

Midterm report

Linguistics, English



The Best American Essays Book Report The collection of essays The Best American Essays carefully selected and edited by Cheryl Strayed represents American contemporary literature in its best colors. 26 essays listed in the table of contents represent a wide range of topics which let everyone find its favorite. These essays have been published in different resources, but they are collected together to represent a certain synchronic view on the notion of contemporary American literature. Most essays are addressed to a wide audience of readers; the style of writing is not too fancy, but all essays are easy to read and understand. The most important in the book is the topics it addresses; it is anthology of life in the USA because it traces local understanding of basic human values and needs people face in their lives. Each story in the book is an independent essay with developed story line and its characters. Out of all the stories, Im Jumping Off the Bridge by Kevin Sampsell is very special. Narrated in the first person, it tells a story of a man who convinces other man not to commit suicide. The savior, however, is trapped by suicidal thoughts and he has to survive a night fighting with his inner controversies to make the decision to live or not to live. The other story, Confessions of an Ex-Mormon by Walter Kirn addresses the issue of religion and belief. It follows the narrator on his way from and back to Mormonism, showing how difficult it can be to find belief inside one's heart. In His Last Game, Brian Doyle manages to render invisible connection between two brothers who are already grown up, but they keep their inner children alive thanks to each other. Other stories, also written in the first person, deal with economics, politics, relationships, inner struggles, desire to live, state of mind and many other vital things people can find interesting in

literature.

This collection of essays reflects current values of people in America. If one wants to have a glimpse in American culture and identity, these stories in their concentration comprehensively represent this hidden knowledge. They are not too philosophical or sophisticated; most of them are written in terms of ordinary daily life with the same ordinary problems. These stories do not offer solutions to global issues of greater gaps between the rich and poor or cure for lethal diseases. They offer a fresh look, a new point of view and ideas to think about in the future. They teach people to appreciate what they have here and now and love their closest people. They show that it is important to live today with the hope for better tomorrow. These essays represent the world as a complicated network of people and their internal universes which all have their roles in this huge system.

The pleasure of reading this book is constituted by its simplicity and depth of the issues addressed. Jumping from one point to the other, it is possible to see the modern world and people from distance, which is a great advantage of the collection. This book is about everything; it captures life in its current state and it is the reason why one needs to read it.

Works Cited

Strayed, Cheryl, eds. *The Best American Essays 2013*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.