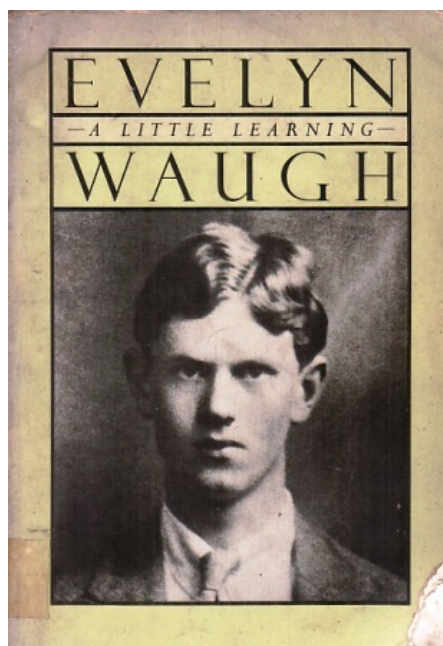




A Little Learning

Evelyn Waugh

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A Little Learning Evelyn Waugh

A Little Learning The author's childhood was warm, bright and serene. The Hampstead and Lancing schooldays which followed were sometimes agreeable, but often not. His life at Oxford - which he evokes in Brideshead Revisited - was essentially a catalogue of friendship. This title presents a portrait of his recollection of those hedonistic days. Full description

A Little Learning Details

Date : Published June 1st 1985 by Little Brown and Company (first published 1964)

ISBN : 9780316926454

Author : Evelyn Waugh

Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : Biography, Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction, European Literature, British Literature

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From Reader Review A Little Learning for online ebook

Mark Nenadov says

This is the first and only volume of an unfinished autobiography. It masterfully covers Waugh's youth, including his genealogy, parent's life, early upbringing, school boy days, days at Oxford, and his working life as a young adult. While it isn't a book I'd re-read, it was a pleasure to read and I'm glad I read it. On rare occasions, it got slightly tedious, but there were quite a few excellent nuggets to make up for that.

Persephone Abbott says

In my apartment I display books here and there scattered in nooks and crannies, about a hundred or so at a time. Anyone who wanders in will assume that these are my cherished possessions, but, in fact, most are not. The books on view are for the greater part volumes I have not yet read. Waugh's autobiography winked at me from a shelf for about a year, and looking at it from time to time my appetite grew so that I launched myself into the battered almost shredded (had a moth gotten at it or a rainy day at on a platform waiting for a computer train?) second hand copy expecting to encounter much mirth and delight. Delight was not immediately present. How incredibly dull for such a brilliant author, I thought, turning the pages. No, yes, no yes, yes....I suspect that Waugh did not know quite what he was willing to reveal and what to present, but at the end I must admit he executed the exercise quite well. Ah, I thought closing the book, therein lies the wincing autopsy, edited obituary and gentle burial of youth.

Amy says

Evelyn Waugh never completed his autobiography, unfortunately. This volume takes us through his first job after college, where on the last page, his attempt at suicide is thwarted by discovering jellyfish in the seawater, so of course he can't stay in. This dark humor and self-deprecation runs through his fond and wry narrative of his early years.

We meet many of the archetypes in his books, naturally, from his youth and education; much of his college experience is repeated with little change in *Brideshead Revisited*, and it is very easy to pick out many of his literary characters from the living people.

But the chronicle isn't the treat here-- it's his writing. Waugh's command of the language is unparalleled. If you want to be a better reader and a better writer, read all of Waugh you can find. My only regret at finishing this book is that there is no more; I would love to have read the rest of his own story, but suspect he left it to his biographers instead, since much of it was painful. This reads as well as his fiction and is well worth exploring.

Tim says

"Today...there are reporters of the popular papers who interview authors rather than review their work; there are the charmers of television; there are the state-trained professional critics with their harsh jargon and narrow tastes, and there are the impostors who cannot write at all, but travel from one international congress

to another discussing the predicament of the writer in the modern world."

c 1968

"An artist must be a reactionary. He has to stand out against the tenor of the age and not go flopping along."
(nb: he does not mean "conservative" when he writes "reactionary")

Tracy says

If you're into Waugh enough to want to read about his life, you'll enjoy this. He brings his characteristic wit and irony to the narration, especially in his masterful depiction of the various characters in his life, but he seems only tepidly enthusiastic about the project (which went unfinished) and it's nowhere near as much fun as his novels.

Martin says

Meh. Once is enough indeed! What was I expecting? Something in the same vein as his novels? At first I was like, 'Oh, too bad he never finished his autobiography', but in the end, well, I'm glad this is all there is to it. It was interesting to get an insight into the author's early life (and also to learn about English schooling back then), but absolutely none of this was essential reading. For Waugh completists only.

J. Watson (aka umberto) says

I fairly enjoyed reading this memoir since, of course, there were related characters and episodes he had to describe. I think his readers can learn and know a lot of figurative words, for instance, nagging debts, Asiatics abounded, frustrated pugnacity, etc.

My Former Review:

When I first saw the book title, it reminded me of a quote by Alexander Pope, "A little learning is a dangerous thing," and I still think this is a wise one worth reflecting and thus keeping in mind to be aware of our own learning. In other words, what should we do to avoid such complacent learning leading to vanity?

I think this memoir by Evelyn Waugh is as interesting as his short stories and his novels I read some years ago. In fact, I've longed to read it since I enjoyed reading them all. Moreover, I wondered how he could write so fantastic, hilarious that I couldn't help smiling & laughing. Therefore, I'm sure I should learn something from his memoir.

David says

Interesting to see so many of Anthony Powell's contemporaries from eyes other than Powell's. Waugh retains his bitter, ironic humour. Not, on the whole, a personality I would embrace. Still, no doubting his

intelligence.

Berit says

3.5 stars. I love Waugh's leisurely, dry-humored, very British (to me) way of writing. His earnest recollections of his youth and adolescence in a boarding school and at Oxford, respectively, are interspersed with comments such as these:

"My predecessor in the office, Loveday, had left the university suddenly to study black magic. He died in mysterious circumstances at Cefalu in Alistair Crowley's community and his widow, calling herself 'Tiger Woman' figured for some time in the popular Press, here she made 'disclosures' of the goings-on at Cefalu" (181).

What? He mentions anecdotes like these so casually that you can't help but laugh, whether he intended them to have that effect or not.

The first chapter was a little slow for my tastes, as was the second half of the Oxford chapter: in both cases, the narrative started to look more like an enumeration of family members and acquaintances than an actual account of his life during that time (hence the 3.5 stars instead of 4).

I did really, really love the childhood and boarding school chapters, though. The way he described his summer visits to his "maiden aunts" as a child, in this old, stuffed-to-the-brim house filled with Victoriana and surrounded by meadows was so evocative, I just wanted to go there. The same holds true for his early-childhood school experiences, first with his nanny at home, then at a day school, and finally at Lancing. I loved all of it.

What was surprising (to me, at least) was Waugh's matter-of-fact treatment of gay men in his circle (he never judges them, even though this part of his autobiography spans 1903-1926, which is pretty awesome) and the casual way he hints at (and at one time even explicitly addresses) sexual harassment and abuse my school masters. Really, really, really unbelievable. I wonder if, when this autobiography came out (in the 1960s), that was ever addressed - I hope it was.

Overall, I really enjoyed reading this. Anything set in Edwardian England I usually love, but I Waugh's writing really makes the era come to live.

Colin says

Notable mostly for the quality of writing he brings to all his work, this incomplete autobiography is inessential to anyone except devout Waugh readers, anyone with a fascination about upper-middle class English life in the early part of the 20th century, or those who fetishize public school and Oxbridge life. There are some wonderful anecdotes throughout, but don't bother unless you fit into one of the above categories.

Greg says

I read this autobiography without having read in Waugh fiction. I tremendously enjoyed it. Why this is not more highly recommended reading, I do not know. I went to Evelyn Waugh's house in Oxford, essentially only because I was there and knew his name from a joke in the movie "Lost in Translation". If that's all you know, read this book!

Sherwood Smith says

I don't know why Waugh never finished this--I strongly suspect he came up against the reality of his intense gay romances, and couldn't slide over the surface, yet of course couldn't talk about them. Anyway, for sheer beauty, the prose when he describes the various places of learning and what they meant to him are some of his very best.

Susanne Clower says

I probably would have liked this more if I understood more of his references, but it was engaging enough that now I want to read a full biography. It's too bad he never finished the autobiography. It's also astonishing (to my 2016 American brain) how casually child abuse and child sexual abuse was regarded in his time/culture.

Jan Frederik Solem says

This delightful autobiographical account of his youth, ending with Evelyn Waugh walking off after not drowning himself after all - turning back after being stung by a jellyfish - should probably be read *before* Paula Byrne's biography "Mad World". Much background to "Brideshead revisited" of course, in his own - surprisingly candid as well as witty - words. Although only mentioned in passing, I didn't know that Waugh counted G. K. Chesterton and Graham Greene among his friends. Given recent highly publicized and litigated scandals involving some Catholic priests' unchaste involvement with young boys, the last chapter - with the story of 'Grimes' - is an eye-opener regarding serial predators being passed on silently (to avoid scandal) in British schools almost a hundred years ago. Published in 1964, it would be interesting to know whether these revelations were at all remarked on in the British press at the time.

Phillip W. says

If you love Waugh you will enjoy his autobiography. Such a shame memoirists like this have disappeared and a pity Waugh died before authoring subsequent volumes. Though he is discreet in his tellings, one can glean much of the man, his milieu and his many associations.
