceland



Synopsis

In his most ambitious book to date, poet, musician, wit, and polemicist Bill Holm repairs to his Icelandic cottage to reflect on the United States and what it might learn from the land of his ancestral roots. The book begins with a description of the extraordinary setting of Brimnes, a small fishing village on the Arctic Circle. From his house, Holm captures Iceland's warmth and genuine community, its secularism, pacifism, and love of nature, poetry, and music. Writing of the America to which his ancestors fled only two generations before, he wonders whether the compelling dream of liberty, freedom, and inquiry still animates his native country. For the legions of Bill Holm fans as well as for those yearning for some straight if often comical reflection on the state of America today, this book provides a memorable experience.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Some years back, Bill Holm, a writer and poet of Icelandic descent, decided to visit the island his ancestors had left behind when they immigrated to Minnesota. He not only found himself happy to be there, but has since become one of Iceland's part-time residents, having bought a small house named Brimnes in a village, Hofsos, along one of the country's northern fjords. Mainly he and his wife are there for the summer but sometimes they manage winter visits as well, when Iceland's "spareness is magnified by snow and darkness." It's a simple life. Their Icelandic-made stove is older they are but does all a stove needs to do, with the not insignificant advantage that the fish cooked on it were swimming in local waters just an hour or two before arriving in the Holm's

kitchen. Holm writes: "When Americans ask me to describe my little house, I tell them, not entirely disingenuously, that it a series of magical windows with a few simple boards to hold them up, to protect your head from rain while you stare out at the sea." As a boy growing up on the prairie, about as far from an ocean as it is possible to be, he read books of adventures at sea -- Moby Dick, Two Years Before the Mast, etc. -- and dreamt one day of finding his way to the world where land gave way to endless water with its tides and rollers utterly indifferent to all headlines, ambitions, ideologies and advertisements. In Iceland he found what he had been looking for. Returning to the theme of windows, he writes: "We do not see reality -- or nature -- directly," he writes, "but always through a window of some sort. These windows are often physical, the window of our 'place,' our experience, our particular angle onto nature.

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