



The Best American Essays 1995

Jamaica Kincaid (Editor) , Robert Atwan (Series Editor)

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With a suspicious eye for "the fixed form or the fixed category of any kind," Jamaica Kincaid, this year's guest editor, has assembled a bold assortment of works by some of today's finest prose stylists, including Edward Hoagland, Grace Paley, James A. McPherson, William H. Gass, Cynthia Ozick, John Edgar Wideman, and Joseph Brodsky. Showcased here are preeminent pieces from periodicals such as the Alaska Quarterly Review, Harper's Magazine, the Los Angeles Times Magazine, and Prairie Schooner. Together they bring readers into remarkably diverse realms, from the blues clubs of Chicago to yesteryear's Hollywood Avenue, from the Women's House of Detention in Greenwich Village to the inviting lushness of a vegetable garden. Topical and trenchant, impertinent and confiding, this wide-ranging display appeals to poetry, social protest, the nuances of language, and even the politics of "good hair," all giving voice to the vibrant dialogue that characterizes American life.

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sarafem says

Some of these essays were great - specifically Burl's stands out the most. Others made me realize that I am horribly low-brow person is these are considered the best of the year. Either that or the editor of this collection is a big fuddyyduddy.

N says

Overall another unimpressive BAE volume. For assorted reasons I enjoyed Bernard Cooper's "Burl's," Edna O'Brien's "Waiting," Tobias Wolff's "Civilian," and Elaine Scarry's "Counting at Dusk" (the latter of which rocked my world by pointing out that poetry is "numbered language"). I felt apathetic toward the rest and downright annoyed by one--so perhaps my response to this crowd of essays reflects my typical response to a crowd of people.

Scott Pierce says

Joseph Brodsky - Homage to Marcus Aurelius - "Equanimity. The word suggests balance, composure under pressure, evenness of mental disposition; literally: equation of the animals, i.e., keeping the soul - and thus the world - in check."

UpstateNYgal says

I read this one because I really like Jamaica Kincaid and thought she would pull together some interesting stories and authors and that she did.

Highly recommended
