

Additional Literary Memoirs

Abbey, Edward. *One Life at a Time, Please*. In his passionate defense of wilderness and wild-ness, Edward Abbey is always worth reading for those who value a wolf's howl more than the ka-chink! of a cash register, and no matter what the subject, Cactus Ed always shoots from the hip. This collection of essays is no different, and contains the invaluable "A Writer's Credo," wherein Abbey tells would-be scribes to rock the boat and make a stand, else the noble craft is reduced to a mess of pottage, and the muse has no reason for staying.

Ambrose, Stephen. *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*. Ambrose recreates the travails of Jefferson's personal secretary who blazed a trail to the Pacific with the Corps of Discovery and returned a hero and a failure.

Anderson, Jon Lee. *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*. Anderson's book is an epic end run around the guardians of the Che legend. A journalist who has made a career writing about wars and guerrillas, Anderson lived in Cuba for three years in order to do this project, and he persuaded Che's second wife, Aleida March, to let him read Che's private diaries. He also seems to have talked to everyone else still alive who ever knew Guevara, and one of the things that such dogged reporting has enabled him to do is to tell us, in wonderful new detail, about the hero as a youth.

Asinof, Eliot. *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series*. 1963. It's all here: the players, the scandal, the shame, and the damage the 1919 World Series caused America's national pastime.

Berg, A. Scott. *Lindbergh*. Masterfully written and extensively researched, this beautifully balanced biography depicts one of the twentieth century's most controversial, famous and yet private of men.

Bragg, Rick. *All Over but the Shoutin'*. Bragg, a Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent, didn't start out to be a writer. In fact, he sort of fell into it. He recalls this personal journey in a rags-to-riches memoir, which begins in 1959 in Alabama, where "white people had it hard and black people had it harder than that, because what are the table scraps of nothing?" In vivid prose, by turns comic and affecting, he recalls growing up white and poor in the South, his difficult relationship with his abusive, alcoholic father, and his love for his courageous mother, who raised him and taught him what really mattered.

Chernow, Ron Titan: *The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* Chernow draws a comprehensive and objective portrait of the founder of Standard Oil, including his business practices, family life, and devotion to philanthropy.

Dillard, Annie. *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* An exhilarating meditation on nature and its seasons—a personal narrative highlighting one year's exploration on foot in the author's own neighborhood in Tinker Creek, Virginia. In the summer, Dillard stalks muskrats in the creek and contemplates wave mechanics; in the fall she watches a monarch butterfly migration and dreams of Arctic caribou.

Dillard, Annie. *American Childhood*. Dillard's luminous prose painlessly captures the pain of growing up in this wonderful evocation of childhood. Her memoir is partly a hymn to Pittsburgh, where orange streetcars ran on Penn Avenue in 1953 when she was eight, and where the Pirates were always in the cellar. Dillard's mother, an unstoppable force, had energies too vast for the bridge games and household chores that stymied her.

Eggers, Dave. *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. Beneath the ironic language and edgy tone of Eggers' account of raising his brother after his parents' deaths is a genuine story of family love.

García Márquez. *Gabriel. Living to Tell the Tale*. Tr. by Edith Grossman. Nobel laureate García Márquez tells the entrancing story of his remarkable family, chronicles the turbulence of his troubled country, Colombia, and offers a piquant portrait of himself as a struggling young writer. A resplendent memoir written with compassion and artistry.

Gordon, Robert. *Can't Be Satisfied*. 2002. Mournful vocals and the crunch of guitar strings reverberate through the pages of this lively and well-researched examination of blues musician Muddy Waters.

Guevara, Ernesto Che, *The Motorcycle Diaries* These travel diaries capture the essence and exuberance of the young legend, Che Guevara. In January 1952, Che set out from Buenos Aires to explore South America on an

ancient Norton motorcycle. He encounters an extraordinary range of people -- from native Indians to copper miners, lepers and tourists -- experiencing hardships and adventures that informed much of his later life.

Hickam, Jr., Homer. *October Sky (Rocket Boys)* The son of a coal miner, nurtured a dream of sending a rocket into space. He and a group of misfits learned not only how to turn scraps of metal into sophisticated rockets but how to sustain their hope in a town that swallowed its mean alive.

Junger, Sebastian. *The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men against the Sea*. In 1991, as Halloween nears, a cold front moves south from Canada, a hurricane swirls over Bermuda, and an intense storm builds over the Great Lakes. These forces converge to create the cruelest holiday trick of all, a 100-year tempest that catches the North Atlantic fishing fleet off guard and unprotected. Readers weigh anchor with sailors struggling against the elements; they follow meteorologists, who watch helplessly as the storm builds; and, by helicopter and boat, they navigate 100-foot seas and 120-mph winds to attempt rescue against harrowing odds.

Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road* *On the Road* is thinly fictionalized autobiography, filled with a cast made of Kerouac's real life friends, lovers, and fellow travelers. Narrated by Sal Paradise, one of Kerouac's alter-egos, *On the Road* is a cross-country bohemian odyssey that not only influenced writing in the years since its 1957 publication but penetrated into the deepest levels of American thought and culture.

Kovach, Ron. *Born on the 4th of July*. Exceedingly honest, personal account of one young man's experience fighting in the Vietnam War.

Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild* After graduating from Emory University in Atlanta in 1992, top student and athlete Christopher McCandless abandoned his possessions, gave his entire \$24,000 savings account to charity and hitchhiked to Alaska, where he went to live in the wilderness. Four months later, he turned up dead. His diary, letters and two notes found at a remote campsite tell of his desperate effort to survive, apparently stranded by an injury and slowly starving.

Krakauer, Jon. *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster*. Only a handful of people have stood atop Everest. Krakauer is one of them, but the story he tells here is not of glorious triumph. Rather, it is a true account of survival and death that will grab YA readers from the very first page. Krakauer had a front-row seat to the headline-making 1996 climbing disaster that resulted in the deaths of five people, and his account of the unfolding tragedy, filled with keenly observed details, is not only a transfixing drama but also an inquiry into survivor guilt and the outer limits of human strength and responsibility.

Least Heat Moon, William. *Blue Highways*. Driving cross-country in a van named Ghost Dancing, Heat-Moon (the name the Sioux give to the moon of midsummer nights) meets up with all manner of folk, from a man in Grayville, Illinois, "whose cap told me what fertilizer he used" to Scott Chisholm, "a Canadian citizen ... [who] had lived in this country longer than in Canada and liked the United States but wouldn't admit it for fear of having to pay off bets he made years earlier when he first 'came over' that the U.S. is a place no Canadian could ever love."

McBride, James. *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*. The absorbing, often hilarious dual memoir upends conventional notions of racial identity as McBride retraces his white Jewish mother's odyssey toward marriage and unwavering allegiance to the black community.

Milford, Nancy. *Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay*. As she did for Zelda Fitzgerald 30 years ago, Milford resurrects the great and courageous lyric poet Edna St. Vincent Millay from unwarranted marginalization, making extraordinarily compelling use of a vast private archive of Millay's diaries and letters in a vivid and sensitive portrait of a mercurial, original, and radiant artist.

Richard Wright, *Black Boy* is a memoir of his life from early childhood to the launching of his career as a writer. His father abandoned the family soon after they moved to Memphis, leaving Wright, his mother and brother in dire straits. Schooling throughout his childhood was erratic and often interrupted; he eventually completed the ninth grade. Domestic violence, neglect and hunger plagued him throughout his youth.

Sobol, Dava. *Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time*. This story of adventure and exploration, competition, and sabotage provides a scintillating account of how the

problem of navigation was solved by a simple clock maker.

Reviews excerpted from Amazon.com.