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In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal

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An exciting new anthology by the editors of the popular *In Short*, about which *Publishers Weekly* said: "Even readers skeptical of short-attention-span publishing will find these shorts addictive."

In their previous collection Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones coined the term "short" for those creative nonfiction pieces ? literary rather than informational, and characteristically short ? that are attracting our finest writers. Now, with a more introspective focus, this new collection emphasizes the personal as "a way of seeing the world, of expressing an interior life. It is intimate without being maudlin, it is private without being secret." From Harriet Doerr's recollection of a halcyon time to Josephine Jacobsen's reverie on memory, *In Brief* offers vivid glimpses into the ways experience can be shaped in language that is fresh and inventive. The seventy-two authors here include the known ? John McPhee, Cythia Ozick, James Salter ? as well as remarkable new writers. Essays (all under 2000 words) range from Frank McCourt's search for his father in the pubs of Limerick to William Maxwell's thoughts about growing old; from Charles Baxter's early experience of reading to Brady Udall's confession as a liar. Patricia Hampl recalls meals at her grandmother's house, while Jane Brox contemplates the meaning of bread. In each piece, imagination becomes a way to explore reality. The real world we are fortunate enough to live in is revealed as endlessly rich and deep.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Noting the proliferation of creative nonfiction pieces less than 2000 words long, Aranging from "fragment to finished essay, anecdote to memoir, story, meditation, hypothesis" Aeditors Kitchen and Jones follow up their 1996 *In Short* with another collection of pithy and tantalizing pieces. Studded with contributions from such accomplished writers as Kathleen Norris, John McPhee, Jamaica Kincaid and Rick Bass, these 73 mostly original offerings include some excerpts from longer works. Often employing the techniques of fiction, the pieces are linked by themes of family or romantic love, place or philosophy, recurring motifs, even theories of writing. In "Low Tide at Four," Harriet Doerr muses about a day in August, 1939, when she "exerted the full force of [her] will, commanding the sun to hold back the wave long enough for [her] to paint and frame low tide." William Maxwell sees his "ninetieth birthday approaching out of the corner of one eye," as much a natural phenomenon as the sea, which brings both joy and anguish as he realizes he has "lost touch with the place that stories and novels come from." In "Waking Dreams," Edwidge Danticat compares her fictional characters with their sometimes real life inspirations, recognizing that "writers always betray someone at some point." Offering autobiographical revelations, flashes of insight and lots of good writing, this is a solid meal for readers on the fly. (June)

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From Library Journal

This refreshing and enjoyable collection of brief personal essays is a delight. Editors Kitchen and Jones have followed up *In Short: A Collection of Brief Nonfiction* (LJ 7/96) with a similar collection of essays in which a single voice conveys an individual experience. Many of the essays involve nature. Several authors of the New West are included: Rick Bass, Cynthia Ozick, Kathleen Norris, and Mary Clearman Blew. Other recognizable names include Frank McCourt, William Maxwell, John McPhee, Andre Dubus, and Edwidge Danticat. The quality of the writing is excellent. Diana Hume Georges *On Seat Belts, Cocaine Addiction, and the Germ Theory* is a humorous account of an overbearing mother and an allegedly promiscuous divorced daughter. Kelly Simons *Frank Sinatras Gum* tells about a teenager who, after chewing a piece of the crooners discarded gum, decides both the gum and the guy are unsugary. For the affordable price, this collection should be purchased by every library; it is ideal for literature students and writing groups. [Editor Jones is an LJ reviewer. Ed.] Joyce Sparrow, Oldsmar Lib., St. Petersburg, F.

-Joyce Sparrow, Oldsmar Lib., St. Petersburg, FL

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From Kirkus Reviews

An anthology of sleek, mostly savvy, short bits of creative nonfiction that focus on the theme of the personal. One might justifiably feel that the trend toward such micro essays panders to attention spans that have been eclipsed by television and the endless barrage of advertisements and sound-bytes which we now experience as normal. But, then again, there is something so delicious about a quick literary nugget that you can gulp down in those five or six minutes of transitional time between "getting things done," which so often serves as our free time these days. The best of these shorts (there are 72 in the collection) represent the compression of a wide range of human emotion and experience into a single object, a sort of self-reflexive literary fetishization. N. Scott Momaday's "The Indian Dog," for example, accesses fierceness of spirit and human longing with the description of a five-dollar dog that refuses to stay with his new master. Ariel Dorfman manages to evoke the multitude of complex emotions experienced by Argentinean refugees sheltering in their embassy during the military takeover in Chile with the image of a blanket thrown over the wall by an

unseen person who is shot before he or she can climb to safety. David Shields condenses desire into the longing for a boy-scout belt; Kelly Simon resolves an encounter with fame by chewing a piece of gum left behind by Frank Sinatra. The new style of this short prose writing is perhaps best reflected by the degree to which pieces such as the chapter from Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (in which he searches the pubs of Limerick for his drunken father), seem out of place. McCourt's conversational, narrative style seems to cheat the spirit of mosaic which characterizes many of the shorter shorts. Shorts are coming into their own as a literary genre resistance is futile! -- *Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Otis Thompson:

This In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal book is simply not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book is actually information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This specific In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal without we comprehend teach the one who reading it become critical in contemplating and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal can bring whenever you are and not make your bag space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even telephone. This In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal having great arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not experience uninterested in reading.

Robert Music:

Spent a free time to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their spare time with their family, or their particular friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, gonna beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing same every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your current free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book could be option to fill your free time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the guide untitled In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal can be good book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

Darlene Goins:

Reading a book to become new life style in this season; every people loves to go through a book. When you go through a book you can get a lot of benefit. When you read guides, you can improve your knowledge, due to the fact book has a lot of information into it. The information that you will get depend on what types of book that you have read. If you need to get information about your study, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself you are able to a fiction books, these kinds of us novel, comics, as well as soon. The In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal offer you a new experience in looking at a book.

Henry Jones:

This In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal is brand-new way for you who has interest to look for some

information given it relief your hunger associated with. Getting deeper you onto it getting knowledge more you know or else you who still having little bit of digest in reading this In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal can be the light food for you because the information inside this particular book is easy to get simply by anyone. These books acquire itself in the form and that is reachable by anyone, yep I mean in the e-book contact form. People who think that in reserve form make them feel sleepy even dizzy this book is the answer. So there isn't any in reading a reserve especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for anyone. So , don't miss the item! Just read this e-book variety for your better life as well as knowledge.

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