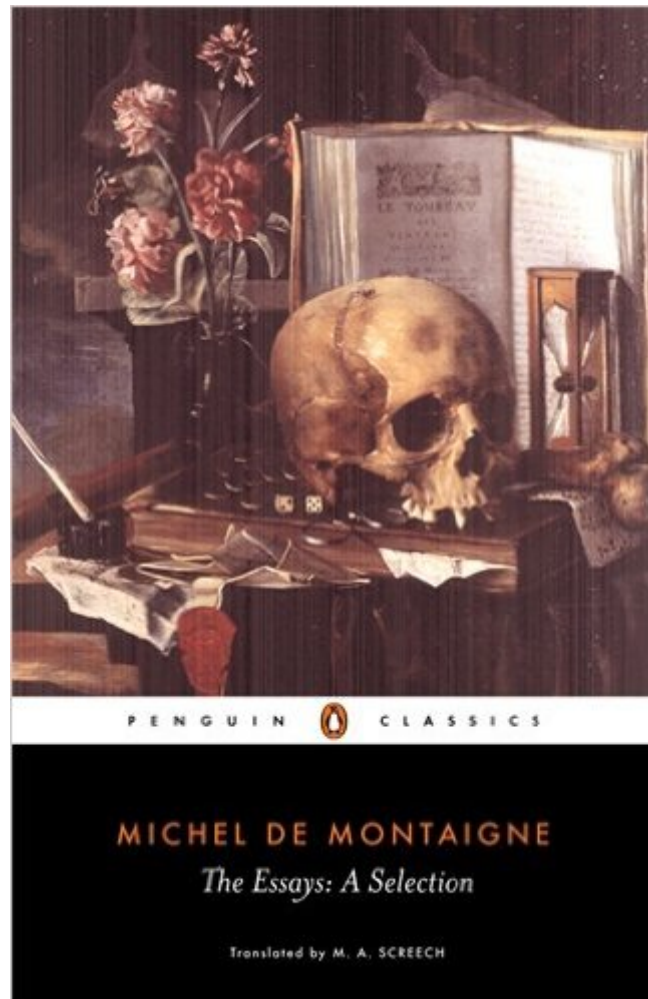


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The Essays: A Selection (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

A survey of one of the giants of Renaissance thought, *The Essays: A Selection* collects some of Michel de Montaigne's most startling and original works, translated from the French and edited with an introduction and notes by M.A. Screech in Penguin Classics. To overcome a crisis of melancholy after the death of his father, Montaigne withdrew to his country estates and began to write, and in the highly original essays that resulted he discussed themes such as fathers and children, conscience and cowardice, coaches and cannibals, and, above all, himself. *On Some Lines of Virgil* opens out into a frank discussion of sexuality and makes a revolutionary case for the equality of the sexes. In *On Experience* he superbly propounds his thoughts on the right way to live, while other essays touch on issues of an age struggling with religious and intellectual strife, with France torn apart by civil war. These diverse subjects are united by Montaigne's distinctive voice - that of a tolerant man, sceptical, humane, often humorous and utterly honest in his pursuit of the truth. M.A. Screech's distinguished translation fully retains the light-hearted and inquiring nature of the essays. In his introduction, he examines Montaigne's life and times, and the remarkable self-portrait that emerges from his works. Michel de Montaigne (1533-1586) studied law and spent a number of years working as a counsellor before devoting his life to reading, writing and reflection. If you enjoyed *The Essays: A Selection*, you might like Francis Bacon's *The Essays*, also available in Penguin Classics.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Over the years I have kept a copy of the Essays by my favorite reading chair to be enjoyed at random, particularly in the middle of the night when Entropy seems to hold the upper hand. They exercise a remarkable calming effect. Seduced by the idea of having a complete set of all the Essays, I initially opted for the complete Screech translation, but found it wooden and pedantic. I moved to the Cohen translation, which does not include all of the Essays, but has all of the major ones and is far more enjoyable.

What a wonderful book to have on the bookshelf. It took me about a year and half to read it, as I would leisurely consume an essay or two while between books, or if I was just looking for a pleasant respite from my other reading. Montaigne is every bit as readable, fascinating and wise as the judgment of history has deemed him.

Worthwhile reading It was a gift to a philosopher friend, and he's enjoying it a great deal. Montaigne is great for older people.

Montaigne goes on his adventures of mind, and explores worlds seemingly far from his own, and yet always somehow leads us back to himself. His digressions and his ramblings in thought mark a new stage of discovery in the human mind's quest to know and understand itself. Like his great contemporary Shakespeare he belongs to an old world dying, and a new world not yet quite born which he is straddling and making anew. Whatever the subject he opens up for those who come after a new way of thinking and exploring.

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