



The Annotated Emerson

By Ralph Waldo Emerson

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The Annotated Emerson By Ralph Waldo Emerson

A brilliant essayist and a master of the aphorism (“Our moods do not believe in each other”; “Money often costs too much”), Emerson has inspired countless writers. He challenged Americans to shut their ears against Europe’s “courtly muses” and to forge a new, distinctly American cultural identity. But he remains one of America’s least understood writers. And, by his own admission, he spawned neither school nor follower (he valued independent thought too much). Now, in this annotated selection of Emerson’s writings, David Mikics instructs the reader in a larger appreciation of Emerson’s essential works and the remarkable thinker who produced them.

Full of color illustrations and rich in archival photographs, this volume offers much for the specialist and general reader. In his running commentaries on Emerson’s essays, addresses, and poems, Mikics illuminates contexts, allusions, and language likely to cause difficulty to modern readers. He quotes extensively from Emerson’s *Journal* to shed light on particular passages or lines and examines Emerson the essayist, poet, itinerant lecturer, and political activist. Finally, in his Foreword, Phillip Lopate makes the case for Emerson as a spectacular truth teller—a model of intellectual labor and anti-dogmatic sanity.

Anyone who values Emerson will want to own this edition. Those wishing to discover, or to reacquaint themselves with, Emerson’s writings but who have not known where or how to begin will not find a better starting place or more reliable guide than *The Annotated Emerson*.

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Editorial Review

Review

Mikics's annotations are gracious, helpful, and genuinely illuminating. This is a 'reader's edition' in the truest sense. (Philip F. Gura, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Impressive in its thoroughness... the author's enthusiasm for his subject is infectious. (Paul Kane, Vassar College)

David Mikics's *The Annotated Emerson* is the best possible introduction to Emerson's prose and poetry. (Harold Bloom)

The #1 essayist and pure prose stylist in U.S. literature is on grand display in this lavish edition of essays, poems, and passages from Emerson's voluminous journals. The neophyte entering the Emersonian universe, as opposed to the scholar, is best served by Mikics's careful annotations and cogent commentary surrounding these selections, though even the most knowledgeable scholar would benefit. (*Publishers Weekly* (starred review) 2011-10-31)

In his writing, Emerson favored fire imagery, and his own fiery intellect brightens every page of *The Annotated Emerson*, a wonderful new collection, meticulously annotated by David Mikics...In the lush pages of *The Annotated Emerson* readers will find that fire still warm, able to illuminate and sear. (Daniel Dyer *Cleveland Plain Dealer* 2012-02-06)

What a pleasure to have, in *The Annotated Emerson*, a lovely and helpful version of many of Emerson's bests, gathered and annotated by David Mikics and introduced by Phillip Lopate. This is in no way Emerson lite. These are not shortcuts but rather a welcome frame for Emerson's particular kind of difficulty. The book's introductions curate the voluminous career, and the wide margins of the pages, dappled with thoughtful notes, give the meditations space to unfurl. This is a book that gives us each hope to approach the "new yet unapproachable" Emerson. Any lay reader will find an open door here. Those who already love Emerson and know him well may find a few cherished things missing, but they may also find a few things they didn't know they wanted to find. (Tess Gallagher *Barnes & Noble Review* 2012-02-21)

Editor Mikics has selected the best known of Emerson's works but also includes excerpts from his journals, selections from lesser-read books, and a number of his poems. The volume is prefaced by a thoughtful foreword by Philip Lopate and a very useful editor's introduction...All in all, this handsome edition will be useful both to newcomers and to Emerson vets. (Margaret Heilbrun *Library Journal* 2012-03-01)

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote essays about Shakespeare, John Brown, Stonehenge, Montaigne, best friend Henry David Thoreau, circles, nature, and self-reliance. One of his most famous lines--"the shot heard round the world" from his poem "Concord Hymn"--is still used to describe singular events in sports and history. *The Annotated Emerson*, edited by David Mikics, an English professor at the University of Houston, explains language and allusions that may be foreign to today's readers. By doing this, Mikics makes a great American essayist, whom Phillip Lopate in his foreword calls a "hero of intellectual labor," readily accessible to a new generation. (Jan Gardner *Boston Globe* 2012-03-25)

Copiously annotated, richly illustrated and handsomely bound, a volume all lovers not just of literature but of freedom will want on their shelves...[Emerson's] astute observations and generous vision of the world within

and without still have much to teach. (William Yeoman *West Australian* 2012-04-06)

Mikics has put together a handsome edition of Emerson's most popular and enduring work. First-time readers of Emerson will find the collection useful because the annotations reference the common occurrences of Emerson's attention and, along with the illustrations, place Emerson's work in the context of the 19th century. More-experienced readers of Emerson will value the many annotations that reference his journals, letters, and other essays not gathered here. (R. T. Prus *Choice* 2012-07-01)

About the Author

David Mikics is John and Rebecca Moores Professor of English at the University of Houston.

Phillip Lopate is a professor at Columbia University, where he directs the graduate nonfiction program.

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