



The Fran Lebowitz Reader

Fran Lebowitz

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The Fran Lebowitz Reader Fran Lebowitz

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The Fran Lebowitz Reader brings together in one volume, with a new preface, two bestsellers, **Metropolitan Life** and **Social Studies**, by an "important humorist in the classic tradition" (*The New York Times Book Review*) who is "the natural successor to Dorothy Parker" (*British Vogue*). In "elegant, finely honed prose" (*The Washington Post Book World*), Lebowitz limns the vicissitudes of contemporary urban life—its fads, trends, crazes, morals, and fashions. By turns ironic, facetious, deadpan, sarcastic, wry, wisecracking, and waggish, she is always wickedly entertaining.

The Fran Lebowitz Reader Details

Date : Published November 8th 1994 by Vintage

ISBN : 9780679761808

Author : Fran Lebowitz

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Humor, Nonfiction, Writing, Essays, Autobiography, Memoir, New York

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Downward says

Let's get this out of the way: Fran Lebowitz is incredibly talented. A razor sharp and reckless wit, cutting up culture in the manner of Oscar Wilde or Dorothy Parker. She's a wizard of the turn of phrase, of reversing meaning to create a new frame through which to view culture, almost always a humorous one. But Fran Lebowitz is also kind of a jerk, dodging sincerity and sticking it to anyone (and everyone) that doesn't fall into her tiny worldview. The Fran Lebowitz Reader is a compilation of Lebowitz's two essay collections, Metropolitan Life and Social Studies. The essays are very short, ignoring depth for a quick jab at whatever Lebowitz has targeted. As a collection, the schtick becomes tedious, though one can see how these pieces, brief and good for a quick laugh would fit into a magazine. Worth picking up, but only for the occasional browse-through. Not meant to be read cover-to-cover.

L.K. Simonds says

The rating is qualified in that this collection may appeal to fans of Larry David's work, such as Seinfeld. This reader includes the essays formerly published in Metropolitan Life and Social Studies, in which Ms. Lebowitz expresses her views of life, people, herself, and her beloved New York. She's jaded, acerbic, and just about any other adjective you can think of that says there isn't much meaning to existence beyond a pack of good cigarettes. Lebowitz is also pretty darned funny, and like Seinfeld, has fun with her own selfishness.

In one essay, Lebowitz gives affluent people a brief primer for talking with poor people, in which she defines "overworked" as overwhelming weariness and fatigue, similar to jet lag. That's an example of her humor.

These essays are 40 years old, and definitely dated. But that's interesting too. I listened to the Audible edition narrated by Lebowitz.

Kira says

If you're going to pen complaints from an apartment in Greenwich Village (however modest it may be by New York standards), those complaints are only *funny* if you understand their relative lack of merit. By which I mean that the hilarity of people like Fran Lebowitz and Larry David isn't that they don't know they're being assholes. It's that they *do* know it, and don't care. I think to some degree that very brand of comedy, if it didn't originate in New York, is at least emblematic of the people who thrive there. There's a fine line between petty inconvenience and actual hardship; a good humorist just knows how to exploit it.

FULL REVIEW

Will says

So many gems, but my favorite is from "Notes on Trick," her parody of Sontag: "The mistreatment of the

Trick is the revenge of the intelligent upon the beautiful."

Benjamin Kahn says

Wow! Did I not like this book. What a slog! There were a couple of mildly amusing parts, but if you don't find Lebowitz funny, there's nothing interesting here. It's not like it's amusing *and* educational.

I might have found her mildly amusing if I came across an article in a magazine, but page after page of the same snarky, world-weary prose is really hard to take. And it's aimed so much at people living in New York! Having never even been to New York, I just don't care. I'll cut her a little slack and admit that the material might have dated, but the fact that she was in her 20s when she wrote a lot of the essays and still adopts the "I've seen it all" tone I find a little offensive.

A great disappointment. I would have abandoned it about 60 pages in but I was reading it for a book club and couldn't convince the other members to give it up. They came to regret that decision as neither of them liked it either.

Tom says

Closer to 2.5. Often humorous but sometimes Lebowitz and her essays are too clever by half. A lot of it is that a lot of what was once considered to be very funny in 1978 (barbs about trans persons; an entire essay mocking child sexual abuse through the lens of a gay Sherlock Holmes and Watson) is justifiably reprehensible to modern tastes, including my own.

Alison Iris Mandelker-Burnett says

If you love to laugh and love NYC, then this is the best book! NYers have a terrible attention span, so these short humor essays are the best way to get through an afternoon.

Kris says

Fran Lebowitz would never be friends with someone like me because I would bore her to death. But a girl can dream. Lebowitz is not exactly prolific, and these essays actually were written decades ago. But it is a timeless truth that, as Lebowitz asserts, one should never allow your kids to mix cocktails because it is unseemly and besides, they use too much vermouth. She is not only the urbane, witty, and worthy successor to Dorothy Parker, to my mind she is the female reincarnation of James Thurber and a national treasure. Read this classic, and keep it on the shelf, because you will want to re-visit it in another decade or two if only to remind yourself that the best humor knows no boundaries of time, place, or culture.

Giselle says

Very smart and opinionated, but reads a bit dated for 2011. If you're from her era, there's a better chance you'll appreciate what she's saying (circa the real deal Studio 54). Wish she hadn't hit that writer's block. It would have been interesting to hear her thoughts on NYC, the economy, and society in general...today. In other news, the documentary Scorsese did about her for HBO, *Public Speaking*, is excellent.

Nickolette says

I love Fran Lebowitz the public figure, the canny social satirist, and it looks like I hate Fran Lebowitz the writer.

"Very few people possess true artistic ability. It is therefore both unseemly and unproductive to irritate the situation by making an effort. If you have a burning, restless urge to write or paint, simply eat something sweet and the feeling will pass. Your life story would not make a good book. Do not even try."

She says and she's been living by this credo for decades. Her so-called writer's block-ade. These essays have been written back in the late 70s – early 80s and we can think of them as the mistakes of youth. That period of a person's life that she is allowed to believe in her artistic ability. The essays all have the same structure – an ok intro and then pointless lists, some "funny advice" or what have you that manages to bore the reader by the end of the first page of a three-page work.

Kisha says

A personal favorite. Her words rhythmically jump of the page--so you've GOT to read it out loud. So caustic. So funny. Lebowitz is so good at making fun--and she's not above making fun of herself. But perhaps my love for this book only proves that I am an elitist snob at heart?

Every writer (of all kinds) should read it.

Lena says

Fran Lebowitz is a New York humorist who worked as a columnist for Andy Warhol's *Interview* before publishing her first collection of comic essays, *Metropolitan Life*, in 1978. In *The Fran Lebowitz Reader*, that first book has been re-released in combination with her second 1981 essay collection, *Social Studies*.

I first heard about Fran after watching the Martin Scorsese-IFC documentary about her, *Public Speaking*. That she is a fascinating and very funny person is obvious from the outset. Whether or not she deserves the title of "the modern-day Dorothy Parker" may be up for debate, but as soon as I heard her discussing her car, a vintage Checker cab, as being such an incredibly subtle shade of pearl gray that "straight men think it's white," I decided I had track down her book.

Her written works did not disappoint. Fran's essays follow a very distinct style - short, sharp, smart, and very, very dry. Not all of them were hits, and I did find they were best enjoyed in small doses rather than a

long sitting. But there were enough laugh out loud moments to make me want to continually read lines to my husband.

They also aged surprisingly well - the fact that they were written over thirty years ago was only obvious in passing reference to things like the advent of digital watches. But Fran seemed to have a pulse on those things that never change, as is evidenced in her comments on LA: "A great many people in Los Angeles are on special diets that restrict their intake of synthetic foods. The reason for this appears to be a widely held belief that organically grown fruits and vegetables make the cocaine work faster."

Celil says

Bir tür Fran Lebowitz Sözlüğü.

Ya'ad???m?z gerçekli?in kendisi ile; daha do?ru tan?mla, bize sunulan, dayat?lan hayat?n kendisi ile ili?kisi bildi?imiz türden olmayan birisi, Fran Lebowitz. Hakk?nda çevrilmi? "Public Speaking" adl? Martin Scorsese yap?m?, HBO Belgeseli -ki kesinlikle tavsiye ederim ve spoiler vermek gerekirse Scorsese asl?nda yoktur orada :) - ve kat?ld??? birçok program? da izlemi? biri olarak; Orada duran, verdi?i cevaplar? gerçekten hissederek mi söylüyor diye çok defa sorulara maruz b?rak?yorken kendimi, aç?kças? bu kitapla - kitap önceki kitaplar?ndan baz?lar?n? da kaps?yor- samimiyetine inand???m? söylemem laz?m. Bazen çok sert, afallatan bir yan? olmas?na ra?men, muzip ve gerçekten nüktedan biri oldu?unu dü?ünüyorum. Bu kitaptaki en güzel bölümler, memleketler ve festivaller hakk?ndaki bölümlerdi.

?imdi art?k uzak bir geçmi? olarak kalan Analog dünyanın, muzip ve nüktedan kad?n? Fran Lebowitz.

Nikki says

"All of God's children are not beautiful. Most of God's children are, in fact, barely presentable. The most common error made in matters of appearance is the belief that one should disdain the superficial and let the true beauty of one's soul shine through. If there are places on your body where this is a possibility, you are not attractive – you are leaking."

"Sleep is death without the responsibility."

"Great people talk about ideas, average people talk about things, and small people talk about wine."

This is typical Fran Lebowitz. She is often hilarious, always sarcastic, and usually playful.

She is a cross between Dorothy Parker, Oscar Wilde, and that friend of yours who never shuts the fuck up. She is arrogant, smart, and sometimes shallow. She hates animals. Even cute ones. She tolerates children. She smokes *a lot* and lives in NYC.

Raymon Gottfredson says

One of the best cynical humorists in the business. For anyone that loves/hates New York life and smokes. Or doesn't.
