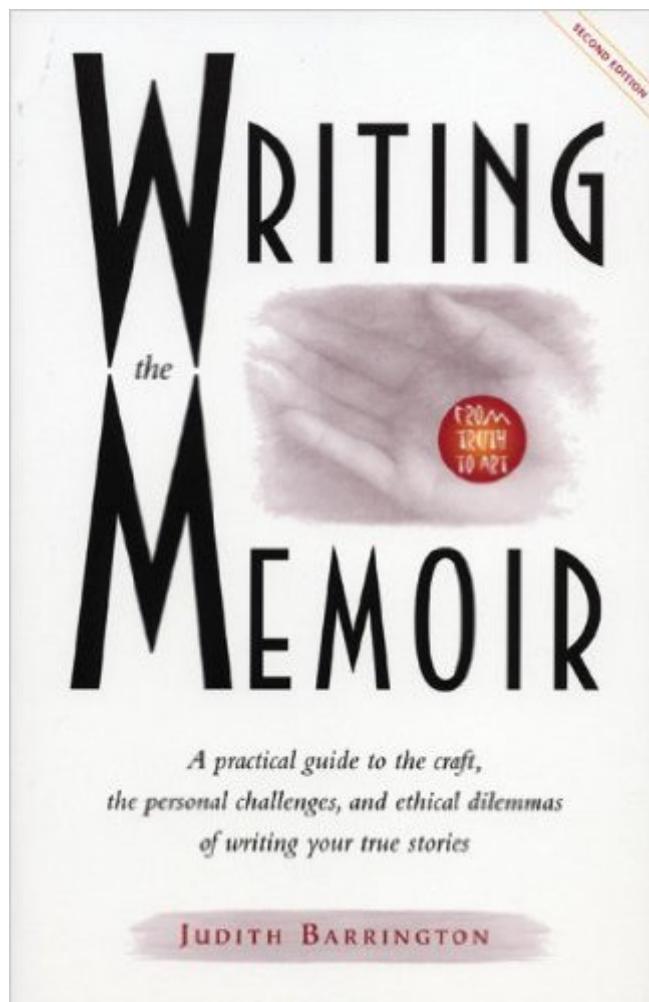


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Writing The Memoir: From Truth To Art, Second Edit



Synopsis

Since Writing the Memoir came out in early 1997 it has sold roughly 80,000 copies and is consistently praised as "the best book on memoir out there." It is thought-provoking, explanatory, and practical: each chapter ends with writing exercises. It covers everything from questions of truth and ethics to questions of craft and the crucial retrospective voice. An appendix provides information on legal issues. Judith Barrington, an award-winning memoir writer and acclaimed writing teacher, is attuned to the forces, both external and internal, that work to stop a writer; her tone is respectful of the difficulties and encouraging of taking risks. Her nimble prose, her deep belief in the importance of this genre, and her delight in the rich array of memoirists writing today make this book more than the typical "how-to" creative writing book. In this second edition the author has added new material and reflects on issues raised since Writing the Memoir was written, early in the memoir boom. "No student of memoir writing could fail to learn from this wise, pragmatic, and confiding book. One hears on every page the voice of an intelligent and responsive teacher, with years of thinking about memoir behind her." Vivian Gornick Judith Barrington is the author of Lifesaving: A Memoir and numerous individual memoirs which have been published in literary magazines and anthologies. She is the author of three volumes of poetry: Trying to Be an Honest Woman, History and Geography, and Horses and the Human Soul (forthcoming in 2002). She has taught creative writing for the past twenty years.

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Customer Reviews

Barrington is both a memoirist and a creative writing teacher and she has taken those experiences to create this "how-to" book on turning the stories of one's life into a shapely and compelling narrative. This practical guide leads writers, whether beginning or published, through the writing process. Barrington addresses the basic elements of writing fiction, such as theme, plot, and voice, and applies them to the nonfiction form. Moreover, she considers issues unique to nonfiction, such as writing about living people and telling the truth. Barrington's aim in this book is to inform readers about memoir as a specific literary form and to teach the skills necessary to writing good memoir. The first chapter is titled "What is Memoir?" and attempts to answer that question for the reader. Barrington compares the literary memoir to other similar forms, such as autobiography and personal essays. She makes a distinction between "memoirs" and "the literary memoir," and gives examples of both to support her claim. The chapter introduces the elements of literary memoir that she will discuss in greater depth throughout the book, such as plot, voice, and moving around in time. The introductory chapter gives the reader a cursory understanding of memoir as a narrative form and prepares the writer to begin writing memoir immediately, without having to read the entire book first. Barrington draws on her own experiences as a memoirist throughout the book, a method which serves to persuade the reader that Barrington has the authority to teach this form of writing.

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