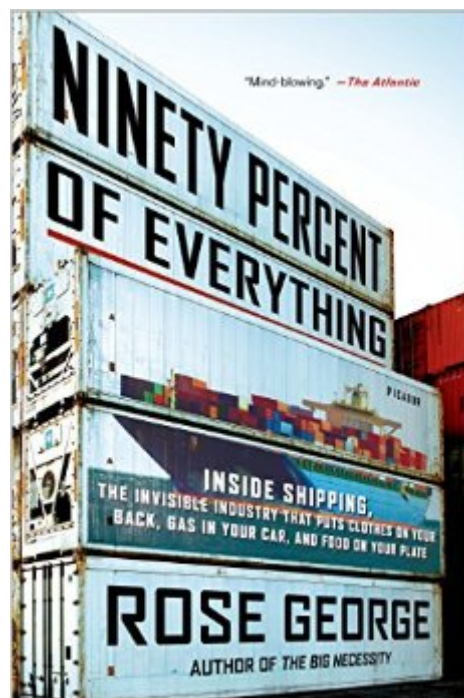


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# Ninety Percent Of Everything: Inside Shipping, The Invisible Industry That Puts Clothes On Your Back, Gas In Your Car, And Food On Your Plate



## Synopsis

On ship-tracking Web sites, the waters are black with dots. Each dot is a ship; each ship is laden with boxes; each box is laden with goods. In postindustrial economies, we no longer produce but buy, and so we must ship. Without shipping there would be no clothes, food, paper, or fuel. Without all those dots, the world would not work. Yet freight shipping is all but invisible. Away from public scrutiny, it revels in suspect practices, dubious operators, and a shady system of "flags of convenience." And then there are the pirates. Rose George, acclaimed chronicler of what we would rather ignore, sails from Rotterdam to Suez to Singapore on ships the length of football fields and the height of Niagara Falls; she patrols the Indian Ocean with an anti-piracy task force; she joins seafaring chaplains, and investigates the harm that ships inflict on endangered whales. Sharply informative and entertaining, *Ninety Percent of Everything* reveals the workings and perils of an unseen world that holds the key to our economy, our environment, and our very civilization.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have lived in Savannah, Georgia for about eight years now. Savannah is one of the busiest ports in the US (around 4th place). When you get near the river, you can see the massive container ships come right up the Savannah River. As a student I always wondered what sort of people work on boats like that and what their lives are like. Despite the volume of cargo moving in and out, most people here are only dimly aware about what goes on in the port and what's being shipped. The port is in an industrial part of town and the security is tight, so you can't just have a stroll around the docks. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, because it answered some of my many questions.

Savannahians in particular (including myself) and people in general don't understand how much our modern world with all its international foods and products rests on maritime transportation. In an early chapter, the author, Rose George, does a non-scientific, man-on-the-street survey of people, so see if they know what percentage of goods comes by sea. The highest guess she got was thirty percent. As the title implies, it's three times that. Most people assume our goods come via plane because they're some much quicker. Container ships may move at a relatively glacial pace, but they cannot be beat for cost-effectiveness. In one of the most shocking lines of the book, the reader finds that it is cheaper to have fish caught in Scotland, frozen and shipped to China to be filleted, and then frozen and shipped back to be sold in Scottish grocery stores, RATHER than pay to Scottish workers to process the fish. The obsession with the bottom-line boggles my mind in this case, but it gives the reader an idea that shipping by boat only adds a penny or two to the cost of most goods. Ms.

This has to be one of the more enjoyable books of the summer. Rose George has once more written a book about a subject that most people don't spend much time wondering about; and has plunged wholeheartedly into the matter. Her last offering, *The Big Necessity* was elucidating the journey of human waste from production to terminal disposal, and for that, she went wading into the muck of sewers to get a first hand experience of the excursion. This time Rose joined the merchant marine, not "to see the world" as the saying goes, but to experience the life of seafarers, mostly ignored by the rest of society. She began her journey of "thirty-nine days at sea, six ports, two oceans, five seas, and the most compellingly foreign environment she is ever likely to encounter" when she boarded the Danish container ship, *Maersk Kendal* "from the southern English port of Felixstowe to Singapore for five weeks and 9,288 nautical miles through the pillars of Hercules, pirate waters and weather." Along the way she experiences the excitement of discovery and the boredom of unrelenting monotony. She witnesses the hardships and injustice meted to the seamen on board, the long working hours (illegal in most countries), poor pay, cramped quarters, unhygienic environment and crimes from petty theft to rapes and even murder; all adjudicated by the unquestioned authority of the ship's captain. "we were told that the captain is our god; he can marry you, baptize you, and even bury you without anybody's permission. We were told that the sea is no-man's-land and that what happens at sea stays at sea." Ms.

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