

The Book of Twentieth-Century Essays



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This collection of the best essays written in the English language during the past one hundred years includes many that have become landmarks defining their time: Norman Mailer's "The White Negro," Tom Wolfe's "These Radical Chic Evenings," James Baldwin's "Notes of a Native Son," and Gore Vidal's "The Holy Family." Others are in a lighter vein, like James Thurber's lampoon of Salvador Dal's Secret Life or Max Beerbohm's reflections on "Laughter." There are Philip Roth on baseball and A. P. Herbert on bathrooms; Mary McCarthy's "My Confession," on her Communist sympathies; and F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Crack-up." Each reader will have his or her own favorites: Eudora Welty capturing the precise moment at which she grew up, or Arthur Koestler debunking the effects of magic mushrooms. And each essay has stood the test of time, like Hannah Arendt's "The Concentration Camps," Edmund Wilson's now classic "The Wound and the Bow," and Paul Fussell on World War II. Lovers of literature will find Virginia Woolf, F. R. Leavis, and T. S. Eliot, plus E. B. White, Graham Greene, H. L. Mencken, George Orwell, John Updike, Joan Didion, and many others.

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