

LOOKING BACK: THE ART OF THE MEMOIR



THE INVISIBLE WALL: A LOVE STORY THAT BROKE BARRIERS | Harry Bernstein | Q, B Bern

In an industrial town in WWI-era England, Christians live on one side of the street, Jews live on the other, and they rarely meet in the middle. The author—now in his nineties—recounts his sister's teenaged love affair with a Christian boy from across the street. Their affair begins to break down the barriers between the two groups, while the neighborhood starts to feel the effects of the war. Bernstein's conversational, approachable style has instant appeal.

A WALK IN THE WOODS: REDISCOVERING AMERICA ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL | Bill Bryson | 917.4 Brys, Q

Bryson, an American living in England, decides he is going to hike the Appalachian trail from Georgia to Maine. Used to the easy slopes of the English countryside, he is underprepared for the rigors of the "AT." Spending time alone and with companions, Bryson's riotously funny story is a tribute to individual perseverance, as well as the wonders of natural America.

RUNNING WITH SCISSORS | Augusten Burroughs | CD, DVD, B Burr

Burroughs survives an impossibly difficult childhood—one in which his mother gives him up for adoption by her psychiatrist, whose much older son engages Burroughs in the author's first homosexual affair. This is only a taste of the trials Burroughs faced, which would make for a grueling read if he were not such a talented writer and fierce personality.

DON'T LET'S GO TO THE DOGS TONIGHT: AN AFRICAN CHILDHOOD | Alexandra Fuller | 916.891 Full, Cass, CD

Fuller's book has been compared to the *Diary of Ann Frank*: a portrait of a little girl's world through her own young eyes, while world events spiral out of control around her. Fuller is born to a white family living in and around Rhodesia during that country's civil war in the 1970s. With a unique voice, she astutely observes the complex racism in a black African country ruled by a white minority. She also documents her family life as they confront danger and beauty in the African bush.

COMMITTED: A SKEPTIC MAKES PEACE WITH MARRIAGE | Elizabeth Gilbert | 306.81 Gilb, Q

In this follow-up to her smash hit, *Eat, Pray, Love*, Gilbert continues her exploration of romance and marriage. This time her Brazilian boyfriend is detained during one of their many return trips to the U.S. and the only way for him to re-enter the country is for them to marry. Not sure she believes in marriage after her divorce, Gilbert weaves her research on attitudes toward marriage around the world with her own touching story.

LIT | Mary Karr | B Karr

Mary Karr's memoirs (*Liar's Club*, *Cherry*) are adored by millions because she expertly makes tremendous personal struggle universal. Readers will not be disappointed by *Lit*, in which Karr brings the reader right into her head as she battles alcoholism and depression while attempting to be a decent wife and mother. Her story of a remarkable recovery is punctuated by Karr's other struggle—to become the writer she has always wanted to be.

THE GLASS CASTLE | Jeannette Walls | B Walls, CD, Q

Growing up with nomadic parents, often homeless, Walls and her siblings were geniuses at figuring out how to fend for themselves. Walls writes about her complex, heartbreaking childhood with little judgment. Raised by a mother who thought that "being homeless is an adventure" and a father who stole his children's savings to go out drinking, Walls' adult successes are astounding. Prior to writing this memoir she hid her past from everyone she knew; now she finds a way to see humor and even a bright side to her tumultuous upbringing.

TEACHER MAN | Frank McCourt | Cass, CD, Q, B McCo
MCCourt is the author of the bestselling *Angela's Ashes* and its follow-up *Tis*, which recount his impoverished childhood in Ireland and immigration to America as a young adult. *Teacher Man* chronicles his 30-year career as a New York City public school teacher. His unusual assignments and methods win him the occasional ire of school bureaucrats but the deep admiration of many of his students. A genuinely inspiring story, fans of McCourt's work will also love this book, and it's a must-read for teachers!

HONEYMOON IN TEHRAN: TWO YEARS OF LOVE AND DANGER IN IRAN | Azadeh Moaveni | B Moav

Moaveni was born in Iran in the 1970s and raised in America, but she challenges herself to return to her home country, despite the restrictions on women, woeful economy and lack of intellectual freedom. A journalist, she chronicled her early career and quest for self-identity in *Lipstick Jihad*. Now her story becomes more personal, as she falls in love with an Iranian man, has his baby and marries him—in that order. Her explication of how difficult it is for modern, educated young people to live and work in Iran is a fascinating complement to the headlines about this struggling nation.

TENDER AT THE BONE: GROWING UP AT THE TABLE | Ruth Reichl | Q, B Reic |

As a former *New York Times* restaurant critic and editor of *Gourmet* magazine, Ruth Reichl knows food. In this, the first of several other memoirs, she weaves food writing with her bizarre, embarrassing experiences as a child of a manic-depressive mother. Her young life was not all traumatic, though: she was able to travel abroad, learn French and live in a Berkeley commune. Her varied experiences each had a role to play in forming the talented person she would become—and write about.

ME TALK PRETTY ONE DAY | David Sedaris | 817.54 Seda, Cass, Q

Sedaris has a knack for turning routine mishaps and weirdness into absolute hilarity, and it has made him quite famous—on National Public Radio, in his many memoirs and on his audiobooks, which he reads himself in his geeky, quirky voice. This collection of essays covers topics such as his plan to thwart speech therapy for his lisp by not using words with the letter 's' and his father's fruitless attempts to get any of his six children interested in his own creative pursuits.

DEVOTION | Dani Shapiro | B Shap

When Shapiro's young son begins to ask her questions about God, she realizes that the pace and stress of her life have not allowed her to explore her own beliefs—in a higher power, organized religion or spiritual pursuits like yoga and meditation. She endeavors to figure out what these things mean to her, as well as how they might help her ease daily anxiety. *Devotion* is remarkable for Shapiro's ability to capture her genuine inquisitiveness about big issues—something readers can easily relate to.

BEAUTIFUL BOY: A FATHER'S JOURNEY THROUGH HIS SON'S ADDICTION | David Sheff | 362.29 Shef, PLAY, SPA CD

Sheff's book is an expansion of an article he wrote for *The New York Times Magazine* in which he depicts his son's addiction with brutal honesty and compassion. Sheff's son Nic was a bright child, full of potential, but he drifted into drug and alcohol abuse, the addiction, in high school. Nic's ultimately hopeful story, as told by his father, will ring with profound truth for anyone with an addicted loved one, as he struggles with several stays in rehab and drags his family into his downward spiral. Nic tells his side in his own memoir, *Tweak*.

JUST KIDS | Patti Smith | B Smit

In what has been called "one of the best books ever written on becoming an artist," rock legend Patti Smith describes her early adulthood in bohemian New York City. There she began a deep friendship with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, who died of AIDS in 1989. Her story includes encounters with the likes of William S. Burroughs and Janice Joplin and time spent in the Chelsea Hotel and the Strand Bookstore, as well as her share of personal tragedy, all without a trace of pretention. As both a portrait of artistic life in New York and a tribute to Mapplethorpe, Smith's book is beautifully written from the very first paragraph, and is tender and genuine throughout.

J. Adler
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