

## Water by the Numbers

Average daily water use, in gallons, per person in the U.S.: **88**

Amount, in gallons, of water used daily for domestic purposes in the U.S.: **27.4 billion**

Approximate savings per year, in dollars, that would result if all U.S. households installed simple water-saving features: **4 billion**

Amount, in gallons, of water lost in a year if a faucet drips 20 times a minute: **526.6**

Length of sewer lines, in miles, in the city of Charleston's wastewater collection system: **780**

Number of people across the globe who live without access to clean water: **663 million**

Number of children under 5 who die each year of diseases related to poor water and sanitation: **289,000**

Average amount of water per month, in gallons, that flows from the faucets in Berry Residence Hall at CoFC: **850,000**

Percentage of river and lake area-miles in the U.S. that are under a fish consumption advisory: **40%**

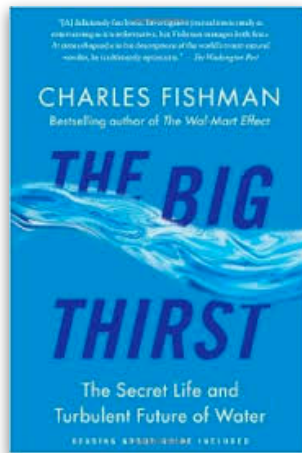
Annual sales revenues, in dollars, for bottled water in the U.S. in 2015: **14.2 billion**

Average cost, in pennies, of 10 gallons of U.S. tap water: **3**

Chance that a commercially available bottle of water originated from a municipal tap source: **25%**

Dollar amount that South Carolina's beaches, which are threatened by climate change, contribute to the state's economy annually: **4.5 billion**

Chance that the water you've consumed was once present in dinosaur pee: **100%**



## About the Book & Author

Water is the most vital substance in our lives. It runs our world in a host of ways, yet we take it completely for granted. But the era of easy water is over. Taking readers on a lively and fascinating journey—from the wet moons of Saturn to the water-obsessed hotels of Las Vegas, from a rice farm in the parched Australian outback to a high-tech IBM plant that makes an exotic breed of pure water found nowhere in nature—*The Big Thirst* vividly shows that we've already left behind a century-long golden age when water was thoughtlessly abundant, free, and safe and entered a new era of high-stakes water. *The Big Thirst* will forever change the way we think about water, about our essential relationship to it, and about the creativity we can bring to ensuring that we'll always have plenty of it. Charles Fishman, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Wal-Mart Effect*, has worked since 1996 for the innovative business magazine *Fast Company*. Fishman is a three-time recipient of UCLA's Gerald Loeb Award, the most prestigious award in business journalism. [adapted from [www.thebigthirst.com](http://www.thebigthirst.com)]

## Identifying with *The Big Thirst*

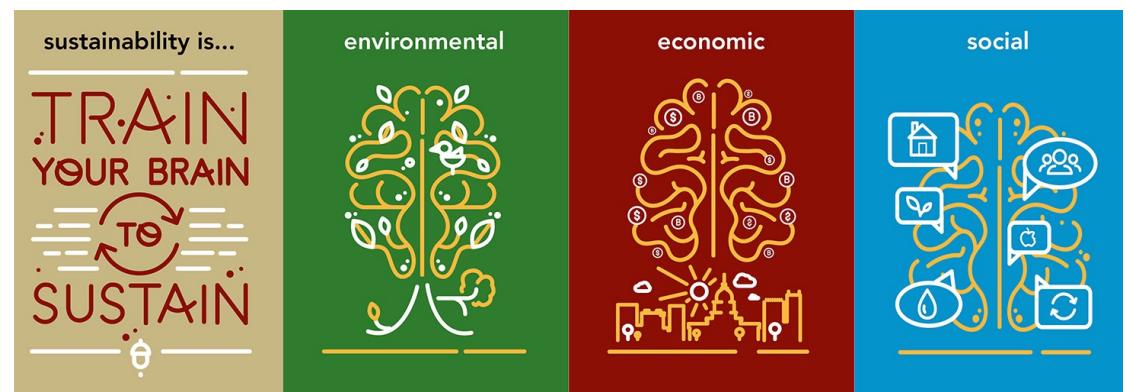
- ♦ What does sustainability mean to you? Is it a state of mind or a set of actions? An approach to social organization, or just another buzzword?
- ♦ Can you trace your awareness of issues related to sustainability and the environment to any single experience? If so, tell a story about that experience.
- ♦ In what ways do you or those around you take water for granted, allowing water to remain in many ways invisible? What priorities and lifestyles enable this attitude?
- ♦ The College of Charleston is just beginning a multi-year sustainability literacy initiative. Why do you think we chose to start with water?
- ♦ What would change about your relationship to water if you could? What can you do—personally, or through civic action—to help create a sustainable water future?

## Engaging with *The Big Thirst*

- ♦ What did you learn as you read *The Big Thirst* that most surprised you? Did anything that Fishman discusses motivate you to re-think your relationship with water in an important way?
- ♦ “When conflict over water arises,” Fishman writes, “it’s not about the water itself, but about the role water is playing, the use it’s being put to, who gets it and who doesn’t, and what condition the water is in when all is said and done.” Choose one water issue from *The Big Thirst* and describe the underlying conflict at play.
- ♦ Revisit what you consider a strong example of a smart water culture from *The Big Thirst*. What policies, ethics, economics, business practices, and uses of technology make this a positive example?
- ♦ Revisit what you consider a strong example of a flawed water culture from *The Big Thirst*. How does Fishman diagnose the problems, and what solutions are offered?

## Choose Your Own Adventure

*The Big Thirst* provides a great opportunity to engage with the three core themes of our campus’s Sustainability Literacy Initiative, which encompass the environmental, economic, and social aspects of sustainability. Chapter 2, “The Secret Life of Water,” offers an introduction to the life of water in our world that sets the stage for exploring these core themes. If you prefer to start with facts and figures, the first chapter—“The Revenge of Water”—has you covered. From there, you might chart out your own pathway depending on your own interests. Here’s a quick guide:



If you'd like to focus on the **economics of water**, check out “Dolphins in the Desert” (Ch. 3), “Money in the Pipes” (Ch. 5), and “It’s Water, of Course It’s Free” (Ch. 9). You can tackle **water and the environment** by reading “Water under Water” (Ch. 4) and “Who Stopped the Rain” (Ch. 7). If our **social relationship to water** is your starting point, head to “The Yuck Factor” (Ch. 6), “Where Water is Worshipped, But Gets no Respect” (Ch. 8), and “The Fate of Water” (Ch. 10). End with a look into the future with the Afterward, “Water Sheds Its Invisibility.”