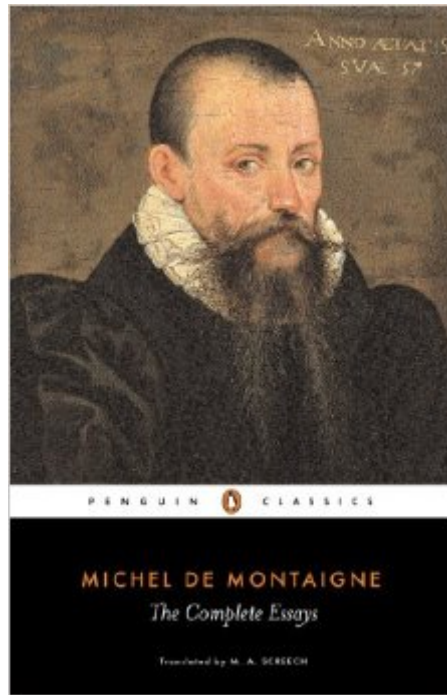


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The Complete Essays



Synopsis

Michel de Montaigne was one of the most influential figures of the Renaissance, singlehandedly responsible for popularising the essay as a literary form. In 1572, Montaigne retired to his estates in order to devote himself to leisure, reading and reflection. There he wrote his constantly expanding 'essays', inspired by the ideas he found in books from his library and his own experience. He discusses subjects as diverse as war-horses and cannibals, poetry and politics, sex and religion, love and friendship, ecstasy and experience. Above all, Montaigne studied himself to find his own inner nature and that of humanity. The Essays are among the most idiosyncratic and personal works in all literature. An insight into a wise Renaissance mind, they continue to engage, enlighten and entertain modern readers. Born in 1533, Michel de Montaigne studied law and spent a number of years working as a counsellor before devoting his life to reading, writing and reflection. He died in 1586. Dr M.A. Screech is regarded as the world's greatest authority on Montaigne.

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MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE - THE COMPLETE ESSAYS. Translated and Edited with an Introduction and Notes by M. A. Screech. Iviiv + 1284 pp. (Penguin Classics). London : Penguin Books, 1993 and Reissued. ISBN 0-14-044604-4 (pbk.) Those who discover Montaigne should count themselves very lucky. There are so many authors competing for our attention today, so many brilliant and less than brilliant men and women both contemporary and of the past, so many poets, novelists, philosophers, thinkers of every stripe, that Montaigne's voice can easily get lost in the general racket, like the voice of a single cricket on a noisy summer's night. But Montaigne's voice is well worth singling out for special attention, like that one cricket whose song is especially musical, because there has never been anyone quite like him, nor anyone who has produced such a wealth of sensible observations on life and everything that goes to make it up. We love Montaigne for his humanity, his wisdom, his clear insight into human nature, his tolerance of our weaknesses and failings, his love and compassion for all creatures whether man, animal, or plant, his calm, gentle and amiable voice, his stately and dignified progress as he conducts us through the vast repository of his mind. But above all we love him for his plain good sense. Despite his distance in time, we can open these essays almost anywhere and immediately become engrossed. Some of what he says,

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