



Memoir: An Introduction

By G. Thomas Couser

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Each year brings a batch of new memoirs, ranging from works by former teachers and celebrity has-beens to disillusioned soldiers and bestselling novelists. In addition to becoming bestsellers in their own right, memoirs have become a popular object of inquiry in the academy and a mainstay in most MFA workshops. Courses in what is now called "life writing" study memoir alongside personal essays, diaries, and autobiographies. *Memoir: An Introduction* proffers a succinct and comprehensive survey of the genre (and its *many* subgenres) while taking readers through the various techniques, themes, and debates that have come to characterize the ubiquitous literary form. Its fictional origins are traced to eighteenth-century British novels; its early American roots are examined in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and colonial captivity narratives; and its ethical conundrums are considered via the imbroglios brought on by the questionable claims in Rigoberta Menchú's *I, Rigoberta*, and more notoriously, James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*. Alongside these more traditional literary forms, Couser expands the discussion of memoir to include film with what he calls "documemoir" (exemplified in Nathaniel Kahn's *My Architect*) and graphic narratives like Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

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Memoir: An Introduction By G. Thomas Couser Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1318589 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2011-12-02
- Released on: 2011-12-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.50" h x .70" w x 8.10" l, .62 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 208 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Couser intelligently and capaciously introduces memoir for the general reader." --*American Book Review*

"Deft, rigorous, and remarkably wide-ranging, Couser's volume is a superb example of accessible scholarship. It will serve as an ideal introduction to memoir for students, a clarifying and stimulating text for scholars, and a splendidly engaging introduction to life writing and other narrative genres for the general reader." --Richard Freadman, author of *Threads of Life: Autobiography and the Will*

"I have been working in the field of life writing for over fifteen years and can honestly say I learned a great deal from *Memoir: An Introduction*. It is extremely readable, impressive, and really quite fascinating, even to one who knows the debates well." --Margaretta Jolly, editor of *The Encyclopedia of Life Writing*

"[A] useful, compact volume...Recommended." --*Choice*

"This contribution to memoir scholarship incorporates and fuses much of [Couser's] previous scholarship. *Memoir* is a significant and timely intervention into current debates around truth and representation. Its conversational style makes *Memoir* an engaging and thoughtprovoking read." --*Literature in North Queensland*

"G. Thomas Couser's book is a tremendous achievement, covering the contemporary American memoir in a rich and thorough way. Encompassing the many genres, surprising history, and ethical perils of the form, MEMOIR is sure to become one of those much thumbed-through books that sits in every writing teacher's office--and on every memoirist's desk." --Rachel Simon, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Riding The Bus With My Sister*

"Couser intelligently and capaciously introduces memoir for the general reader." --Thomas Larson, *American Book Review*

About the Author

G. Thomas Couser is the author of several books on life writing, including *Signifying Bodies*, *Vulnerable*

Subjects, and Altered Egos. He lives in Connecticut.

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