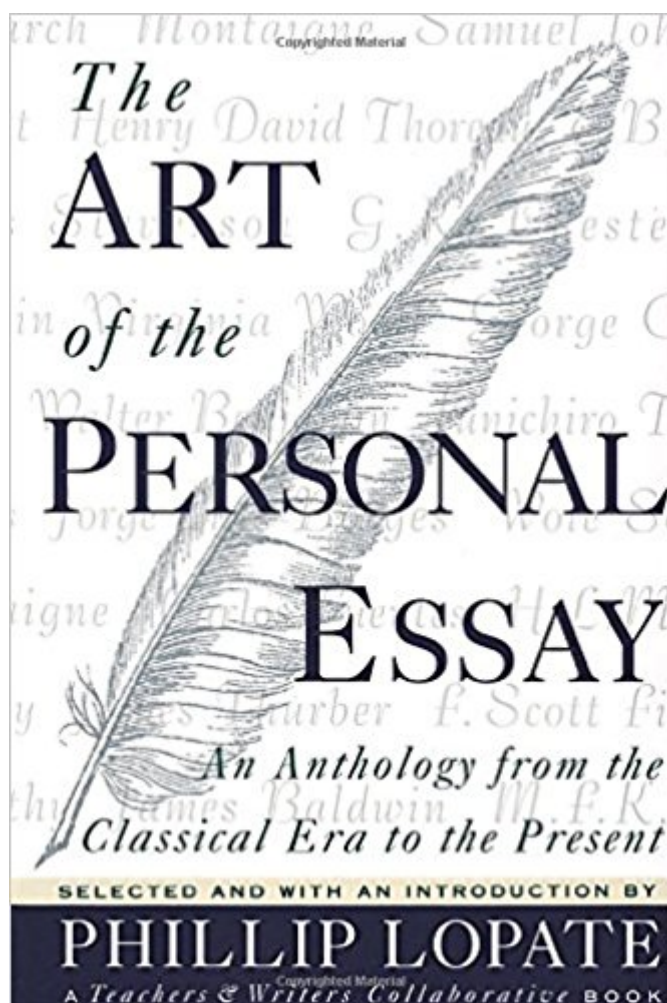


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# The Art Of The Personal Essay: An Anthology From The Classical Era To The Present



## Synopsis

For more than four hundred years, the personal essay has been one of the richest and most vibrant of all literary forms. Distinguished from the detached formal essay by its friendly, conversational tone, its loose structure, and its drive toward candor and self-disclosure, the personal essay seizes on the minutiae of daily life--fashions, foibles, oddballs, seasonal rituals, love and disappointment, the pleasures of solitude, reading, taking a walk -- to offer insight into the human condition and the great social and political issues of the day. The Art of the Personal Essay is the first anthology to celebrate this fertile genre. By presenting more than seventy-five personal essays, including influential forerunners from ancient Greece, Rome, and the Far East, masterpieces from the dawn of the personal essay in the sixteenth century, and a wealth of the finest personal essays from the last four centuries, editor Phillip Lopate, himself an acclaimed essayist, displays the tradition of the personal essay in all its historical grandeur, depth, and diversity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Essayist Lopate ( Against Joie de Vivre , Poseidon Pr., 1991, among others) has selected and introduced some 75 personal essays, covering over 400 years, from the East as well as the West, in an attempt to show the development of the genre. The result is a fascinating overview that could be useful in teaching situations. Given the personal nature of the pieces, it may also appeal to general

readers who enjoy biography and autobiography. Lopate considers the personal essay to be a sort of friendship based on "the supposition that there is a certain unity to human experience." He devotes extensive space to Montaigne, "the patron saint of personal essayists," but we also hear from unfamiliar voices, such as a tenth-century Japanese court lady, and from special branches of the essay, such as the American humorists. Of interest to both academic and public libraries.-

Nancy Shires, East Carolina Univ., Greenville, N.C. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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"A wonderful book. The most charming smorgasbord of essays from around the world." -- Diane Cole, USA Today. "Without a doubt, this is the most nourishing essay collection I've read in years." -- Susan Burmeister-Brown, Portland Oregonian. "A labor of deeply felt love and keenly honed scholarship by an essay authority who knows his territory down to his bones." -- Christian Science Monitor. "The best available [essay anthology] no matter how crowded the field." -- Chicago Tribune. "The striking thing is how much Lopate has managed to pack in, and how high a standard he has managed to maintain." -- John Gross, New York Newsday. "Packed with personality and beguiling first-person prose... of reminders of the perils and pleasures of the craft." -- The Wall Street Journal.

"The Art of the Personal Essay" is a great collection of essays on a variety of topics including family, food, personal loss, illness, politics, relationships and more. You learn different perspectives of how to write an essay on your topic. You also learn significant things about the writers of the essays that really make their work stand out. If you are looking for quality essay content to help you develop your own or you want to read content that is moving, thought-provoking, and has purpose, this is a book to add to your collection.

A classic anthology -- read the essays from cover to cover or pick through them by author or subject. I have used this text for writing classes as an instructor, and there is something for every student. In addition, the text can be used as a guide to write your own essays. I don't mean it is full of writing exercises -- it is not; however, the examples of different types of essays offer models for the beginning and advanced writer.

This book is full of all the classic essays and is an excellent resource for those studying writing. This book is an artifact of how culture has progressed over the centuries, and shows the evolution of our perceptions. The editor, a teacher of the essay, put together the greatest in the field for this masterpiece. It's something great to have nearby on a shelf to refer or escape to without the commitment one needs for reading a book.

I'm not a writer. I'm a scientist. My girlfriend, however, is a writer and by way of introduction to essays gifted me this anthology. The introductions are insightful, essays pleasant/diverse, the time frame sampled is enormous, and most of all are a joy to read. I highly recommend this collection.

The introduction itself is invaluable. The author gives an excellent overview of the personal essay as a genre -- how the essay is put together, why it works, what makes it so charming and interesting. I've studied this intro closely and have strongly recommended it to my writer friends. In fact, I loaned my original copy of this book to someone in April but soon bought another because I didn't want to be without it until I see the person again in July. A reading treat, all the way through.

The essay has long been a favorite form of writing, or should I say reading. And Lopate has gathered a treasure trove of the form. From Tanizaki's incredible "In Praise of Shadows", a unique revelation of Japanese design and form, revealing how pottery and other wares look most luminous in half light, to the philosophical masterworks of Robert Louis Stevenson, Orwell and many others, we are transported to the life of the mind, left to question our previous moral certitudes.

Laurie Stone, the essayist and creative writing teacher, recommended this book to me as the most essential volume on the personal essay. I could not agree more. The editor, Philip Lopate, is one of the most well-respected authors of the personal essay and he has compiled this anthology of pieces from the classical era to the present. The book works well for readers and writers alike. Lopate, in his lengthy introduction, gives an overview of the personal essay, and instructions on how to use this book as a learning tool. It is divided into several sections, beginning with the essay's forerunners in the classical period. Michel De Montaigne, the father of the personal essay, gets his own section. Personally, I did not find it useful to read the book cover-to-cover - I read it in reverse. I started out with the most recent, contemporary essays - those most accessible to me - and went backwards in order to see the devolution of the essay, as it were. The essay is fast becoming one of my favorite forms - it is short, funny, and insightful. I highly recommend this book to ANYONE.

I was required to purchase this book for a writing class. Besides that, the essays are interesting to read and the book was a good price. Despite purchasing this book used, the condition was good, too.

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