



Browsings: A Year of Reading, Collecting, and Living with Books

By Michael Dirda

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Browsings: A Year of Reading, Collecting, and Living with Books By Michael Dirda

From Pulitzer Prize-winning book critic Michael Dirda comes a collection of his most personal and engaging essays on the literary life?the perfect companion for any lover of books.

Michael Dirda has been hailed as "the best-read person in America" (*The Paris Review*) and "the best book critic in America" (*The New York Observer*). In addition to the Pulitzer Prize he was awarded for his reviews in *The Washington Post*, he picked up an Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America for his most recent book, *On Conan Doyle*.

Dirda's latest volume collects fifty of his witty and wide-ranging reflections on literary journalism, book collecting, and the writers he loves. Reaching from the classics to the post-moderns, his allusions dance from Samuel Johnson, Ralph Waldo Emerson and M. F. K. Fisher to Marilynne Robinson, Hunter S. Thompson, and David Foster Wallace. Dirda's topics are equally diverse: literary pets, the lost art of cursive writing, book inscriptions, the pleasures of science fiction conventions, author photographs, novelists in old age, Oberlin College, a year in Marseille, writer's block, and much more, not to overlook a few rants about Washington life and American culture. As admirers of his earlier books will expect, there are annotated lists galore?of perfect book titles, great adventure novels, favorite words, essential books about books, and beloved children's classics, as well as a revealing peek at the titles Michael keeps on his own nightstand.

Funny and erudite, occasionally poignant or angry, *Browsings* is a celebration of the reading life, a fan's notes, and the perfect gift for any booklover.

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Browsings: A Year of Reading, Collecting, and Living with Books By Michael Dirda Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #367108 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2015-08-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.30" h x 1.00" w x 6.50" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 336 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"This joy-filled, reflective collection makes perfect bedside reading. Literate but never snobby, this collection of essays surely will entertain and enlighten book lovers of all stripes." (Booklist)

"*Browsers* is as much about living with books, about serendipitous discovery, as about the boundless pleasures of reading. Dirda's comradely essays are unfailingly informative and amusing, punctuated with poignant asides on the aging artist and paeans to great literary scholars. His almost single-minded passion, the exhilaration of a life in literature, glows on every page." (Kirkus Reviews (starred review))

"Beyond bibliophilism, this is a work about how reading stories builds relationships?between readers and writers and between readers and readers?and how these relationships change and shape one's life. Dirda's exuberance is infectious, and the book is hard to put down. Clearly this author recognizes that the most important quality of a book is the pleasure it gives." (Library Journal)

"A rambunctious personality wanders the aisles of rare-book stores; musing about language, aging and traffic; and catching up with fellow aficionados of the weird and the obscure. The innumerable forgotten books he catalogs are captivating." (The New York Times)

"A set of appealingly conversational meditations on the life of the mind. The author's personality is so vivid and immediate that a readerly rapport is established almost instantly. The hallmarks of the Dirdanian sensibility includes a wry, slightly avuncular tone that wears its erudition slightly, a pronounced interest in genre fiction, and a sturdy sort of common-sense approach to critical theory, all with a light dusting of loveable curmudgeon and a sprinkle of raffish boulevardier. Cheerfully eccentric, Dirda eschews the lofty pronouncement of Olympian judgment, preferring instead a hale and friendly exploration of shared enthusiasm." (The Washington Post)

"Dirda's enthusiasm is manifest, and his knowledge is often impressive. Dirda's first-person voice and confessional zeal make him an easy author to like." (Times Literary Supplement)

"Michael Dirda is one of the great book reviewers of our age. It is not merely that his writing is so lucid and intelligent or that his taste is so inclusive but discerning. The key to his particular magic is that he is always alert to the complex pleasures that animate literature. His engaging essays are those of a restless, omnivorous reader and a true bookman." (Dana Gioia, poet and former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts)

"If we were all to write about reading as Dirda does, if we taught children to write from joy rather than to form arguments, then the world would have many more serious readers and far better books." (Bookforum)

"Elegantly written musings about calligraphy, writer's block, genre conferences, the books on a given critic's nightstand, with the odd personal reminiscence thrown in." (Los Angeles Review of Books)

"The 52 pieces collected in *Browsers* shine with Dirda's passion for books, both as a reader and a collector, and are certain to delight any bibliophile. They reveal the mind of a critic with an astonishing breadth of literary knowledge and a talent for sharing that learning in accessible, often humorous, prose." (Shelf Awareness)

“Smart but not stuffy, critical but not carping, self-engaged but not self-absorbed. Dirda’s intellect is a brightly populated curio cabinet, containing topics as varied as Samuel Johnson’s cat, the art of the perfect book title, the decline of penmanship and the distress of writer’s block.” (Wall Street Journal)

“Michael Dirda, bookman extraordinaire, has elevated the indulgent pleasures of browsing to the quality of high art. A marvelous collection for serious book lovers, common readers and all of us who take a guilty delight in the gossip of literature.” (Alberto Manguel, author of 'A History of Reading')

“Pleasure, provocation, passion ? just some of the words that came to my mind and through my heart as I perused this book. A reunion with the old forgotten favorite books and an introduction to some dazzling new ones, this is a book to go to bed with, to wake up to, and to browse through in between.” (Azar Nafisi, #1 'New York Times' bestselling author of 'Reading Lolita in Tehran' and 'The Republic of Imagination')

“In remembering and reflecting upon his own first excitements as a reader, Dirda is infectious.” (Larry McMurtry - Harper's Magazine)

“It’s awfully refreshing, in this Age of Noise, to know that there are still critics like Michael Dirda reading the pages of books old and new. These 52 essays showcase Dirda’s remarkable range of fancy and his indomitable and unabashed joyfulness in the memory of his own reading life. For all their intelligence, these essays are not pedantic. Rather, they have a sort of plain-spoken elegance about them, one that relies more on a generosity of feeling than on an excess of intellect. Dirda shows that he’s one of the most accessible critics still doing the good work.” (Minneapolis Star Tribune)

“Dirda is required reading. Dirda wonderfully captures how this particular browsing very nearly approximates paradise.” (Open Letters Monthly)

“A valentine to people who love reading and books. Dirda is gently self-deprecating about his writing and enthusiasms, but his humility is contradicted by his huge roster of literary acquaintances, vast knowledge of both popular and literary fiction, and omnivorous tastes as a reader.” (Publishers Weekly)

“Bibliophiles, bibliomaniacs and bibliophagists will love *Browsings*. The essays are highly personal, occasionally curmudgeonly, always self-effacing, uniformly informative, sometimes politically lefty, unfailingly affecting. Emily Dickinson famously wrote, 'There is no frigate like a book.' In *Browsings*, Michael Dirda has constructed a sturdy vessel transporting us to shores that surprise, delight and educate.” (The Cleveland Plain Dealer)

“A witty, informative and amusing book, filled with small treasures of insight that booklovers will retain as a roadmap to future reading adventures. A book that I know I will keep in my collection and enjoy for years to come.” (Bookreporter)

“Quite simply, Dirda loves books, possibly more than anyone else in the world, and he can make the reader feel that love. Reading *Browsings* is an unusually joyful endeavor.” (Bookslut)

“Ranging in tone from intellectual to sentimental and amusing to poignant, Dirda's vignettes celebrate bibliophilia in all its glory. A literary smorgasbord. There is much to savor between these pages.” (Hartford Books Examiner)

“As much about a passion for collecting and living with books, about chance discoveries and recoveries of the forgotten, as it is about the inestimable pleasures of reading. Dirda may be as well read as anyone alive.”

(Charleston Post and Courier)

“A brief, elegant reflection. For so many years Dirda has been such an insightful guide to literatures past and present.” (Nick Owchar - Los Angeles Times)

“The essays of *Browsings* can often read like (a particularly eloquent and charmingly cordial) fanboy’s ruminations. The friendly, affable Dirda within its pages is enjoyable.” (Paste Magazine)

“Dirda on literature, whether highbrow or low, is riveting. If there is a young person out there who thinks he would like to have books as a presence in his life: You should buy this volume right away, and learn, with delight, how much more you’d like to know.” (Washington Free Beacon)

“Charming.” (The Times Literary Supplement)

About the Author

Michael Dirda is a Pulitzer Prize-winning critic and longtime book columnist for The Washington Post. He was once chosen by Washingtonian Magazine as one of the twenty-five smartest people in our nation’s capital (but, as Michael says, you have to consider the competition). He also writes regularly for the Times Literary Supplement; the New York Review of Books and other literary journals. His previous publications include the memoir *An Open Book*, four collections of essays? *Readings*, *Bound to Please*, *Book by Book*, and *Classics for Pleasure*? and *On Conan Doyle*, for which he won an Edgar Award. A lifelong Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle fan, he was inducted into The Baker Street Irregulars in 2002. He lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Katherine Belcher:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite guide and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your problem; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled *Browsings: A Year of Reading, Collecting, and Living with Books*. Try to the actual book *Browsings: A Year of Reading, Collecting, and Living with Books* as your buddy. It means that it can to be your friend when you experience alone and beside that course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know everything by the book. So , let's make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

Joe Bell:

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David Reed:

Is it an individual who having spare time then spend it whole day by means of watching television programs or just lying down on the bed? Do you need something new? This *Browsings: A Year of Reading, Collecting, and Living with Books* can be the response, oh how comes? A book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your extra time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a nerd activity. So what these guides have than the others?

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