



Readings: Essays and Literary Entertainments

By Michael Dirda

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"For some time now, the best book critic in America has been Michael Dirda." Michael M. Thomas, *New York Observer*

Intimate, humorous, and insightful, *Readings* is a collection of classic essays and reviews by Michael Dirda, book critic of the *Washington Post* and winner of the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for criticism. From a first reading of Beckett and Faulkner at the feet of an inspirational high-school English teacher to a meeting of the P. G. Wodehouse Society, from an obsession with Nabokov's *Lolita* to the discovery of the Japanese epic *The Tale of Genji*, these essays chronicle a lifetime of literary enjoyment.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

If you have never happened upon Michael's Dirda's "Readings" column in the *Washington Post Book World*, yours is a sorry fate indeed. One never knows what one will find there, except that it will come filtered through the witty, unpretentious, voracious, book-besotted being that is Michael Dirda. In one column, Dirda introduces Guy Davenport, "the best literary essayist since Randall Jarrell and Cyril Connolly"; just as ardently, he reports elsewhere on a weekend convention of the P.G. Wodehouse Society. Another column finds Dirda sparring with his spouse over the preferred fate of his children's outgrown books (she says get rid of them; he hides them in the garage). Yet another column--several, actually--find him fondling and justifying the purchase of some first edition or another. Dirda writes about books he has (sort of) stolen, teachers who mattered, and an early 11th century Japanese novel (Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji*). He even discusses his secret desire not to read so many books. "I sometimes think that a passion for omnivorous reading has seduced me into a lifetime of one-night stands," he says, "while the less promiscuous have managed to find a single true and more fulfilling love." For our sake, Mr. Dirda, keep up those love affairs--that passion is contagious. Those many Dirda enthusiasms, presented here in a collection of 46 "Readings" columns, will ignite fires aplenty in the curious reader's mind. --Jane Steinberg

Review

"Michael Dirda may be as close to the ideal as we are likely to get." (Annie Proulx)

"Michael Dirda is a superb literary essayist, and *Readings* should provide deep delight for discerning readers." (Harold Bloom)

About the Author

Michael Dirda, who won a Pulitzer Prize for distinguished criticism at the Washington Post Book World, is the author of *An Open Book*, *Bound to Please*, and *Readings: Essays and Literary Entertainments*. He lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

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