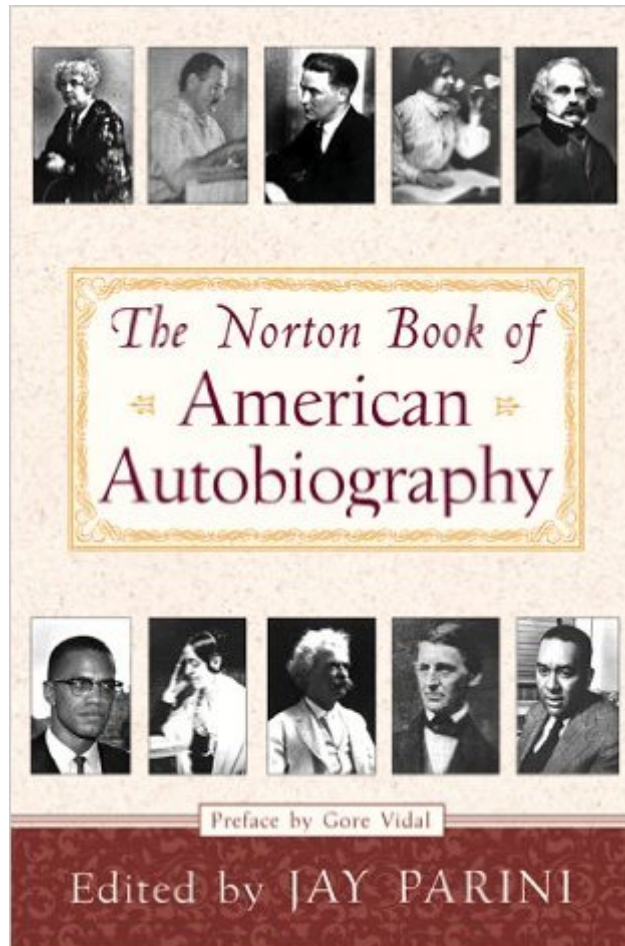


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The Norton Book Of American Autobiography



Synopsis

"The essential American form of expression." —from the Introduction by Jay Parini From Mary Rowlandson's story of her capture by Indians in the mid-seventeenth century to Mary Paik Lee's story of being a pioneer Korean woman in America at the beginning of the twentieth century, the autobiographical form has provided our most vivid, intimate glimpses of daily American life and self-understanding. In this groundbreaking anthology, respected writer and critic Jay Parini brings together an abundant selection from over three centuries of "the democratic voice . . . discovering itself." Here are the voices of the Founding Fathers and African American slaves; of transcendentalists and suffragists; of ancestors such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Mark Twain, Henry James, Helen Keller, Zora Neale Hurston, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, James Baldwin, and many others; and of a wide range of contemporaries, including Maxine Hong Kingston, Gore Vidal, Julia Alvarez, and Mark Doty. The rich, continuous influence of autobiographical writing in our culture is clear, and as memoirs continue to fascinate readers, this invaluable anthology provides an essential guide to our foremost American literary tradition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I teach in a jail setting and am limited as to how much can be stored in the classroom office. Some of the students have expressed interest in reading autobiographies. We're not allowed use of the internet, so I needed to resort to books. Yet, they couldn't agree on which autobiographies to read. Thus, I ordered three copies of "The Norton Book of American Autobiography". The book contains

autobiographies of a lot of famous people, and of some people whom I never heard of before. Each autobiography is a few to possibly 20 pages long. It is enough information to give a good overall picture of the individual, and not so long that the reader wants to give up on reading it. I had a couple of reluctant students who thought autobiographies would be boring to read. However, they quickly found the book to be interesting. I gave the book a 3 star ranking. Although the content is good, the presentation is bland. The type font is on the small side. So sometimes you're looking at hundreds of words on a page with no sort of visual to go along with it. Even if the chapter titles could be a little jazzed up, that would help. I also think that the book could have included more famous people. I noticed that if one of my students didn't recognize a name, then he or she would skip that autobiography and find a different one. If you have any questions about the book, feel free to ask.

Autobiography isn't always just the blathering of B-list celebrities. Much of it is some of the finest American literature ever produced. Some say Americans are egotistical and self-involved. Well, fine, maybe so, but it makes for great autobiography. And the informative and literary life synopsis (synopsises?) make for great reading by themselves!!! Huzzah to the editor and his minions!!!

I truly enjoyed how this book gives us the most tasty morsels of some of the greatest writers in America. This book will encourage anyone to find out more about the author and read all of his works. I give this two thumbs up very easily!

I bought this book because I was interested in the autobiography. I had just finished reading a few "shorts" in different anthologies, and I decided to do a search to see if there was anything larger out there. I found The Norton Book of American Autobiography and was pleased. I just finished this massive 711 paged book, and I would recommend it to anyone who's just interested in other people's lives. There are some stand-out writers included (Malcolm X, Benjamin Franklin, etc.), but also some contemporary writers as well (Julia Alvarez, Caroline Knapp, Paul Monette, etc.). This is a great book to read on your own, but I can really see it benefiting a lit. class at the same time.

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