Contents

Foreword 6
Introduction 8

Chapter 1: The Development of Solar Power

1. A Brief History of Solar Energy 16
   Lucy Cogan
   Ancient people throughout the world made use of the sun’s rays to heat homes.

2. How Solar Technology Developed in the Nineteenth Century
   Charles Smith
   The director of a sustainable development program explains that during the second half of the nineteenth century, scientists and engineers refined methods to capture and use solar energy.

3. Discovering How to Turn the Sun’s Rays into Electricity 30
   John Perlin
   The development of photovoltaic cells enabled scientists to turn solar energy into electricity.

4. How Today’s Solar Technology Works 38
   Union of Concerned Scientists
   An organization representing scientists concerned about the environment explains how the sun’s rays can be put to work to heat homes and businesses and to generate electricity.
Chapter 2: Is Solar Power Viable?

   Liz Borkowski
   Solar power can wean America from dependence on fossil fuels and thereby slow global warming.

2. Solar Power Cannot Make America Energy Independent
   Mike Oliver and John Hospers
   An engineer and a political philosopher argue that solar power is too inefficient to meet America’s energy needs.

   Robert F. Service
   If developed nations invest in solar technology, they can meet future energy needs and protect the environment.

4. Solar Power Is Best Suited for Poor Nations
   Nicholas Thompson and Ricardo Bayon
   Solar power is most viable in rural areas of poor nations, which lack access to a national electrical grid.

Chapter 3: The Future of Solar Energy

1. American Homes Will Use More Solar Energy
   Joe Provey
   Falling prices for solar cells and rising prices for electricity provided by burning coal or gas will fuel a boom in home solar power systems.

2. Improved Solar Water Heaters Could Lead to Solar Air Conditioning
   John Colmey
   A Malaysian inventor’s new design for solar water heating makes hot water available to people in developing countries. It also could make possible solar-powered air conditioning.
3. Solar and Hydrogen Energy Will Power Future Homes
   
   Someday, homes will be powered by hydrogen made from solar energy.

4. Satellites Will Supply the Earth with Solar Energy
   
   An aeronautical engineer describes his vision for a gigantic solar-power satellite that would turn the sun’s energy into electricity, which would be beamed down to Earth for use in homes, businesses, and factories.

5. Solar Energy Will Make Drinking Water Safe in Remote Areas
   
   An environmental health specialist examines how solar energy is being used to kill pathogens in water. Solar boxes and stills can greatly improve the health of the world’s poorest people.