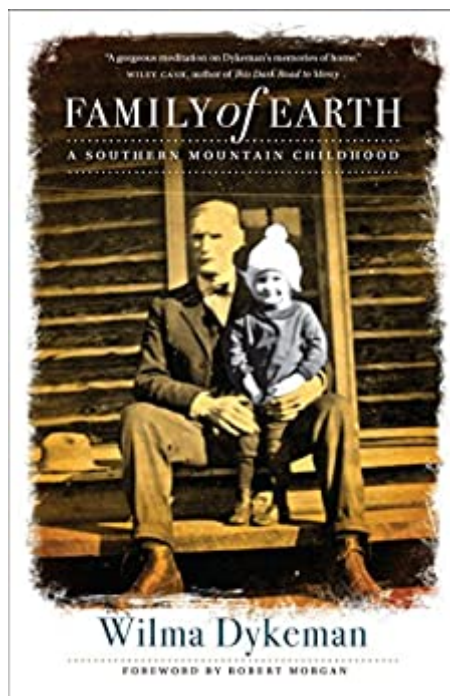


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# Family Of Earth: A Southern Mountain Childhood



## Synopsis

Discovered as a typewritten manuscript only after her death in 2006, *Family of Earth* allows us to see into the young mind of author and Appalachian native Wilma Dykeman (1920–2006), who would become one of the American South's most prolific and storied writers. Focusing on her childhood in Buncombe County, Dykeman reveals a perceptive and sophisticated understanding of human nature, the environment, and social justice. And yet, for her words' remarkable polish, her voice still resonates as raw and vital. Against the backdrop of early twentieth-century life in Asheville, she chronicles the touching, at times harrowing, story of her family's fortunes, plotting their rise and fall in uncertain economic times and ending with her father's sudden death in 1934 when she was fourteen years old. Featuring a new foreword by fellow North Carolinian Robert Morgan, *Family of Earth* stands as a new major literary work by a groundbreaking author.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An amazing lady who set the standard for future southern fiction writers

While I enjoyed reading this memoir, I found it to be very limited in scope. Dykeman focuses on her early childhood and her relationship with the land on which she was raised. I loved her dream-like and child-eye reveries on nature, but I wanted more about the people of the mountains where she grew up. The few times she delves into these descriptions were the strongest points of the book. I was highly skeptical of her alleged memories from when she was an infant.

Not my style.

In the academic world, there are scores of "found" manuscripts; everything from newly-discovered poems of Emily Dickinson to letters written between star-crossed literary lovers to mathematical formulae scribbled on the margins of a cocktail napkin. However, the academic world would not exist without such serendipitous discoveries that add to the length and breadth of the knowledge of a particular subject. The literary world is certainly much richer for the discovery of Wilma Dykeman's long-forgotten manuscript for *Family of Earth: A Southern Mountain Childhood*. *Family of Earth* was discovered after Dykeman's death in 2006 by her son, James Stokely III, who edited the manuscript, choosing to keep it as intact as possible. This modest volume contains within its pages the beautiful juxtaposition of romance and realism wherein Wilma Dykeman (1920-2006) describes the world of her childhood from birth until the sudden death of her father just after she turned fourteen. It is difficult to believe in the age of Snapchat and text messaging that a young woman in her early twenties had such an innate sense of self and of her place in the natural world. And, while I had some difficulty believing that Dykeman could actually remember her infancy with the level of detail with which she writes, her writing is, at turns, poignant and poetic and she leaves her reader with a deeper understanding of what it was like to grow up in the mountains of North Carolina during the Depression era. And, so, my disbelief was easily suspended. Wilma Dykeman has contributed greatly to the tapestry of Southern literature, both fiction and non-fiction. As Robert Morgan states in the foreword to *Family of Earth*, Dykeman "served as an ambassador of history and literature to countless communities, and she was an enthusiastic champion of contemporary writers" (p. xvii). Her love of the natural world is obvious throughout *Family of Earth* and the memoir gives the reader fascinating insight into Dykeman, herself. In many ways, the book is a fine example of American Transcendentalism because Dykeman truly believes in the inherent goodness of people and nature and many of her previously-published works are greatly informed by that belief. It was, honestly, difficult to write a review that does justice to this book. I feel that any writing that I might do about it pales in

comparison to the words that Dykeman has bled out onto the page. Anyone who has interest in the history of North Carolina, of the southern mountains, of how families who knew how to live off the land survived the Depression, or in Wilma Dykeman's life will appreciate this book and it would make a worthy addition to the local history collection in any public library in the Appalachian region.

A wonderfully written memoir of a young woman who ended up being one of the brilliant voices of the Appalachians. Wilma Dykeman is a wonderful writer, one who is ripe for rediscovery!

Beautifully written. I read it on vacation in Asia and it made me feel like I was home (when I was homesick). An easy read and touching. Takes you back to simpler times. Insightful and relevant. Can be read in a few hours if you have the time.

The writing in this book is crystal clear and very fine. You cannot help but compare your own childhood to the nature-centered beauty of Dykeman's childhood and the people of your childhood with the fascinating characters of hers.

Great read

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