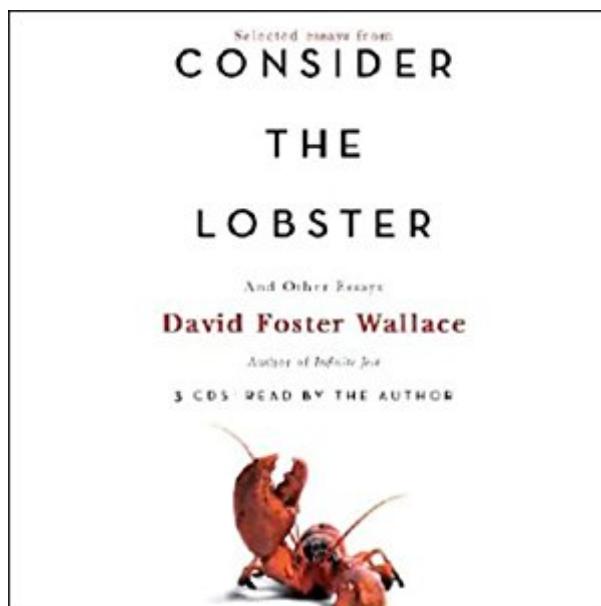


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Consider The Lobster And Other Essays (Selected Essays)



Synopsis

Do lobsters feel pain? Did Franz Kafka have a funny bone? What is John Updike's deal, anyway? And what happens when adult video starlets meet their fans in person? David Foster Wallace answers these questions and more in essays that are also enthralling narrative adventures. Whether covering the three-ring circus of a vicious presidential race, plunging into the wars between dictionary writers, or confronting the World's Largest Lobster Cooker at the annual Maine Lobster Festival, Wallace projects a quality of thought that is uniquely his and a voice as powerful and distinct as any in American letters. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

This is my first foray into David Foster Wallace (I know, it's one of his last works and nonfiction, but I felt like it would be a good introduction). I enjoy his style of writing, the quality of prose, and the introspection and philosophizing that is present throughout. In this particular collection, mostly journalistic-type pieces, some essays are more compelling than others - an outsider's view of the porn version of the Oscar's is a highlight, while an abstruse treatise that is ostensibly a review of a writing style guide is difficult to wade through even for linguistic enthusiasts. As a whole I would rate it highly, though, especially for those who want some quality reading without having to commit to a full novel (I found it a pleasant distraction during a plane ride and while waiting at the DMV, for example)

To characterize the late David Wallace as merely a fiction writer is to be truly short sided. In fact, I'd wager that his true talent was on exhibit moreso in these wonderful books of essays and short stories and not necessarily in his novels. In 1997 he published the marvelous "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again" that accumulated numerous nonfictional narrations that emoted a side of Wallace not seen in his literary breakthrough "Infinite Jest", a legendary fictional monolith.

Continuing with the short non fiction writings, we now encounter "Consider the Lobster" an amalgam of previously published magazine pieces that Wallace was commissioned to write for, among others, Harpers, Esquire and Rolling Stone. Put together in an order that was surely well thought through by both author and editor, we enter a maze of prodigious writing and thinking that few writers could ever hope to aspire to. Wallace's talent is truly laid bare here and it is the reader who is the victor as one's mind is hopelessly expanded while damning fate (re: clinical depression) is responsible for taking such a talent away before his work was complete. Yea verily, to appreciate Wallace, one must really be dialed into his cynicism...for me he's at his best when he methodically and systematically dismembers those whose inflated sense of self importance and self aggrandizement leave no other choice. In "Up Simba" and "The Big Red Son" Wallace picks apart two widely disparate but uniquely unified egos when he tackles the arrogant national press that follows a major presidential candidate and the self proclaimed untouchable postures of adult video hierarchy. Slowly at first and then gathering steam, these mercenary depictions integrate within the narrative, giving nuance and depth that by the end, the reader is suddenly faced with reporting as he's never experienced...in both of these excellent essays, I found myself laughing almost uncontrollably while marveling, at the end, at why all journalism can't be this way. This, to me, is the power of DFW. The other essays, although not quite up to the standard of the two previously mentioned, are also excellent in varying forms. This next level would include "The View from Mrs. Thompson's", a "where were you" for Wallace on 9/11 that uniquely treats the human spirit in a seemingly heretofore un-Wallace-like way. "How Tracy Austin Broke My Heart" is a rigorous diatribe at Austin's memoirs and a "how could she be so callous" with her life story review. The book's title essay is an exploration not so much of the Maine Lobster Fest of 2003, although it's certainly centered around that, rather it's a referendum on animal rights and, more specifically, a thoughtful study on the lobster and whether it's cruel and unusual punishment to boil one alive. Wallace has clearly done his homework here and his crustacean knowledge approaches Phd level. The others are works that I would characterize as academic essays ranging from studies on Kafka and Dostoevsky (the essential post modern literary anchor points) to a surprisingly personal reflection on today's use of language compared to its intended use and how many language syntax fanatics or

SNOOTS (don't ask...look it up), Wallace having been one of its proud leaders, are mulling about the land looking and lurching for the ever present mistake in prose. These works require a lot more work and commitment from the reader but are still rewarding in the end. Finally, it wouldn't be a Wallace work without a word about the footnotes. Wallace explains that the endnotes are a way for him to "fracture reality" and provide a way to give him a second voice, all of which I believe and trust...but, I also believe that to a degree, Wallace is messing with us a bit and enjoying it...methinks he's thumbing his nose at those who would criticize him with the final essay "Host" in the book. Without giving it away, one only has to turn to any page in this essay to see what I'm talking about. It is true that this reviewer has come aboard the DFW bandwagon very late and the circumstances of his death have certainly added the needed melancholy to his legend. But, I believe that I do possess enough balance to recognize genius when I read it and I must say that David Wallace deserves all accolades thrown his way...with "Consider The Lobster" being one of his many masterpieces.

The late Mr. Wallace has been reviewed by too many to mention. I'm just a person reading anything of his for the first time. My nephew is a huge fan and pointed me to his essays to start. The first essay in this collection had me laughing out loud from the first paragraphs. Later ones have proven a little dry and deep for me. I am, for the most part, enjoying reading these reviews and essays and will explore further into his works. He uses some almighty big words (which in context you do understand) . Be prepared for many, many footnotes. I followed my usual practice on footnotes and ignored them. If you want to go deeper you can explore them later. That's a personal quirk of mine.

RZ

My husband has read a few books by David Foster Wallace, so I bought this for his birthday. He loves it and wants me to read it, too! He says it's not as labor intensive as some of DFW's other work, and that's good - especially if you don't have hours to dedicate to looking up obscure phrases and unusual terms.

Awesome book...I sincerely wonder how his keen eye and mind would capture the Great Recession or Trumpism. To RIP DFW

What do I say about David Foster Wallace that hasn't been said. He captures what it's like to be in real life.

Wallace was truly a master of the creative nonfiction genre.

This book is a nice way to start getting into DFW before trying to digest a whole novel. You can clearly hear his voice throughout the essays which gives you the strong sense that you know DFW. His essays are insightful and thought-provoking. Enjoy.

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