

# IN DEPTH

ESSAYISTS FOR OUR TIME



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# IN DEPTH

## ESSAYISTS FOR OUR TIME

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## Preface

In making this collection, our primary goal has been to provide some of the best essays we could find by twenty-five outstanding and richly varied essayists—Woody Allen, Francis Bacon, Russell Baker, James Baldwin, Bruno Bettelheim, Joan Didion, Annie Dillard, Loren Eiseley, E. M. Forster, Ellen Goodman, Stephen Jay Gould, Ernest Hemingway, Edward Hoagland, Martin Luther King, Jr., Margaret Mead, George Orwell, Jonathan Swift, Lewis Thomas, Henry David Thoreau, Barbara Tuchman, Mark Twain, Alice Walker, E. B. White, Tom Wolfe, and Virginia Woolf. Each author is represented in depth—by four or five pieces—resulting in a collection of more than 100 essays.

This collection includes the most current essayists as well as writers from earlier periods whose work continues to speak to the interests and issues of our time. Likewise, it provides essays both by well-known literary figures and by authors who are best known for their work in the sciences, social sciences, and public affairs. So, the anthology as a whole offers an opportunity to read the essays of twenty-five distinguished writers and thinkers ranging widely across various subjects and fields of human concern.

We have organized the collection alphabetically, by author, because this arrangement provides the handiest means of quickly locating individual essayists and their work, while leaving the material free to be organized as anyone might wish. This organization also serves to remind one of how diversified the essay can be by producing such striking juxtapositions as Bacon and Baker, Goodman and Gould, Tuchman and Twain, or Wolfe and Woolf. But we also recognize the value of studying essays in terms of their rhetorical patterns and their thematic relationships to each other. So, a topical guide to the essays follows the table of contents, and a rhetorical index and an author-title index appear at the back of the book.

To provide a framework for thinking about the essay as a form of reading and writing, our general introduction focuses on the most distinctive aspects of the essay as defined or commented on by essayists who appear in the collection. Though essays can, of course, be understood in and of themselves, they are so directly related to the experience and outlook of their authors that it seems useful to know more than just a handful of facts about the persons who have written them. So, our introductions to each of the essayists provide detailed information about their lives, careers, accomplishments, interests, and ideas, as well as their thoughts about writing.

To encourage a careful study of the essays, our questions following each selection explore a sequence of interrelated issues. These questions, referred to as “Lines of Inquiry,” are not separately listed and numbered as in a quiz or examination, but are grouped in paragraphs because they are intended to stimulate lines of thought or investigation bearing on important aspects of each essay. In each case, the Lines of Inquiry contain three paragraphs of questions: the first focuses on aspects of form; the second on aspects of content; and the third on the relationship of the piece to personal experience and ideas, to contemporary culture and thought, or to other essays in the collection. So, the Lines of Inquiry, like the introductions, are meant to stimulate thoughtful reading, discussion, and writing—to lead one in depth through essays and essayists for our time.

For their helpful reactions to the table of contents, the introductions, and the Lines of Inquiry, we are grateful to Professors Laura Julier, Drake University; Charles Schuster, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; and Jeffrey L. Spear, New York University. For their expert work in bringing this book into print, we are grateful to the staff of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: especially Marlane Miriello, our current English editor, and Thomas Broadbent, our former English editor, for their advice and support; as well as Cheryl Hauser, production editor; Eleanor Garner, permissions editor; Gina Sample, designer; Vicki Kelly, art editor; and Sarah Randall, production manager, for their contributions to the book.

C.H.K.

C.A.

R.B.F.

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## *Introduction: On the Essay*