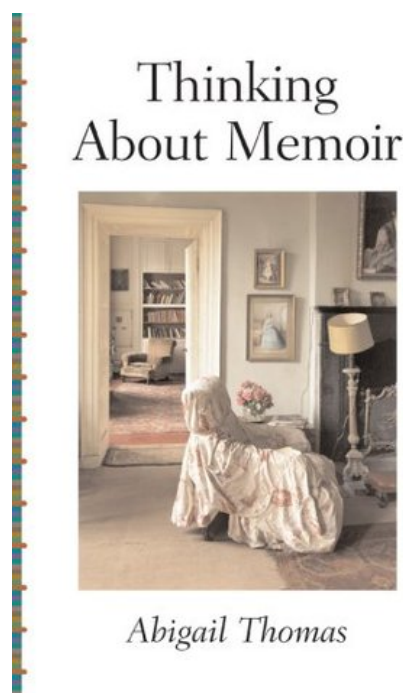




Thinking About Memoir

Abigail Thomas

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If living is an art, it must be practiced with diligence before being done with ease. Yet almost nothing in our culture prepares us for reflection on the great themes of existence: courage, friendship, listening, dignity—those everyday virtues that can transform our world. Because AARP believes it's never too late (or too early) to learn, they, together with Sterling Publishing, have created the *About Living* series to address these crucial issues. Each entry will be written by only the best authors and thinkers.

Thinking About Memoir, the first of these volumes, helps adults look back at their past and use writing as a means of figuring out who they used to be and how they became who they are today. It's written by Abigail Thomas, whose own memoir *A Three Dog Life* was selected as one of the Best Books of 2006 by the LA Times and the Washington Post and called "perfectly honed" (*Newsweek*), "bracingly honest" (*Vanity Fair*), and "stunning" by the *Los Angeles Book Review*. Thomas writes that memoir can consist of looking back at a single summer or the span of a whole life. Through her experience as a writing teacher, she knows how difficult that can be; this book is about the habit of writing as a way to keep track of what's going on in the front and the back of your mind. It inspires different ways for us to look at the moment we're in right now and will help would-be memoirists find their own "side door" into a subject. Thomas writes eloquently about how to get started and find that jumping-off point for your work, and provides exercises that liberate our creativity, enable us to get the distance and perspective we need, and open our eyes to possibilities that may not at first seem obvious.

Whether your words are for publication, for your loved ones, or for you alone, Thomas makes the process fulfilling, thoughtful, and even fun.

Thinking About Memoir Details

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Author : Abigail Thomas

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From Reader Review Thinking About Memoir for online ebook

Brooke says

I read this once, but suspect I'll dip back into it to work on the exercises every now and then. Love her writing style.

Liz says

I'm giving this a 5 with a purpose--to let those who wish to develop memoir writing skills know that this is a good one. The "write two pages" of exercises will take a new writer far. After checking it out of the library, I ordered it from Amazon.

Candice says

If you utilize this wonderful book, you will have volumes of essays. She is one of my favorite writers , so insouciantly directing her arrows to the heart, and the collected prompts will be one of your most revelatory guides for discovering who you are. I believe it is out of print, but hunt it down, it's golden.

Lindsey says

If I could give this book six stars, I would. It is the only book about writing that I have absolutely devoured. Amazing. Abigail Thomas is my hero.

Carrie says

What an engaging little book! Thomas presents part "how-to," part workbook, part work of her own in this part of a series by AARP to "provoke thinking about some of the personal and public disciplines and graces that have fallen into disuse in our recent history." Looking at personal memories and refining them through the vehicle of stories is a good start. With little subject headings reminiscent of The Pillow Book, Thomas shares some of her own observations and memories and then throws in prompts for the reader to delve into theirs. There is much humor, much encouragement and the basic advice to "pay attention." Subject matter is omnipresent. This would be a really fun project to take on with a small group.

Hannah Garden says

THIS IS SO GOOD.

Jean Carlton says

I am not particularly interested in writing memoir at this point but I do have 'stories' of my life I might want to put into written form someday and this helped me consider doing them as they come to me and not worrying about a full-fledged memoir or chronology. I get something out of every book I read about writing and this little book had some good ideas along with examples of the author's own snippets; after which each has an exercise for the reader to do. Just write. Daily. One thing leads to another. Prompts of various sorts follow almost every entry saying "Write two pages on the thing you wanted to be" or "...about your treasures." Got to be a bit much. I had planned to 'do' them all but that quickly changed. I was motivated to do a few; I would by no means take them as assignments but one gets the idea. I liked the one suggesting using "It's not funny." as the 2nd sentence. I was surprised where that took me.

Skye says

This book is filled with clever two-page exercises. The one I like is to take some decade of your life and write two pages with ONLY three-word sentences. Not two, not four. Subject, verb, object. Go!

Russell Ricard says

Such a wealth of information and exercises to inspire any writer, whether it be memoir or other form of prose, or poetry for the matter.

Abigail Thomas guides you to think about life's process and, at the same time, your creative process.

This is a book I'll retune to again and again both reader and writer.

Sarah says

I love this book. To say I've read it seems strange... it's not something you read and then put aside. I've read it, and now I'm working my way back through the prompts. But you needn't want to write to read this. It's a great exercise in memory itself, and you'll find that Thomas pulls up things from your own past that you'd thought you'd forgotten. Really, really lovely.

Debbi says

This could be my favorite book on writing. At 108 pages it's possible to breeze through the book in a single sitting, however, I'm sure I will revisit it often. The structure is simple: short anecdotes followed by one line prompts or questions to explore. "Write two pages in which your enthusiasm rapidly waned... write two pages of a fading memory- something you have to squint to see" Some of the prompts are deep while others give memory and reflection an easy place to land. Although the book is geared to memoir I can also see it being a

great help to fiction writers who want to polish their character development. I found Thomas charming. For writers as well as those interested in contemplating their life's path this is an excellent book.

Sarah says

Like a lot of other people, I like to think that there is a writer buried somewhere deep inside me. Unlike a lot of those people, though, I don't ever do anything -- like, say, *write* -- to let that inner writer out! I do, however, enjoy reading books *about* writing, and I hold out hope that I'll internalize enough of it so that someday something will reach critical mass and words will start spouting forth.

I read Abigail Thomas's memoir *A Three Dog Life* last year and was profoundly moved by it, so I was interested in reading her insights on writing memoir. This book is billed as the first in a series of AARP titles meant to appeal to, well, AARP-aged readers -- I guess that makes sense, since who better to write memoirs than the older generation? -- but Thomas's words are not, in any way, limited to people of a certain age. She interweaves writing tips, flashes of her own memories, and writing prompts that take off on the vignette she's just shared.

As someone with a memory that can charitably be described as "dim," I appreciated her commentary about how we can embellish our memories without even realizing it, and the observation (which I've made many times myself) that a certain sight or smell can trigger an avalanche of memories we didn't know we had.

I didn't do any of the prompts while reading this, nor did I jot any down for later, but I did come away from the book wanting to write more. Maybe that Inner Writer will get to come out to play someday after all.

David Bossert says

This was a quick read and well done. It conveys inspiring text that is concise and to the point.

Ineke says

.A book full of inspiration. Some of the writing exercises are difficult to put in words but it makes you dig deeper into your memories from your past. Her examples of life are real and I could associate with many of them. A good book to use for extra memoir writing.

Kathleen says

I have loved and been inspired reading Abigail Thomas. If you have not read Abigail Thomas, you must. This book, parsed, is an easy read if you are thinking about writing memoirs (as I am.) While it is about writing memoir, how to connect the dots of your life to tell your story, or not, it is more importantly, an invitation to write. Using examples from her own life, Thomas plays with the many writing prompts she recommends for getting started and for continuing. Some are a few sentences; others, a few pages. Her voice comes through each one, sometimes with humor, sometimes with sadness, always honest. I have used three

of her prompts this past week and have found them surfacing memories from deep within my past. I thought her chapter on "Writing From Loss" was the most profound until I thumbed back through "Memory" and "Structure" and realized what they had given me. Dig deep or don't bother.
