



Breakfast on Mars and 37 Other Delectable Essays

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Breakfast on Mars and 37 Other Delectable Essays will inspire students to think differently about the much feared assignment in elementary and middle schools around the country: essay writing.

Rebecca Stern's fifth grade students were bored to death with essay writing, and the one thing Rebecca needed to inspire them—great examples appropriate for kids—was nowhere to be found. Inspired by a challenge, Rebecca joined forces with her friend, social entrepreneur Brad Wolfe, and the two came up with a terrific proposal—to gather together a collection of unconventional essays by some of the best writers around. They have compiled and edited a collection of imaginative, rule-breaking, and untraditional essays that is sure to change the way you think about the essay.

Contributors include: Ransom Riggs, Kirsten Miller, Scott Westerfeld, Alan Gratz, Steve Almond, Jennifer Lou, Chris Higgins, Rita Williams-Garcia, Elizabeth Winthrop, Chris Epting, Sloane Crosley, April Sinclair, Maile Meloy, Daisy Whitney, Khalid Birdsong, Sarah Prineas, Ned Vizzini, Alane Ferguson, Lise Clavel, Mary-Ann Ochota, Steve Brezenoff, Casey Scieszka, Steven Weinberg, Michael Hearst, Clay McLeod Chapman, Gigi Amateau, Laurel Snyder, Wendy Mass, Marie Rutkoski, Sarah Darer Littman, Nick Abadzis, Michael David Lukas, Léna Roy, Craig Kielburger, Joshua Mohr, Cecil Castellucci, Joe Craig, Ellen Sussman

Breakfast on Mars and 37 Other Delectable Essays Details

Date : Published June 25th 2013 by Roaring Brook Press

ISBN : 9781596437371

Author : Brad Wolfe (Editor) , Rebecca Stern , Ellen Sussman (Contributor) , Rita Williams-Garcia (Contributor) , Elizabeth Winthrop (Contributor) , Chris Epting (Contributor) , Sloane Crosley (Contributor) , April Sinclair (Contributor) , more... Maile Meloy (Contributor) , Daisy Whitney (Contributor) , Khalid Birdsong (Contributor) , Sarah Prineas (Contributor) , Ned Vizzini (Contributor) , Alane Ferguson (Contributor) , Lise Clavel (Contributor) , Mary-Ann Ochota (Contributor) , Steve Brezenoff (Contributor) , Casey Scieszka (Contributor) , Steven Weinberg (Contributor) , Michael Hearst (Contributor) , Clay McLeod Chapman (Contributor) , Gigi Amateau (Contributor) , Laurel Snyder (Contributor) , Ransom Riggs (Contributor) , Wendy Mass (Contributor) , Marie Rutkoski (Contributor) , Sarah Darer Littman (Contributor) , Nick Abadzis (Contributor) , Michael David Lukas (Contributor) , Léna Roy (Contributor) , Craig Kielburger (Contributor) , Joshua Mohr (Contributor) , Cecil Castellucci (Contributor) , Joe Craig (Contributor) , Kirsten Miller (Contributor) , Scott Westerfeld (Contributor) , Alan Gratz (Contributor) , Steve Almond (Contributor) , Jennifer Lou (Contributor) , Chris Higgins (Contributor) ...less

Format : Hardcover 224 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Nonfiction, Writing, Essays, Language, Teaching, Childrens, Middle Grade

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From Reader Review Breakfast on Mars and 37 Other Delectable Essays for online ebook

Runa says

I really loved the idea of this book--showing kids that essays don't have to be boring. I just wish the types of essays shown here would actually be accepted by teachers. These were so good, but I bet if any one of them were turned in, they would be nitpicked for first person pronouns and informal language and breaking essay conventions, and that just makes me sad. (That said, my favorite essay by far was the one in Donkey Kong's point of view. Hilarious!)

Kadi Cook says

This collection of essays is wonderful for exciting the children in my classroom when we write essays. I love that the structure of the essays are unusual and are not simply the traditional 5-paragraph essays. The students feel like they can be more creative with their essays after reading the variety in this book. They also appreciate that their natural, creative style of writing an essay can be appreciated by the greater community, instead of having to write boring essays to fit inside a box. It is great that the authors of the essays don't take themselves too seriously, which is how I like to run my classroom.

Se Young Chun says

This book isn't like other books of essays. At first when my teacher recommended it to me, I was a bit skeptical. However, it was actually enjoyable. It's a collection of essays that professional and famous writers wrote involving topics that are usually assigned to students. "Breakfast on Mars and 37 Other Delectable Essays" proves that essays can be funny and enjoyable to read. This book shows students that the stereotype of essays being "boring" and "difficult" is false. Some of my favorites were the Leia/Padme essay and Laurel Snyder's essay about a good lie. I would recommend this book to middle schoolers who are stressed about five paragraph essays. Overall, it's a book that any reader would like because of its short, yet interesting stories.

Christiane says

I liked the idea of this book (authors tackle dreaded essay questions like "Compare and contrast two characters from the same story" and "Write about a strong memory and what it means to you") more than I enjoyed the reality of reading it. The essays are really uneven in quality; some are actually just not that interesting and others, while interesting, don't have much child appeal (like the lovely "Natural Light" by Sloane Crosley). In fact, a lot of the essays may appeal more to adults looking back at their childhood than children currently living it. Teachers may find a use for this book in their classrooms.

Chris says

In the following pages, you'll catch a glimpse of something most people have never seen in the wild. We've let essays out of their cages, and we've set them loose.

This book is a great idea, a collection of essays by professional writers responding to the prompts that are commonly assigned in schools to serve as examples for students frustrated by the confines of the requirements. Whether prompted with "Write about a time you helped make the world a better place" or "Compare and contrast two characters from the same story" or "Pick a belief that is widely accepted and then debunk it" or one of the other forty topics (indexed by type; e.g. persuasive, etc.), the authors demonstrate a variety of ways to make the essays personal, creative, interesting, and meaningful. I was hooked from the Forward by Margaret Cho to the end, and, though not every selection was stellar or spoke to me, the collection as a package is excellent. Highly recommended for all classrooms where essays are assigned, students looking for a bit of inspiration, and readers who enjoy encountering a variety of interesting, engaging essays.

I could have just as easily picked any number of other favorite bits, but I think I'll share this metaphor for friendship that I loved from Ransom Riggs in "Camp Dread or How to Survive a Shockingly Awful Summer":

The popular kids I knew seemed to make friends effortlessly. Their cliques grew and blossomed and rotated members on a daily basis. My friend group, on the other hand, was like a rare mold that only grew beneath a certain kind of rock at a specific elevation: There wasn't much of it, it formed very slowly, and it was exceedingly stable. But if a wild mongoose came and ate a bunch of it, the mold wasn't going to grow back in any big hurry.

Rachel says

If you like good writing or teach writing, open up a tab to [Breakfast on Mars: Your Favorite Authors Take a Stab at the Dreaded Essay Assignment](#).

The collection begins with a foreword from Margaret Cho, who admonishes teachers who have used writing as a form of punishment. She tells a story about how she first realized that words had power and introduces the anthology by saying that it's "a collection of essays by authors who understand that writing about ideas should be fun and real, not a drill. The authors in this book get that essays don't have to follow the same rules that someone made up forever ago."

I wish I could run out and buy 30 copies of this book for my classroom. The short, focused essays are excellent models for a writing workshop. (The editors have included a related prompt for each essay, which makes the collection more accessible for teachers revising their curriculum because their state has adopted the Common Core State Standards.)

EXAMPLES - WHY I LOVE THIS BOOK:

1.) The opening of "Creative Boot Camp" by Joshua Mohr (186-190):

Sometimes we forget to celebrate our imaginations. We take them for granted. We slack and never muster the energy to walk them. We fail to make sure they're eating quality calories. They get lazy and bored. Neglected, our imaginations lie on the couch, eating Doritos and wearing dirty clothes. Our imaginations spend hours on Facebook stalking our boyfriend's ex-girlfriends or our ex-girlfriend's last boyfriend or our old BFF who we now completely hate or the strange cousin we met at Aunt Martha's crab-feed in July. We look at our imaginations, sadly curled on the sofa, and we scream at them, "Get up!"

For the record, this essay ends with the imagination and "you" walking off into the distance together as artist and best friend, which is adorable and perfect.

2.) The close of my very favorite essay in the anthology:

"The world is full of time machines. You can fight that truth. Or you can ride." (31)
-Steve Almond in "The World is Full of Time Machines"

3.) The first line of another great essay in the anthology:

"I confess that I have always wanted a tail for personal reasons." (99)
-Ned Vizzini in "Why We Need Tails"

4.) An excellent argument in favor of pictures in essays and books:

"...how did we get from a world where illustrations were plentiful, and where illustrators could be powerful partners in creation, to our modern-day world, where there are hardly any pictures in novels at all?" (20)
-Scott Westerfeld in "Warning: This Essay Does Not Contain Pictures"

Jennifer says

The essay is my favorite form of writing so this book was made for me. Billed as a guide to help school kids (or rather, "young essayists") write better essays, I found it to be full of great writing and good things to think about even though after a major birthday this summer I think I would be called a "middle-aged essayist" :) I love the advice and encouragement it gives to not just young people but to any of us who try to write, simply through the demonstration of good writing. Very recommended.

Ben says

"To properly introduce this book, you need a little bit of backstory.

Once upon a time, essays were exciting, and full of the author's exciting, new opinions. People would seek out essays and actually want to read them. Then the essay became the favorite tool of schools, and through generations the essay faded from the mass of honestly bad, blandly formulaic essays written by generations of bored schoolchildren.

In this fun book, a bunch of contemporary writers have tried to bring a little bit of spice back to essays with 37 essays on topics that the authors really care about, like why humans should colonize Mars. The authors' different and fun styles and far-ranging topics make the book a fun and worthwhile read."

Emrys says

What a fabulous idea! The essay comes back with a bang, a hum, and a fantastic kind of flourish. There is a huge range but all are wonderfully composed. Funny, sad, pensive, revealing, and as delicious as a stack of pancakes. The authors here are professionals, and so of course they break all the rules. You won't find five concise paragraphs, or three citations to support each point, or the words "in conclusion" at the end of every page. Instead you'll get powerful anecdotes that span from intro to closing sentence, well-able-bodied opinions, even occasional pictures, graphs, and photographs.

These are essays from the hearts and heads of people who love to write and make their living from it, people who have baby-sat penguin families, struggled with their first names and their ability to fit into jeans and people who are best friends with their imaginations. My personal favorites were just when one of these exceptional authors took an opportunity to open up to us about a little part of their seemingly mundane, ordinary life, and made it glow like a sunset on a river and shine like starlight off a spaceship halfway to Mars.

And they're all only about five pages long!

I read this as an ARC and elements are subject to change

Julia says

First, this book is exactly what I studied in college – creative nonfiction. Writing personal essays and memoirs, short nonfiction pieces that are creative and original, that grab you, make you think, play around and have fun, and don't need to have fairies in them to do it.

Second, I would never have been this creative in grade school, and that's what this book is for. Each essay is prefaced by the prompt it is responding too. The index at the back lists them by title, prompt, and type of essay (personal, persuasive, research, etc.). It's great for teachers who want to pull things out of this book and say "See? Essays aren't boring!"

Some of them are better than others, but all anthologies are like that. To my mind, though, none of them sucked. None of them were boring. They were all uniquely weird and interesting, creative things that that one little creative kid in each class would write but no one else would buck the rules enough to try. Hopefully this book will get their little minds thinking, break them of Honors kid syndrome (as a former sufferer, I can tell you, it's all-consuming. "Tell me exactly what you want an A to look like and I will give you exactly that and then you will give me the A.")).

Tanja says

I have always wanted something like this, to pull out when primary school teachers ask me whether I have persuasive (or any other type of) essay they could use as a prompt with their students. This is a brilliant collection of essays, with a super user friendly index that lists the essays by essay type as well as by prompt.

And yes, I can just see how this book will get students excited about writing, just as the editors intended to!

Mary Sanchez says

A creative way of showing 38 interesting short essays (persuasive, personal,informative, graphic, and literary)written by favorite authors for children. Each essay starts with a prompt assigned to the author like: Analyse a character from a fairy tale; If you could steal one trait from an animal, what would it be and why?

Teachers have a handy source to help teach students how a great essay looks. The index lists the titles/authors of the essays under their essay types and also lists the essay prompts.

Penny Peck says

Several authors (many YA authors) contributed to this ebullient collection of essays on a wide variety of subjects, perfect for middle and high schoolers. These are great examples of the types of essays students are required to write: persuasive, personal, how-to, and literary (there is an index in the back). Experience the truth about Sasquatch, what life was like for a kid before TV, and the joy of blueberry picking. Many of these are personal reminiscences by the authors, which may lead the reader to find the books by that person. Useful to teachers who need examples of great essays, but first and foremost an entertaining read.

Melissa Mcavoy says

Breakfast on Mars is a rare breed: an anthology of essays written for a tween audience. Bay Area native and teacher, Rebecca Stern recognized the difficulty of teaching children to write something they had no experience reading and so gathered nearly forty short essays, mostly written by authors children will recognize. In their range and variety they refute the idea that essays must be serious, structured and dull and offer a multitude of examples and jumping off points to inspire both student writers and their teachers. Each essay is categorized: personal, persuasive, informative, literary or graphic. An index allows readers to search for topics or authors that particularly appeal. While the examples provide inspiration in their dramatic openings, effective use of colloquial speech and creative metaphors they also inspire with the joy the authors evince in writing. It's On Like Donkey Kong crackles with indignation. River Girl is passionate and elegiac. The Incredibly Amazing Humpback Anglerfish, quivers with the intensity of the fact collector. While it is possible the volume may be read cover to cover it will be invaluable as an aid in middle-school essay assignments or for students writing high school applications. Three of the essays struck me as awkward, personal and too tragic for the collection: Natural Light, Death is Only a Horizon and A Thousand Truths. However, the 35 other strong contenders leave plenty of examples to speak to all types of readers and writers.

Reeka (BoundbyWords) says

As seen on my blog:

Breakfast on Mars was a terrific idea for a book. It contained a little taste of genius from so many great authors: Ransom Riggs, Scott Westerfield and Ned Vizzini, to name a few. I absolutely *loathed* essay-writing in school, and cursed the day someone, somewhere, decided to make structured writing a **thing**. Talk about cruel and unusual punishment *le sigh*.

I wish this book was published while I was in grade school. *Breakfast on Mars* was compiled of 38 essays, written like essays ought to be written like. *however* we chose it to be. *Breakfast on Mars* was a tribute of sorts, to the first generation of essays, when essays were a cool thing to be. There were personal essays, persuasive essays, literary essays and a whole array others that were cleverly written, and an absolute joy to read.

Each author was given a topic, for example "Write about a time when you had to experience pain in order to get a huge reward." For this one, author Chris Epting wrote a personal essay entitled *Penguin Etiquette*, that detailed, complete with pictures!, a trip to the Antarctic with his daughter to study emperor penguins. The essay comprised only 11 pages (words and photos), but Chris conveyed such poignancy and beauty onto those pages, that I felt like I read an entire novel of adventure. Which was, in essence, the point of the book. To prove that essays don't need be a drab, soul-crushing feat. They could be sounding boards for knowledge, and can be read like a novella even!

I enjoyed so many of the essays in *Breakfast on Mars*, they were mini bursts of happiness, and I couldn't turn the page to the next one fast enough. If you get a chance, read this book, then pass it along to your children!

Recommended for fans of: ALL genres. Many of us were the victims of essay-writing. Read this and think of it as your revenge on structure! I did =)
