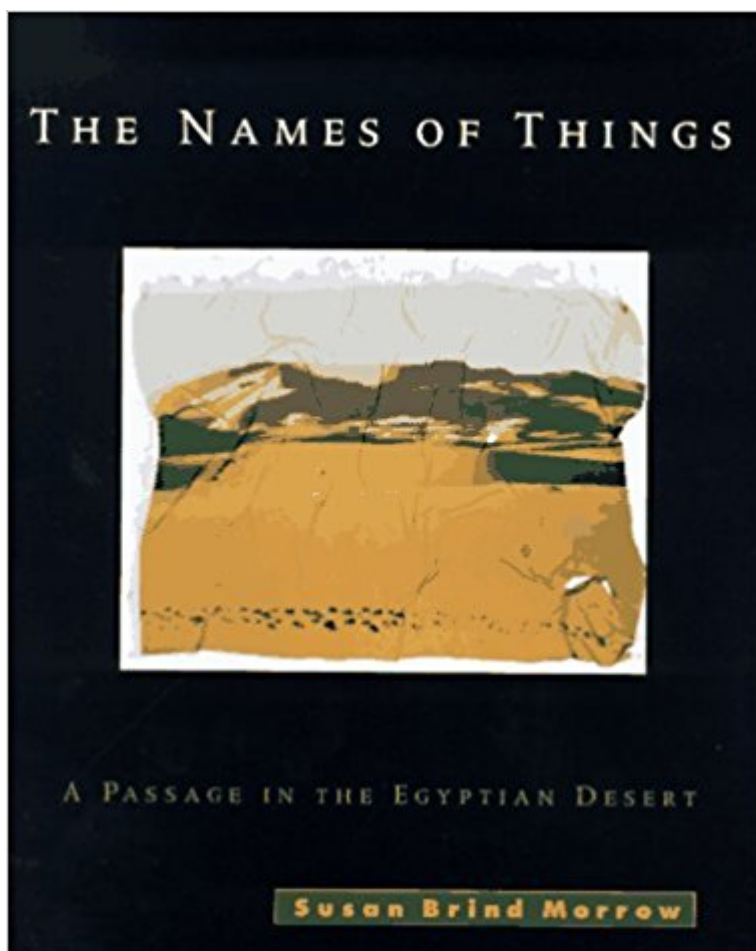


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The Names Of Things



Synopsis

Provides the memoirs of a woman's journey into the Egyptian desert, where she joins a nomadic desert family and begins her adventurous travels to the Sudanese border, Coptic monasteries, and the coast of the Red Sea, finding both beauty and danger along the way."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Susan Brind Morrow's lyric prose wades the deep waters of life, death, and the meanings of words. Her narrative evokes the smell of raw, wet earth from her Finger Lakes childhood, the red rock of the Egyptian desert she travels, dead Greek words she studied "like shards of some wonderful glass," and fluid Arabic where "a name is a mirror to catch the soul of a thing, and a pun is the corner of its garment." Seeking desert solace for her siblings' deaths, Brind adventures through Egypt's Red Sea Hills and Sudan's wadis, studying the birth of language amid its natural, living origins.

From a lifetime of combining the study of nature and a fascination with language emerges the beautiful story of Morrow's journey—both physical and spiritual—from her childhood in rural New York to the magnificent deserts of Egypt and Sudan. Memories interlace and enrich this lean yet richly descriptive narrative, particularly the unexpected tragedies of her brother's and sister's deaths. After studies of Arabic and Egyptian hieroglyphs at Barnard College, leading to her first archaeological survey in Egypt in 1980, Morrow traveled extensively in the Middle East and Africa, living with nomadic tribes, courting adventure, and recording her experiences in a mixture of prose, Linnaean

descriptions, and etymological pleasures. But more than simply a diarist, Morrow becomes a part of her desert milieu, in a region where women have had little freedom. This work imparts a quality not unlike the writing of Isak Dineson or Jane Goodall. Highly recommended. ?Kay Meredith Dusheck, Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I am prejudiced in the author's favor. I had read her work on decoding Egyptian Hieroglyphs, *The Dawning Moon of The Mind*, which stands on high merit. Ms Morrow used unusual intelligence guided by her sense of seeing beyond the apparent to arrive at stunning insights which have changed forever the way I see Egyptian writing. THEN I bought her earlier work reflecting a love affair with the country of Egypt, *The Names Of Things*. I expected the same intuitive vision and rigor but found something else: an earlier Egyptian adventure apparently when she was young, wild, and trying to find herself (nothing wrong with that). Anyone would be thrilled to encounter such a free spirit. While interesting and attractive as to the risks and experiences she reports, it was without the hoped for mature insight into things, people, places, and behavior. She reported on events without much curiosity into motive and circumstance of place or persons who seem to come into and out of her life with little emotional connection. Some readers may find that attractive for it's neutral stance. Judging from her later book, *The Dawning Moon of The Mind*, which stands as a landmark bit of investigative analysis, *The Names of Things* remains her sophomore effort.

It is creative and thoughtful , and beautifully written..give a sense of the layered meanings of things, starting with the words that represent them...poetic, intellectual, creative..a great read.

I was captivated with the first paragraph and came back to the secondhand bookstore two weeks latter worried if that single book has been sold.I love this book. It reminds me that many things to do and still "Many songs waiting to be sung" in the passion of words.Words, that dull word got a living context here. Actually it has never been dull. I was dull.

I read this book many many years ago and still find it one of my favorite travel memoirs. The writing is lyrical and evocative and her experiences are unique. I loved reading about not only the language and her quest for finding the right words, but also about a woman's journey around Egypt in settings far beyond the better known locations like Cairo, Alexandria or Giza. Such a gorgeous book. I'm reading it again for the third time and still love it!

It certainly is refreshing to read how a truly educated and enlightened woman can insinuate herself into what has to be some pretty stressful situations. *The Names of Things* is as close to poetry as prose can get. Susan Brind-Morrow takes the reader on a wild cultural carousel through Egypt and its surroundings, brought on by professional necessity. This is not the tourist's travelogue, so be prepared to confront an astounding array of societal paradoxes. An example is Brind-Morrow's perception of how Arab men treat her. Even though Arab women are treated like property, Arab men treated her with great hospitality, as though she were a man. Every page reeks of humanity, so much so that after reading it through once, I now take it down occasionally to relive a page or two at a time. Bravo!

Susan Brind Morrow has led a very interesting life. She's a graduate of Barnard College with a master's degree in classics from Columbia and for a short time was a fellow of the Creane-Rogers Foundation in Egypt and Sudan. Most of this book recounts her travels as a traveling archaeologist leading up to and around that period. Her prose is so lyrical that the book is more like reading poetry than anything else. So much so, that it's often difficult to keep a sense of where she is, who she's with, and what she's doing. The later is my only complaint, though to be honest it's not that anyone can capture in the lyrical sense what Susan Brind Morrow has in this very unique memoir.

Susan Brind Morrow brings onto paper the difficult task of writing of 'the names of things' Showing the reader through Egypt, bringing us elements of the good, the bad, the inbetween. She tells us of her love affair with this enchanting country, and how many times during her life she's had to return to this place, this haven of hers. If you have any interest in etymology, you'll love this book!

I've read several charming books about Egypt recently, by Andre Aciman, Alhadeff, and Penelope Lively. This one is a beautifully written, haunting memoir by a woman whose encounters with an exotic world are delicately portrayed, with great empathy for landscape and its people.

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